PHILANTHROPY, THE WELFARE STATE, AND EARLY
TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERATURE

A Thesis in
English

by
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ABSTRACT

“Philanthropy, Welfare, and Early Twentieth-Century Literature” furthers the discussion of modernist literature and its relationship to modernity by showing the role of the philanthropy-versus-welfare debates in early twentieth-century fiction. I examine works by Virginia Woolf, Vita Sackville-West, Rebecca West, Ernest Hemingway, Anzia Yezierska, Edith Wharton, Wyndham Lewis, and E.M. Forster in the context of philanthropy, the birth of welfare, the professionalization of social work, the crisis of liberalism, the disintegration of the British Empire, immigration in the United States, and World War I. In addition to my inquiry into the historically constructed discourses and practices of philanthropy, I position my discussion of literature in relationship to recent critiques of Habermas’s account of the disintegration of the bourgeois public sphere and to Derrida’s work on the gift, and I argue that artistic engagements with philanthropy helped define twentieth-century notions about how to govern; how to conceive of class and gender boundaries; how to give; and how to market one’s labor, whether physical or intellectual.

Early twentieth-century writers participated in the debates that shaped such milestones of contemporary social policy as the 1911 Insurance Act in Britain and Progressive and New Deal legislation in the United States. In order to trace the writers’ engagement with this “New Philanthropy,” I study recent scholarly works as well as contemporary publications like The Charities Review, The Salvation Army Yearbook, C.S. Loch’s Annual Charities and Digest, Burdett’s Hospital and Charities; modernist periodicals such as Blast, The Enemy, and The Egoist; and government documents like the “Louisiana Mothers’ Pension Statute” (1939) and the Hansard Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law and Relief of Distress and the “Louisiana Mothers’ Pension Statute” (1909).

For most modern and modernist writers, as well as for Derrida, neither the state-based economy of gift-giving nor philanthropy represents true giving. As phenomena of giving, both philanthropy and welfare annul the gift. Yet modern writers’ discourses of philanthropy, welfare, and altruism are movements towards the promise of the gift; and just as they render an account of the (im)possibility of true giving, they carve out a place for modernist subjectivity, the modernist artist, the “New Woman,” the poor, the immigrant, and the colonial subject in the turbulent first decades of the twentieth century.
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Introduction

In 1903 Francis W. Hirst published his history of the Manchester school and free trade, *Free Trade and Other Fundamental Doctrines of the Manchester School* (1903). He quoted the following from the writings of Richard Cobden, leading economist of the Manchester School:

I yield to no man in the world (be he ever so stout an advocate of the Ten Hours’ Bill) in a hearty good-will towards the great body of the working classes; but my sympathy is not of that moribund kind which would lead me to despond over their future prospects. Nor do I partake of that spurious humanity which would indulge in an unreasoning kind of philanthropy at the expense of the great bulk of the community. Mine is that *masculine species of charity* [my emphasis] which would lead me to inculcate in the minds of the labouring classes the love of independence, the privilege of self-respect, the disdain of being patronized or petted, the desire to accumulate, and the ambition to rise. I know it has been found easier to please the people by holding out flattering and delusive prospects of cheap benefits to be derived from Parliament [my emphasis] rather than by urging them to a course of self-reliance; but while I will not be the sycophant of the great, I cannot become the parasite of the poor. (Hirst I.6)

At the turn of the twentieth century Cobden’s “masculine” philanthropy seemed to disappear in favor of a more “feminine” philanthropy of the state; what used to be merely “flattering and delusive prospects of cheap benefits to be derived from Parliament” rapidly materialized into the impressive reforms undertaken under the liberal administration of Campbell-Bannerman (1906-8) and Asquith (1908-15), reforms that included the Education (Provision of Meals) Acts (1906 and 1914), Education (Administrative Provisions) Act (1907), Notification of Births Acts (1907 and 1915), Probation Act (1907), Children Act (1908), Old Age Pensions Act (1908), Housing and Town Planning Act (1909), National Insurance Act
(1911), and Trade Board Act (1909). As early as 1903 Hirst notes that Cobden, who “argued the case for the abolition of the Corn Laws (and hence, cheap food) on the grounds that it would free the laborer from degrading charity” (Le Van Baumer 455), “did overestimate the evils of State intervention. We have learned in the past few years that the State can do a great deal for the poor, especially in large towns, by prescribing certain rules of health and minimum standards of air-space and sanitation in their homes, factories, and workshops” (Hirst I.7).

Hirst’s note about state intervention signals the changing roles of the state and philanthropy at the turn of the twentieth century. The debate over philanthropy concerned not only its charitable uses but the transformation of British parliamentary democracy, the end of the British Empire, the crisis of liberalism and the rise of the Labor Party, the beginnings of the welfare state, the professionalization of social work, immigrant politics in the United States, and women’s changing roles in society and the “New Woman.” It was so widespread that it made its way into intellectual histories of the time and permeated British and American culture in the early twentieth century. In my dissertation, I explore the crisis of philanthropy in its historical context and the response of modernist and avant-garde writers and of writers associated with modernism to this crisis.

**Modernist Writers and Philanthropy**

Modernists participated in the debates that surrounded such milestones of contemporary social policy as the 1911 Insurance Act in Britain or the Progressive Era and the New Deal legislation in the United States, and their works shaped a discussion about how to give in the new twentieth century. The issue of philanthropy was important to modernist writers because notions
of giving defined how to govern; how to conceive of class and gender boundaries; how to participate in the cycle of economic exchange; and how to market one’s labor, whether physical or intellectual, to consumers.

Not all contemporaries were as optimistic as Francis Hirst about the “New Philanthropy.” One of the most vocal opponents of growing state intervention was the founder of the Vorticist movement and the editor of the modernist magazine *Blast* Wyndham Lewis. Lewis feared the “occult” power of benevolence and the advent of a “capitalo-revolutionary” society where men and women would be reduced to the status of children in a nursery who “eat bread and jam dressed in short print frocks and bibs, sit in demure and silent rows, while one dressed as a martinet scolds them, and then administers shuddering fesseés (Lewis, *Art* 136). Lewis proposed to restore the masculine ethos of philanthropy through violence that would shatter this newfound social security, a sort of “smack in the eye” philanthropy: “[t]he more ‘progressive’ the form of compulsion, or punishment, is, the less humane, we generally find. A smack in the eye is, after all, a less savage form of attack than a social boycott. A duel is a more decent thing than a whispering campaign, to settle a dispute. We ‘advance’, but we merely become subtler in our inhumanity” (Lewis, *Left Wing* 285). On the opposite end of the political spectrum, the radical young heroine of Rebecca West’s novel *The Judge* (1922) welcomed the rise of the Labour party into political prominence and criticized the Salvation Army Labour Colonies as “mere palliatives” by means of which “the pious gave themselves the pleasure of feeling that they were dealing with the immense problem of poverty when they were merely taking a few hundred men and setting them to work in uneconomic conditions” (West 375). These conflicting attitudes were part of a larger historical crisis in British democracy.
Women writers from both within and outside the modernist context such as Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West revisited the figure of the powerful woman-philanthropist in their works despite the decline of voluntarism and women’s philanthropy at the time. They not only furthered the philanthropic debate by proposing a sort of compromise between self-interest and public duty but advocated for women’s entrance into the professions and the freeing of women’s “pent-up egotism” (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 109) in direct relationship to rising welfare arguments for better material conditions of life.

The debate over philanthropy raged not only in Clarissa Dalloway’s London but in Forster’s colonial India. Novels such as such as E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* and *Howards End* and Rebecca West’s *The Judge* reveal how the modern experience of disintegration of both empire and voluntarist philanthropy informs the modernist understanding of kindness, alienation, detachment, and individual autonomy. Dr. Aziz, the Indian intellectual in E.M. Forster’s novel *A Passage to India*, brings philanthropy to the forefront of the British Empire debates when he says “Mr. Fielding, no one can ever realize how much kindness we Indians need, we do not even realize it ourselves. But we know when it has been given. We do not forget, though we may seem to. Kindness, more kindness, and even after that more kindness. I assure you it is the only hope” (Forster, *Passage* 116-117). A final philanthropic twist of the novel is Dr. Aziz’s advocacy of women’s liberation in India that helps define independent India in terms of Victorian philanthropic ideals. Aziz becomes convinced after his trial that only the end of the purdah will bring reform to India, and he devotes most of his poetry to this cause.

Across the Atlantic, Edith Wharton, Anzia Yezierska, and Ernest Hemingway engaged with the Settlement Movement, upper-class patronage, World War I, and the New Deal and brought to the forefront of their readers’ attention the plight of marginalized immigrants and war
veterans. “I’m not grateful. I hate this Home. I hate myself for living here. I hate the hand-me-down rags I wear on my back. I hate every damned bit of kindness you’ve ever done me. I’m poisoned—poisoned with the hurts, the insults I suffered in this beastly place,” declared the self-made heroine of Yezierska’s novel *Arrogant Beggar* (Yezierska, *Beggar* 86). Both Yezierska and Hemingway articulated the problematic character of progressive reform and welfare, but they also asserted the importance and centrality of the giving, the gift, and the desire for the gift as a story central to American character, American success, and American destiny.

**Why Philanthropy and Welfare?**

In my dissertation, I address both philanthropy and the incipient welfare states in Britain and the United States. If the beginning of the twentieth century did not lay the foundations of the modern British welfare state, it did a lot to create a blueprint for the post-World War II Beveridge plan. Before the welfare state in Britain was well established, however, measures such as the parliamentary acts passed under the liberal administration of Campbell-Bannerman (1906-8) and Asquith (1908-15) were often, and to a much greater extent than today, associated with altruism and philanthropy. The same holds true about social science and private philanthropy during the Progressive Era in the United States.

Philanthropy and welfare were not rigidly separate concepts at the time; indeed, they permeated one another so much that when the “New Liberals” from the end of the nineteenth century (J. A. Hobson, L. T. Hobhouse, T.H. Greene, D. G. Ritchie, and their followers)¹

¹ Greene, in his *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* delivered in 1879-80, had already started to alter Mill’s views of the “negative freedom” of the individual—“freedom from”—to allow the state more
criticized philanthropy for lacking “any wider consideration of social justice” (Finlayson 161), their philosophy and the proto-welfare measures that it promoted earned the appellation the “New Philanthropy.” In contrast to Richard Cobden’s laissez-faire, “masculine,” charity, and to the nineteenth-century “citizenship of contribution,” the “New Liberals” introduced the idea of a “citizenship of entitlement.” The entrance of the “citizenship of entitlement” on the political arena created a sense of crisis in many contemporaries who feared state intervention, resisted the diminishing importance of voluntarism, and perceived the political changes of the time as a fall and decline of British democracy, empire, economy, culture, and society.

The increase in state philanthropy troubled contemporaries who foresaw in it the imminent extinction of the British Empire and the British nation. A 1905 fantasy novel entitled The Decline and Fall of the British Empire warned a hypothetical Japanese Empire about the inglorious end of Britannia, the new Rome. The British had perished due to their irresponsible generosity evident in such indulgences as Public Libraries and free meals for schoolchildren (Decline 13), excessive taxation, and municipal extravagance:

[the English] came to look to the State for everything. It educated, fed, whipped, and in some instances clothed their children. It lit their houses and lent them light literature; it carried them to and fro on tramcars; it gave them cheap lodgings, and conducted scores of similar costly undertakings on principles which will be

authority in creating the conditions for greater “positive freedom.” D. G. Ritchie took the view of “positive freedom” further in his Principles of State Intervention published in 1891, where he laid an emphasis on the individual in the community. They argued that the possession of political rights guaranteed by the state lead naturally to social rights; they created a new notions of citizenship, one “provided as an entitlement by an active state rather than aspired to by active citizens outside the state” (Finlayson, 162). Geoffrey Finlayson comments that to the “New Liberals” philanthropy “failed to grasp the element of mutuality which held the community together. At worst it could be harmful; at best it offered only palliatives, and lacked any wider consideration of social justice” (156, 161).
recognized by the smallest office boy in Tokio as ignoring the mere elements of political economy. (*Decline* 30)

Pamphlets such as *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* and publications in popular periodicals of the time prove what historian Norman Barry calls the lack of any “coherent philosophy of welfarism” in the early twentieth century (Finlayson 177). Most British welfare historians agree that there was never a clear ideology of welfare before 1914. Rather, as Geoffrey Finlayson adds, “[t]he process—as historians have also agreed—was largely uncoordinated and unplanned. Gilbert writes that social policy “evolved, like the British empire, in a fit of absence of mind” (254). For contemporaries, the New Liberal reforms were most understandable as manifestations of generosity and philanthropy.

**A History of British Philanthropy**

In Britain, the legal definition of charity dates from Tudor times. As Chesterman points out, “What the philanthropist of Tudor times tried to do forms the basis of the legal definition of charity. No other single period of English history is so important to the formation of the modern concept of charity” (qtd. in Kendall, Jeremy, and Knapp 29). Before the sixteenth century, the dispensation of alms was part of the Catholic doctrine. As Chesterman points out, during that time “[p]arish priests, and to a lesser extent, monks, were legally bound to expend an appropriate proportion of their revenue (partly derived from tithes) on furnishing alms-houses, doles, and elementary education for the poor” (qtd. in Kendall et al. 29). Henry VIII and his successor, Edward VI, confiscated the property of the monasteries and chantries in subsequent years and weakened the Church’s capacity to care for the poor (Kendall et al. 31). At the same time, the
Reformation saw the rise of a new merchant and mostly Puritan urban aristocracy, who took on some of the welfare functions previously ascribed to the Church. These new benefactors gave less for religious motives than they gave for social ones; they also felt their responsibility in a social system that had become unstable with the enclosures and urbanization: “detached from the customary support system of Tudor feudal society—and with the monastic network no longer in place to provide support--the landless poor now appeared to the elite to be posing a major threat to social order and stability.” These beggars and vagrants consisted of “peasants thrown off the land through the move to more enclosures, those affected by war and epidemics, and former monks and nuns” (qtd. in Kendall et al. 32).

As a result of these new conditions, an increasingly sophisticated Poor Law system evolved— one that on the one hand, involved taxation (“poor rates”) to support local governments’ anti-poverty measures, and on the other hand, encouraged secular charity and protected against fraud. This bifurcated system formally remained in place in England until the 1920s when the workhouse system was finally abolished. The two bodies of legislation were consolidated in the famous 1601 Statute of Charitable Uses. In this way, the poor were divided into employable and unemployable. The former came to be seen as “undeserving”; they were to be provided outdoor relief by the parishes or, as time went on, sent to workhouses in order to “encourage” them to find work. The unemployable were seen as “deserving” and as such they were to be taken care of by private philanthropic resources. (qtd. in Kendall et al. 33). The system of philanthropy established by the Statute of Charitable Uses determined the central place of private and secular philanthropy in solving social problems in the United Kingdom.

The eighteenth century saw the rise of associative philanthropy—voluntary association built on the model of joint stock companies in business—and the Industrial Revolution brought
with it a new tightening of the Poor Law in 1834, which “put deterrence to the top of the agenda” (Kendall et al. 34, 35). During the nineteenth century the English philanthropic tradition reached its apogee. The nineteenth century saw an unprecedented growth in philanthropic action in England, and benevolence remained of great importance until the introduction of the welfare state. As Sir James Stephen says in his essay on the Clapham group, “[o]urs is the age of societies… For the cure of every sorrow by which our land and our race can be visited, there are patrons, vice-presidents, and secretaries. For the diffusion of every blessing of which mankind can partake in common, there is a committee” (qtd. in Owen 95). Some nineteenth-century observers, bewildered by the proliferation of philanthropic activities, voiced their frustration with the disorganized state of affairs where every individual and group organized, lobbied and supported their favorite cause; Charles Greville declared that “[w]e are just now overrun with philanthropy, and God knows where it will stop, or whither it will lead us” (qtd. in Owen 89). Growing private, unpaid philanthropic work opened a possibility for upper-class Victorian women to enter the public sphere and acquire organizational skills that would qualify them for the professions in the coming century.

Historians like F. K. Prochaska and Martha Vicinus have studied closely the proliferation of women’s branches, or auxiliaries, and of women’s charitable associations in the beginning of the nineteenth century which led to “an explosion of charities managed exclusively by women” (Prochaska, Women 36). Women’s charitable associations had a certain degree of institutional sophistication: “Run by committees made up of secretaries, treasurers, and members who subscribed a certain sum, they conformed to rules coming out of headquarters; their essential purpose was ‘to solicit and obtain patronage’” (Prochaska, Women 24). The skills that women acquired in these associations were later applied to the suffrage movement and in acquiring
positions in local government. As Prochaska notes, “[b]y the end of the nineteenth century there were over 1,000 female Poor-Law Guardians in Great Britain, over 200 female members of school boards, and about 200 female parish councilors.” Most of the women who obtained these positions had been closely associated with philanthropic work (Prochaska, Women 226). Thus, in more than one way, voluntary organizations provided women with a venue into the public sphere.

With the rise of social insurance and the professionalization of philanthropy, social work was transformed from the main venue of handling distress to “a residual service,” and one “largely perceived as supplementary [to the social security system]” (Daunton 219). Victorian women had been extensively involved as unpaid charity workers before these transformations, and their position was bound to change with the historical shift towards more state-managed and more science-oriented social work. Jane Lewis outlines this change and asks whether women’s position, once prominent within philanthropic activities, did not change “from (unpaid) influence to (paid) oblivion” (Daunton 203).²

**Methodology and Approach**

After Michael Levenson’s insightful study of modernist character and form, *Modernism and the Fate of Individuality* (1991), a number of scholars have helped reorient the discussion of modernism and mass culture and establish modernist fiction in its cultural and historical context, or what Levenson calls “the crisis of liberalism, the challenge to Eurocentrism, the advance of

bureaucracy, the contest between men and women” (Levenson xiii). Paul Peppis, for instance, discusses the place of nationalism, empire, and reactionary politics in the formation of the English avant-garde. Mark Morrisson examines modernists’ engagement with mass culture (“advertising practices, discourses of youth, education, and the purity of language in oral performance; the tactics of suffragist, anarchist, and socialist political movements; understanding of racial and ethnic difference in America; and the institutions of the publishing industry”) and argues that early modernism was not a mere matter of coterie consumption but was engaged with the public sphere and with the commercial culture of the early twentieth century” (Morrisson 10). Janet Lyon investigates modernist manifestoes in their intersecting historical contexts; Jennifer Wicke, Reginald Abbott, David Chinitz and Sebastian Knowles query the connection of modernism to pop culture and consumption; and Michael Tratner challenges the critical commonplace about modernist individualism and claims that “modernism was an effort to escape the limitations of nineteenth century individualist conventions and write about distinctively ‘collectivist’ phenomena” (Tratner 3). These critical perspectives represent an emerging vision


of modernism as deeply embedded in the political and social events of the time, at once shaping and being shaped by the turbulent early decades of the twentieth century.

I intend to move the discussion of modernism’s relationship to modernity in a new direction in order to show the role of the philanthropy-versus-welfare debates in the birth of modernist fiction. Aside from Michael Szalay’s study of the popularization of social security and American modernism,8 nothing has yet been published on philanthropy and early twentieth-century literature. In order to flesh out the history of philanthropy and the incipient welfare states in Britain and the United States, I have studied publications of charitable societies such as *The Charities Review. A Journal of Practical Sociology* (1891-1901), *The Salvation Army Yearbook* (1913, 1914, 1963), C.S. Loch’s *Annual Charities Register and Digest* (1911), *Burdett’s Hospital and Charities* annual (1911 and 1914), and the *Report of Officers and Certificate of Incorporation* for the Clara de Hirsch Home for Working Girls (1901) in New York City. Side by side with modernist periodicals such as *Blast, The Enemy,* and *The Egoist,* these publications and British and American state and parliamentary documents like the “Louisiana Mothers’ Pension Statute” (1939) and the *Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law and Relief of Distress* (1909) helps sort out the issues of state and empire, egoism and altruism, philanthropy and gender, professionalization and writing, war relief, immigrants and charity.

I am indebted to recent historical studies of British and American philanthropy and welfare, including David Owen’s *English Philanthropy, 1660-1960* (1964), Frank K.

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A number of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century works and documents have also proven invaluable in charting the changing terrain of philanthropy during the time period of this study; some examples include Helen Bosanquet’s *Rich and Poor* (1908), Herbert Spencer’s *The Man Versus the State* (1892), William Seward Hall’s “The Empire of Philanthropy” (1822), William Booth’s *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), Elizabeth Macadam’s *The New Philanthropy* (1934), Edith Wharton’s *The Book of the Homeless* (1916), Charles Bakewell’s *History of the American Red Cross in Italy* (1920), William H. Matthews’s *Adventures in Giving* (1939), FDR’s radio addresses, Theodore Roosevelt’s address to the First International Congress in America on the Welfare of the Child, and David Lloyd George’s collection of speeches *Better Times* (1910).

In addition to my inquiry into the historically constructed discourse and practices of philanthropy, I position my discussion of modernism and philanthropy in relationship to Habermas’s account of the public and private sphere in *The Structural Transformation of the*
Public Sphere and to Derrida’s writing on the gift, Given Time: Counterfeit Money I and The Gift of Death. I will consider Habermas alongside his feminist critics (Nancy Fraser, Mary Ryan, Joan Landes, Iris Young, and Seila Benhabib) in order to complicate his reading of Western democracy’s “sorrowful voyage from reason to mediatized consumption” (Landes 137).

Habermas’s account of the rise and fall of the bourgeois public sphere concerns the specific ways in which late seventeenth-, eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century France, England and Germany came to understand the public and the private. His work, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, attracts the reader’s attention to the problems of feudal representation “before” the people versus liberal bourgeois representation, as well as the problems of representation in late bourgeois democracies. In an idealized picture of classical bourgeois publicity, Habermas emphasizes a conception of the public that is universal, egalitarian, and disinterested. He describes the role of the free press, clubs, philosophical societies, and literary societies in the establishment of working parliamentary and democratic regimes, and the subsequent corruption of these regimes in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the rising power of labor and feminist movements, proliferating mass culture, mass opinion, and mass representation. I am going to trace these precipitous changes and how the British public and British modernist art responded to them, specifically with view to such Victorian moral values like individualism, self-reliance, the laissez faire, and philanthropy.

My study will also further the discussion over Habermas’s conception of the public sphere (it manifested itself as universal but represented the interests of the middle classes; servants, women, the poor were excluded from it as non-owners). However, I will contest and complicate his entirely too pessimistic view of the modern publicity and democracy, a pessimism which Habermas expressed as follows:
The public was expanded, informally at first, by the proliferation of press and propaganda; along with its social exclusiveness it also lost the coherence afforded by the institution of sociability and a relatively high level of education. Conflicts hitherto pushed aside into the private sphere now emerged in public. Group needs that could not expect to be satisfied by a self-regulating market tended to favor regulation by the state. The public sphere, which now had to deal with these demands, became an arena of competing interests fought out in the coarser forms of violent conflict. Laws passed under the “pressure of the street” could hardly be understood any longer as embodying the reasonable consensus of publicly debating private persons. They corresponded more or less overtly to the compromise between competing private interests. (Habermas 131-2)

The story of British and American philanthropy and welfare, from Anzia Yezierska’s immigrants to Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway, from E.M. Forster’s Aziz to Hemingway’s Harry Morgan, partakes of the sea change described in Habermas’s account, from “rational” discourse to “the coarser forms of violent conflict”; nevertheless, this sea change enabled immigrants, women, colonial subjects, and the working classes to have a voice in the public debates of the century. Even though the philanthropic works of Woolf’s Lady Bexborough, Sackville-West’s Lady Slane, and Yezierska’s settlement workers were pushed aside by labor and immigrant politics, the modern novels that I discuss demonstrate that, if anything, philanthropy came to be even more at the center of public debate.

In addition to the works of Habermas and his critics, Derrida’s writing on the gift offers an insight into modern philanthropy I have found productive for my study. For Derrida, the gift excludes reciprocity, exchange, return, debt; it “is annulled each time there is restitution or countergift” (Derrida, Given Time 12). Furthermore, in order for this condition to be satisfied, the gift must be forgotten in an absolute way: “It is thus necessary, at the limit, that [the donor] not recognize the gift as gift. From this perspective, philanthropy is impossible, as well as any gift giving, or at least any giving, says Derrida, “where there is subject and object” (24). But even if the gift is not phenomenal, if it is a transcendental illusion, a desire, or something towards
which we always feel impelled, for Derrida we still have an obligation to render an account of the gift. In other words, we need to know about the impossibility of the gift as we give: we need to know how to give.

Derrida’s essay *Given Time* addresses two texts about philanthropy and giving from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, namely, Baudelaire’s story “Counterfeit Money” and Marcel Mauss’s anthropological essay “The Gift” (1925). “Counterfeit Money” details the story of a donation of a counterfeit coin to a beggar. And Mauss’s analysis explicitly mentions the birth of the welfare state and social security in turn-of-the-century France: in the lengthy conclusion to his essay, Mauss takes the opportunity to extol “[s]ocial security, the solicitude arising from reciprocity and co-operation, and that of the occupational groupings, of all those legal entities upon which English law bestows the name of ‘Friendly Societies’” (Mauss 68) as a return to an economy of the gift.

For most modernists, as well as for Derrida, neither the state-based economy of gift-giving, nor philanthropy represents true giving. As phenomena of giving, both philanthropy and welfare annul the gift. Yet modernist discourses of philanthropy, welfare, and altruism are movements towards the promise of the gift; they render an account of the (im)possibility of the gift that agrees in spirit with Derrida’s later injunction, “Know still what giving wants to say, know how to give, know what you want and what to say when you give, know what you intended to give, know how the gift annuls itself, commit yourself [engage-toi] even if commitment is the destruction of the gift, give economy its chance” (*Given Time* 30).

My first chapter, *Women Writers, Altruism, and Philanthropy in Early Twentieth-Century Britain*, discusses the work of Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West in the context of
private philanthropy and the parliamentary reform acts of the Campbell-Bannerman (1906-8) and Asquith (1908-15) administrations. I argue that the trope of the influential philanthropic woman continued to haunt women’s fiction and non-fiction during the time when the British parliament was busy passing the National Insurance Act (1911) and other welfare legislation. Virginia Woolf presents us with many references to parliamentary reform and private philanthropy in *Mrs. Dalloway*: from the hypocritical Miss Kilman to the overbearing Lady Bruton to the stoical and idealistic Lady Bexborough, Woolf provides a commentary on philanthropy as a woman’s occupation in opposition to (male) parliamentary reform. *Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, A Room of One’s Own, and Three Guineas* reveal philanthropy to be both a site of symbolic resistance to emerging state bureaucracies and a venue for the professionalization of women’s work and of women’s writing. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf specifically discusses donations as a means of redressing the poverty of women’s colleges and bringing women into the professions. Similarly, philanthropy is a facilitator of women’s professionalization in Vita Sackville-West’s *All Passion Spent*. Here the main protagonist, Lady Slane, promotes her granddaughter’s musical career by bequeathing a private gift of great value to the expert management of the British Museum. Like Woolf’s *Three Guineas*, Sackville-West’s novel brings the language of self-renunciation in support of women’s self-actualization.

Historians of philanthropy such as Frank Prochaska and Martha Vicinus have recently noted that the more women entered the professions, the more “emotionalism, religiosity, and close domestic ties of traditional women had to be replaced with rationality, scientific knowledge, and corporate loyalties” (Vicinus 41). My chapter demonstrates that Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West made this argument in anticipation of their findings.
The second chapter of my dissertation, *Empire and Welfare in Britain*, explores the modernist engagement with the disintegration of the British empire, the simultaneous birth of British welfare, and the connections between the British imperial and philanthropic projects in Edward Morgan Forster’s two novels, *Howards End* (1910) and *A Passage to India* (1924); in Vita Sackville-West’s novel *All Passion Spent* (1931); and in Rebecca West’s *The Judge* (1922) and her travelogue of Yugoslavia *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941). This part of my dissertation highlights modernist writers’ individualist critique of imperial bureaucracy alongside their nostalgic endorsement of individualist philanthropy.

Set against the historical context of a disintegrating British empire, modernist works contributed to the crystallization of a new understanding of philanthropy and government. As the British colonies gained their independence at the turn of the twentieth century, and as Britain found itself embroiled in the “scramble for Africa” and the Boer Wars, the bureaucratic apparatus of empire grew. The number of Colonial office employees increased from 109 in 1900-1901 to 1,286 in April 1950 (Harrison 63). The modernist works I discuss in this chapter address the joined concerns that the growing imperial and welfare bureaucracies and constitute a site of individualist resistance to these bureaucracies.

*The Judge* by Rebecca West provides a unique perspective into contemporary anxiety surrounding national health and the failure of both philanthropy and empire. In my reading of this novel, mother England’s two sons, the brilliant dynamic Richard (who makes his fortune abroad and develops explosives for military uses) and the feeble emasculated Roger (who joins the Salvation Army), show the double failure of overseas expansion and domestic policy of British liberalism. Foster’s *Passage to India* takes up the subject of philanthropy and imperialism in colonial India and claims that the discourse of Victorian philanthropy was
appropriated by the Indian independence movement while the growing Anglo-Indian bureaucratic apparatus signaled the failure of British philanthropy and British rule.

Finally, Forster’s *Howards End*, Vita Sackville-West’s *All Passion Spent*, and Rebecca West’s *Black Lamb, Grey Falcon* attempt to emancipate liberal philanthropy from the undeniable failures of the British empire. The altruistic projects of the Schlegel sisters in *Howards End* aim to put to good uses the imperial millions of Henry Wilcox, and Lady Slane’s donation of a collection of valuable antiques purchased around the world to the British Museum is a liberating act of renunciation of the riches of the Raj in *All Passion Spent*. In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Rebecca West advocates a return to Victorian liberalism as a necessary step towards an effective British resistance to Nazism. To her the Balkans are not only picturesque, idealized, or primitive, but they embody a contemporary version of the Victorian age and a second chance for Victorian philanthropy.

The third chapter, *American Philanthropy: the Great War, Immigration, and the Progressive Era*, examines the interconnected class and gender aspects of philanthropy in the work of Edith Wharton and Anzia Yezierska, two very different women writers from the turn of the twentieth century. It places their work in the context of the American tradition of generosity and skepticism about the gift evidenced in the works of Horatio Alger, Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson and in tune with Derrida’s more recent deconstruction of the gift in *Given Time*. In this part of my dissertation I argue that Wharton and Yezierska portrayed philanthropy’s uneasy relationship with gender and class at a time when mass politics and immigrant writing were prominent in American culture and letters. Their works provide examples across the class divide how class and gender politics exploded the notion of
philanthropy during the Progressive Era, and how this contributed to both the upward mobility of the European immigrant and to women’s entrance into the professions at the turn of the twentieth century in the United States.

Wharton’s *House of Mirth*, her novella *Summer*, and the short stories written at the time of the Great War, as well as her personal fundraising and war relief efforts emphasize a distancing from the sentimental, Victorian, and familial implications of philanthropy alongside an affirmation of generosity and of women’s more professional lives outside of the intimate sphere. Written during Wharton’s strenuous wartime relief work, *Summer* provides a critique of altruism and women’s roles in a patriarchal marriage economy that contrasts markedly with the author’s philanthropic activities at the time. The main character of the novel, Charity Royal, symbolizes the position of women as an oppressed class marked by an original stain of degradation, guilt, duty, and shame and destined for the abusive protection and stifling security that family and domesticity can provide. The novel highlights the incestuous character of the family and throws suspicion on the charity by which women are raised and wedded. In spite of the gloomy ending, the novel succeeds to emancipate the excess of (women’s) sexual desire by explicitly discussing it as a gift. Despite Wharton’s salient critique of philanthropy and affirmation of authentic giving in the lives of upper-middle class women, her works stereotype the working class characters whose lives are represented either as simple and sexually fulfilling or as dangerously savage.

In contrast to Wharton’s elitist perspective, Anzia Yezierska critiques the ‘scientific’ philanthropy of the Progressive Era from the position of the underprivileged white immigrant, but affirms the importance of reciprocal philanthropy and the gift. This part of my dissertation argues that Yezierska’s works redefined free enterprise, American individualism, and
philanthropy in the light of Jewish communal values and giving. I discuss Yezierska’s stories and novels (How I Found America, Arrogant Beggar, Salome of the Tenements, and Red Ribbon on a White Horse) and her personal involvement with philanthropy in the context of Progressivism, the American settlement movement, and the writings of John Dewey, on one hand, and Jewish philanthropy, on the other. Yezierska’s portrayal of the progressive reformer (inspired partly from her relationship to John Dewey) highlights the contradictions that inhere in charity, paternalistic reform, and welfare. Even though her works did not escape the charge of primitivism and ethnic stereotyping, their radical critique of democracy and society in America makes them good examples of the literature of protest. Yezierska’s critique is nowhere as powerful as when she probes, condemns, redefines, wishes for philanthropy and for the poisonous, compelling, or elusive gifts of the Promised Land.

Chapter Four, Wyndham Lewis and the Gift of Egoism, addresses individualist anxieties about the destruction of personal freedom with the advent of Labor politics and the New Liberal welfare reforms. Here I will discuss Wyndham Lewis’ novels Tarr and Childermass, his journals Blast and The Enemy, short stories from The Wild Body, as well as Lewis’ political writings in The Art of Being Ruled in conjunction with Dora Marsden’s editorials in her radical journal The Egoist. I will argue that in his fiction and non-fiction, Lewis explores the potential of violence as a form of giving, and I will show how his works ultimately foreground the limitations of aggression and show a fascination with his indestructible antagonist, the philanthropic. Lewis embodies his deep-seated mistrust of philanthropy, contemporary liberalism, and welfare capitalism in “puppet”-like authoritarian characters such as the Bailiff (The Childermass) and the beggar Ludo ("The Death of the Ankou"), but his satire of the
contemporary society of Peter Pan marionettes suggests the unavoidability of welfare capitalism. Even though the author’s political affinities were always somewhat contradictory and at times quite inflammatory, he articulated the most devastating and dystopian analysis of philanthropy, benevolence, and the impoverishment of civil society and public debate at the turn of the twentieth century.

The fifth and final chapter of my dissertation, *Ernest Hemingway and the “New” Philanthropy*, examines Hemingway’s engagement with shell shock, gender, the Red Cross Ambulance Corps, World War I, and the New Deal. I discuss Hemingway’s war fiction (“The Way You’ll Never Be,” *In Our Time*, and *A Farewell to Arms*) side by side with Charles Bakewell’s *The Story of the American Red Cross in Italy* (1920) and Theda Skopol’s *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* in order to argue that Hemingway’s bleak vision of philanthropy in time of war serves to emphasize his criticism of the war and to destabilize gender roles in his writing.

After his move to Key West in 1928, Hemingway became sharply critical of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration’s efforts to respond to the collapse of the economy. During the thirties of the twentieth century, Hemingway’s journalistic writings (“Who Murdered the Vets,” published in the *New Masses*) and his novel *To Have and Have Not* protested the activities of New Deal bureaucrats in Washington. My chapter discusses the plight of American war veterans and their entitlement to welfare from the Civil War to the Bonus marchers in order to understand how Hemingway addressed class and New Deal issues in *To Have and Have Not*. 
Women-Writers, Altruism, and Philanthropy in Early Twentieth-Century Britain

At the end of nineteenth and the turn of the twentieth century, philanthropy came to be regarded as a measure of British civilization. Charity was not only the preserve of the rich and the enfranchised: it pervaded every social class, gave religious minorities a voice, and involved women in the public sphere. At a time not so long ago, philanthropy touched every life and every household, and was largely believed to hold a diverse and growing social fabric together. According to contemporary historian F. K. Prochaska, until the twentieth century philanthropy was universally regarded as a social panacea: “for every affliction, individual or social, physical or spiritual, the charitable pharmacopoeia has a prescription or at least a palliative” (qtd. in Thompson 392).

Historians like Frank Prochaska and Martha Vicinus have argued that the proliferation of women’s charities in the Victorian age provided women with valuable organizational skills and a venue into the professions. Upper-class Victorian women, who stayed at home, played an important role in organizing Victorian charitable organizations, and occupied center stage in Victorian philanthropy. Frank K. Prochaska notes the proliferation of women’s branches, or auxiliaries, and of women’s charitable associations in the beginning of the nineteenth century, “an explosion of charities managed exclusively by women” (Women 36). Women’s charitable associations had a certain degree of institutional sophistication: “Run by committees made up of secretaries, treasurers, and members who subscribed a certain sum, they conformed to rules
coming out of headquarters; their essential purpose was ‘to solicit and obtain patronage’” (Prochaska, Women 24).

Women who collected subscriptions -- sometimes called “ostentatious” and “amazonian” (Prochaska, Women 27) -- were a threat to the public/private split and aroused conflicting emotions. On the one hand, they were quite efficient in the service of a moral goal; on the other, they violated the notion of privacy and the woman’s place, and thus excited disapprobation. Evidence of such anxieties can be found in Dickens’s portrayal of the “telescopic philanthropy” of Mrs. Jellyby and of the formidable tyranny of Mrs. Pardiggle in Bleak House. Mrs. Jellyby, “a lady of very remarkable strength of character, who devotes herself entirely to the public” but neglects her family responsibilities, does not notice when one of her young children falls down a whole flight of stairs banging his head against every step, nor does she care about the state of decay in her home where the maid drinks, the boiler is not working, the holes in the stair rug have holes that catch visitors’ feet, dinner is served raw, and the curtain in the guest room is fastened with a fork (Dickens 26-30). The disorder in the home where almost every article is broken and even the fire does not want to burn, the disarray of everybody’s clothing and the dirtiness of the children suggest a violation of the social order that rests on the separateness of home and society. Naturally, such a violation of the private/public split undermines the authority of the husband: Mr. Jellyby is nothing but a “nonentity;” as one of the characters says, “he is, so to speak, merged—Merged—in the more shining qualities of his wife” (Dickens 26). A different threat to the private/public split presents the formidable figure of Mrs. Pardiggle, who takes her boys on charitable rounds and obliges them to spend their allowances on charitable causes. She has “such a mechanical way of taking possession of people” (Dickens 82). The destructiveness of her ‘mechanical,’ unsympathetic philanthropy is shown in the way she knocks down every
object in the houses she visits. Uncharitable herself, she is unable to inspire empathy and
gentleness in the hearts of her five boys, who are “ferocious with discontent” and look as if they
belonged to “the most baleful members of [the Tockahoopo Indians]” (Dickens 77).

The early twentieth century drastically altered the seemingly effective, prosperous, and
stable Victorian charitable arrangements. The prestige of charity and the influence of women
who ran charitable activities began to wane. Philanthropy was presented as feminized,
sentimental, and inefficient. While Dickens depicts Mrs. Jellyby as rather masculine and
threatening, her heirs had to confront the opposite charge of being too weak and ineffectual to
produce social change. As early as in 1885, Jane Clapperton wrote in her book on *Scientific
Meliorism and the Evolution of Happiness* that the word “philanthropist” had come to signify “an
individual stronger in the heart than in the head” (10). This came to be a predominant twentieth-
century critique of the multitudinous and unorganized local Victorian charities. Philanthropic
motives and practices alike were stamped with failure and with insensitivity to the feelings of the
poor and how they wanted to live their lives (Clapperton 63).

**Modernist Engagements with Philanthropy**

Women’s philanthropy and women’s writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth century
have been extensively addressed by historians and literary scholars alike. Researchers have
studied Sarah Scott, Frances Burney, Hannah More, Charlotte Richardson, Elizabeth Gaskell,
Sarah Orne Jewett, Dorothy Wordsworth, and George Eliot among others, and their relationship
To charity, sympathetic identification, and women’s emancipation.⁹ To my knowledge, nothing has been published on women writers and philanthropy in the modernist period. I intend to further the discussion in this direction.

In the early twentieth century, iconoclastic modernist texts such as Lytton Strachey’s famous book *Eminent Victorians: Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Dr. Arnold, General Gordon*, satirized Victorian respectability and public-mindedness of charitable reformers such as Florence Nightingale. But while Dickens and his contemporaries were critical of charity that did not begin at home, and wary of women’s considerable involvement in the public sphere, Strachey scrutinized philanthropic impulses and affirmed egoism as well as altruism as the major driving forces behind charitable giving.

*Eminent Victorians* exposes the private passions and foibles behind iconic public figures such as Miss Nightingale. According to historian Jose Harris, late Victorian character was “not essentially a religious concept,” but it “rejected the ethic of egoism in favour of altruism; and—in marked contrast to early Victorian notions of virtue—it suggested that virtue was an essentially public characteristic” (Harris 249). In contrast, Strachey’s Florence Nightingale is endowed with a great deal of self-interested energy; she is not a meek lamb or the “lady with the

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lamp” but a fierce tigress and an eagle, a torero and a hunter, vanquishing with ease the “Bison” bureaucrat and overworking her assistants beyond the limit of endurance. When a tyrannical Florence Nightingale takes control over Sidney Herbert, a gentleman “charitable and benevolent to a remarkable degree,” devoted completely to public service, and when “swept … forward at her own fierce pace and with her own relentless stride” he ends his life, in Strachey’s violent metaphor, with “her claws in the quivering haunches” (148-9), we witness the (modernist) ending of one of the glorious chapters of British philanthropy.

Strachey rejects the public image of Florence Nightingale as “the delicate maiden of high degree who threw aside the pleasures of ease to succor the afflicted, the Lady with the lamp, gliding through the horrors of the hospital at Scutari, and consecrating with the radiance of her goodness the dying soldier’s couch” in favor of a less popular and more self-interested ethos; not Miss Nightingale’s philanthropy but her dominant will grant her a place in his gallery of Eminent Victorians. Strachey compares Miss Nightingale’s ambition to demonic possession, “the stress of an impetus which finds no place in the popular imagination” but argues that “demons, whatever else they may be, are full of interest. And so it happens that in the real Miss Nightingale there was more that was interesting than the legendary one; there was also less that was agreeable” (115).

Despite the irony, Strachey’s interest in Florence Nightingale and other famous Victorian benefactors and public figures testifies to a degree of admiration for his philanthropic predecessors. In the pent-up egotism of Miss Nightingale, for whom “a true comprehension of the scientific method was alien,” he sees the main driving force behind the great achievement of her life, “the immense impetus which she gave to the scientific treatment of sickness” (168). Thus Strachey and other modernist writers who celebrated the self-interested pursuit of self-
realization also affirmed a sort of modernist compromise between utility and impulsiveness, individualism and public mindedness, philanthropy and self-interest, and egoism and altruism.

In this chapter, I am going to address the ways in which women writers from the turn of the twentieth century responded to changes in the public sphere that quickly made traditional philanthropy and traditional women’s roles in the public realm obsolete. As the Charity Organization Society pioneered systematic case studies and introduced scientific methods in philanthropy, and as numerous Acts of Parliament in the first two decades of the twentieth century inaugurated the British welfare state, women writers from both within and outside the modernist context advocated for women’s entrance into the professions and supported the freeing of women’s talents and “pent-up egotism” (Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* 109) over the Victorian morality of duty and self-denial.

Despite the apparent decline in women’s charitable organizations at the turn of the twentieth century, the figure of the powerful woman-philanthropist keeps resurfing in the texts of this chapter—Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, A Room of One’s Own*, and *Three Guineas* and Vita Sackville-West’s novel *All Passion Spent*. These writers saw no contradiction between their affirmation of private egotism and the public good; in this way, they furthered the philanthropic debate by proposing a sort of compromise between self-interest and public duty. Intensely conscious of the politics of the emerging welfare state in Britain and the tensions that this shift created, both Woolf and Sackville-West saw an opportunity for women in the mass politics of the day. The pressures of the street for better material conditions of life that transformed philanthropy, prepared the way for the British welfare state, and led to the expansion of the public sphere in the early twentieth century also lent force to the argument that women have the right to join the professions.
All Passion Spent and Upper-Class Philanthropy

In its affirmation of women’s self-interested pursuits, Vita Sackville-West’s novel All Passion Spent uses the rhetoric of redistribution, social justice, and the “New Philanthropy” of the day in order to reclaim women’s right to a career, artistic expression, and relationships outside of marriage. Lady Slane, the protagonist, is an artist “slain” in her youth by a glamorous marriage to the future Lord Holland, a successful Prime Minister of England and a Viceroy. While Henry loves Deborah and Deborah loves Henry, their relationship is like a “straight black line drawn right through her life” (Sackville-West 169). Deborah Holland is “defrauded of the one thing that matters,” a career as a painter (Sackville-West 220). Like Richard Dalloway in Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway, Lord Henry is a career diplomat; like Mrs. Dalloway, Lady Slane has acted all her life as the political hostess.

Lord Henry’s death presents an Lady Slane with the opportunity to break away from the philanthropic activities that have taken up her time and to allow her to indulge her desires. A married woman not by her choice, Deborah Holland is also a philanthropist against her inclinations. As a Vicereine and a representative of the British Crown, the young Deborah finds it hard to care about the ophthalmia among the Indians. Instead, she prefers to observe the “flock of butterflies, white and yellow, which danced on either side and overhead and all around [their carriage]” through the Persian desert (Sackville-West 137). While her children believe the elderly Lady Slane to be happily engaged with opening hospital wards (Sackville-West 36), and with her “committees, the Battersea Club for Poor Women, the Foundlings’ Ward, the Unfortunate Sisters’ Organization” (Sackville-West 60), they know nothing whatever about Lady Slane’s desire to indulge herself and withdraw from both family and public life.
Released from the confines of marriage, Lady Slane recaptures her lost youthful egotism in her old age. Lord Slane’s death gives her the opportunity to live on her own in a house in Hampstead, away from the public gaze: “I have considered the eyes of the world for so long that I think it is time I had a little holiday from them. If one is not to please oneself in old age, when is one to please oneself? There is so little time left,” she tells her daughter Carrie (Sackville-West 67). Her plan is to “become completely self-indulgent,” to “wallow in old age,” to surround herself with old people, and to see none of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, “no strenuous young people, who are not content with doing a thing, but must needs know why they do it” (Sackville-West 68). The protagonist of All Passion Spent withdraws in a micro-universe of egotistical privacy.

As Lady Slane moves to Hampstead accompanied only by her faithful servant Genoux, she is once again surrounded with capable and sentimental men who indulge her every whim. Her new situation seems a nostalgic reenactment of a benign patriarchy: the landlord Mr. Bucktrout, the carpenter Mr. Gosheron, and the millionaire Mr. FitzGeorge conspire to protect her from worry and want “as though she were something precious, and fragile, and unselfish, needing a protective insistence on the rights she would never claim for herself” (Sackville-West 113). Mr. Bucktrout, a former hunter, businessman, and a “regular Juggernaut” (Sackville-West 123) allows Lady Slane to rent his house in Hampstead at a fraction of the real cost although he knows she may vacate the premises unexpectedly. Mr. Bucktrout and the carpenter Mr. Gosheron conspire to give Lady Slane the best furniture and repairs at the lowest possible cost. Another of Sackville-West’s eccentrics, Mr. FitzGeorge, a misanthropic millionaire without a family, gathers enough courage in his old age to reveal his romantic feelings of many years for Lady Slane and leaves her his priceless collection in his will. Philanthropy shifts from the
reluctant Vicereine Lady Slane to the self-made figures of the businessman Bucktrout, the artisan Gosheron, and the eccentric millionaire Mr. FitzGeorge. This confirms philanthropy once again not only as a male but as a private venture, removed from the mass politics of the politicians and the “trades-union men” (Sackville-West 115) whom Mr. Gosheron despises. The (philanthropic) traditions that Lady Slane and her friends venerate “[go] back a hundred years or more” (Sackville-West 111).

However old-fashioned Lady Slane’s friends are, their philanthropy is only possible as a result of their egotistical and worldly pursuits, and is different from the self-denying ethics of Victorian duty. Mr. FitzGeorge, for example, is “the complete egoist;” he has “never gone out of [his] way for man, woman, or child” (Sackville-West 216). He is so self-interested that he does not allow himself romantic attachments: “so wary an egoist (unlike the poor Keats), just too wise to let himself float away on a hopeless love for the young Vicereine, just unwise enough to remain faithful for fifty years” (Sackville-West 223). A connoisseur of art and collectibles, he intends to give his collection to museums and charities after his death. But for Mr. FitzGeorge’s private foibles and hobbies, this gift would not have been possible, and yet, in some sense, he is a philanthropist and a benefactor:

“You would expect a gentleman of his sort to be a J.P., or something, wouldn’t you, sir? To have some public work, I mean—hospital committees, or something.”
“I don’t think Mr. FitzGeorge was very publicly minded,” said Mr. Foljambe in such a tone that Kay could not decide whether he was being sympathetic or censorious. “And yet,” he added, “I oughtn’t to say that about a man who can leave such a priceless collection to the nation.” (Sackville-West 244)

Mr. FitzGeorge’s “New Philanthropy” is the work of a private individual invested exclusively in his private interests, yet accepting in the long run of the larger claim of the
community to his private wealth. Although Mr. FitzGeorge does not explicitly endorse the “New Liberal” ideology of the “citizenship of entitlement,” he does not contradict its demands either. At the end of the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth century the “New Liberals” argued that the possession of political rights guaranteed by the state lead naturally to social rights; they created a new notions of citizenship, one “provided as an entitlement by an active state rater than aspired to by active citizens outside the state” (Finlayson 162). T. H. Greene, in his *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* delivered in 1879-80, had already started to alter Mill’s views of the “negative freedom” of the individual—“freedom from”—to allow the state more authority in creating the conditions for greater “positive freedom.” D. G. Ritchie took the view of “positive freedom” further in his *Principles of State Intervention* published in 1891, where he laid an emphasis on the individual in the community. By the time *All Passion Spent* was published in 1931, the “New Philanthropy” of entitlement had already paved the road to the British welfare state. In *All Passions Spent* the “citizenship of contribution” of private philanthropy reaches a compromise with the “New Liberal” ideal of a “citizenship of entitlement.” Lady Slane’s donation of Mr. FitzGeorge’s priceless collection and great wealth to the nation affirms somewhat unexpectedly private egotism as well as the citizenship of entitlement of the new British welfare state from a specific class viewpoint, namely that of a nostalgic British aristocracy.

Lady Slane’s withdrawal into private life in her old age symbolizes the sentiments of an entire class with respect to public welfare. When she suddenly finds herself the beneficiary of Mr. FitzGeorge’s vast estate, the former Vicereine decides to affirm this withdrawal by giving the priceless collection to the nation. She does so not because she cares about the world—that would be hypocritical as it is hypocritical in William, Herbert and Carrie—but because she does
not need it. It also seems to her the only just course of action: “[i]t had seemed wrong to her that private people should own such possessions, such exaggerated wealth; therefore she had hastened to dispose of both, the treasures to the public and the money to the suffering poor” (Sackville-West 276). She also feels this newly acquired wealth to be a burdensome responsibility, and she enjoys baffling and annoying her greedy progeny: “Let me be rid of it all. Only let me be rid of it! Besides, think how much I shall annoy my children!” (Sackville-West 259). Thus her philanthropic gesture is neither completely altruistic nor entirely self-effacing but essentially a trade-off, and a consciously self-interested choice. By affirming the redistribution of resources between the wealthy and the indigent, the individual connoisseur and the nation, the novel also argues that this redistribution is advantageous to the giver, too.

Moreover, the ending of All Passion Spent forges a compromise between the egoism of the woman artist and the welfare state. By giving up Mr. FitzGeorge’s wealth Lady Slane inadvertently enables her great-granddaughter (and her spiritual heir) to have an artistic career. In giving up Mr. FitzGeorge’s millions to the nation, she unknowingly releases her great-granddaughter Deborah (Lady Slane’s spiritual heir) from her engagement so she can pursue a career as a musician. In the final scene of the novel, when the young Deborah comes to thank Lady Slane “for reducing her value in the worldly market,” the older woman “imagin[es] that she herself was the speaker” (Sackville-West 281). The girl is an “echo” of Lady Slane’s dreams of escape and disguise and of embarking upon a career instead of marriage; Lady Slane experiences her presence as “strange” and “lovely” and imagines an “unexpected confusion of her own life with that of her great-granddaughter” (Sackville-West 282). Shortly before her death, “[i]n the deepening twilight of her life,” Lady Slane is able to recapture youth, egotism, herself in “this self, this other self, this projection of herself” (Sackville-West 283). This singular reincarnation
is recaptured typographically on the page in the use of “you” and “I” interchangeably in the sentence, “I daresay you would find that your grandfather had understood you (me) better than you (I) think” (Sackville-West 287). Lady Slane’s physical death coincides with her symbolic rebirth as a young self-interested artist, a rebirth that depends on an act of exchanging wealth for freedom, so that “the small and rare fraternity to which Deborah belonged, indifferent to guided lures, should be free to go obscurely but ardently about its business” (Sackville-West 288). Thus Sackville-West’s novel nostalgically looks at the idyllic society of self-made and self-interested men and women and also celebrates the possibilities that the new professional philanthropy and the rising welfare state afforded women artists at the turn of the twentieth century.

“Charity Up-to-Date”: British Philanthropy Becomes Professional

The history of British philanthropy from the end of the nineteenth to the first two decades of the twentieth century is marked by growing attentiveness to poverty and its causes, continuous professionalization of charity work, new scientific methods, and a larger participation of the state in redistributing material resources. In the popular consciousness of the English, philanthropy (as opposed to government intervention) was still the force for social change up to at least 1914 and even into the 1920s and 1930s. The British maintained their long-standing tradition “of political skepticism and social self-sufficiency, a continuing belief that, for better or worse, there were limits to what governments could do to alter the state of the world” (qtd. in Thompson 84). While they were very proud of their state, they traditionally expected very little of it up to at least 1914. Even into the 1920s and 1930s, most continued to see society as their voluntary association, their family, trade union, local community, place of work, public house, church. An
early Mass-Observation survey found that membership of a football pools syndicate was the most rapidly growing form of communal life for men in northern towns (qtd. in Thompson 84).

However, the practices of philanthropy at the turn of the century were changing, so that there was less and less opportunity for women and men of little training to participate in them. The Charity Organization Society, founded in 1869, established itself during the 1870s and 1880s as the leading authority in matters of charity and the Poor Law. It set itself the ambitious task to coordinate the efforts of the numerous charities in Britain, and to apply to them the scientific method. Although it was not successful in achieving its primary goal, C.O.S. pioneered systematic social casework, and introduced trained professionalism and scientific investigation in charitable and social work (McBriar 54-55).

The Charity Organization Society established “a number of autonomous district committees (some 35 were in operation by 1873) which were charged with the responsibility of adjudicating on the relative merits of requests for charitable assistance.” In 1902, the “COS’ commitment to systematic charitable provision” and progressive scientific methods led them to conduct “a pioneering survey work on poverty” by the famous philanthropists Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree. The results of these painstaking surveys discovered that 35% of east Londoners and 30% of the population of the capital as well as 28% of the population of York were “in a state of poverty” and that “philanthropic endeavour could not provide anything approaching a comprehensive solution to the problem of late 19th century poverty” (Page and Silburn 28-9).

In order to rid Britain of poverty and to take effective measures against its causes, philanthropy needed to distance itself from sentimentality and become professional. An article published by Samuel Barnett in *The Contemporary Review* in 1911 summed up these sentiments
for professionalization by comparing philanthropists to doctors, businessmen and politicians. Like doctors, philanthropists “must get the facts for a right diagnosis, and bring to the cure all the resources of civilization”:  

[Philanthropists] must be students of personality and of the State. They must consider the individual who is in need or the charitable body which makes an appeal, as carefully as a physician considers his case; they must get the facts for a right diagnosis, and bring to the cure all the resources of civilization … Charity up-do-date, whether it be from person to person or through some society or fund, must be such as is approved by the same close thinking as business men give to their business, or politicians to their policy. (Barnett 225)  

In addition to a growing interest in poverty, the pressure politics of the street contributed to the increasing involvement of the central government with economic issues. A manifesto of working class women published in the November 1, 1905, issue of the London Times demanded from the government “to vote money to put honest men into work.” The protestors threatened to revolutionize England: “The women of Paris saved France. We appeal to the women of London to save England. Assemble on the embankment at 12 o’clock (mid-day)” (“The Deputation to Mr. Balfour”). As a result of such pressures, the liberal administrations of Campbell-Bannerman (1906-8) and Asquith (1908-15) approved such measures as the Education (Provision of Meals) Acts (1906 and 1914), Education (Administrative Provisions) Act (1907), Notification of Births Acts (1907 and 1915), Probation Act (1907), Children Act (1908), Old Age Pensions Act (1908), Housing and Town Planning Act (1909), National Insurance Act (1911), and the Trade Board Act (1909). At the turn of the century these changes radically altered philanthropy and laid the foundations for the British welfare state.
**Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, and the New Philanthropy**

Even more than Sackville-West, modernist novelist Virginia Woolf revisits the fascinating figure of the nineteenth-century woman philanthropist, symbol of women’s independence and self-determination. Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. Dalloway, Lily Briscoe and Elizabeth Dalloway (characters in Virginia Woolf’s modernist novels *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway*), negotiate women writers’ self-interest, relationship with altruism, and women’s growing opportunity to join the professions.

Martha Vicinus and Frank Prochaska credit nineteenth-century philanthropy with providing women with a convenient venue into the public world and the professions. Philanthropy helped women prove their capacity for holding a public office and in 1893, it was estimated that some 500,000 women worked “continuously and semi-professionally” in charities, 200,000 were “paid officials,” 20,000 practiced as trained nurses, and at least 200,000 more worked part-time for charity (Prochaska, *Women* 224). The skills that women acquired in these associations were later applied to the suffrage movement and in acquiring positions in local government (Prochaska, *Women* 226). The more women entered the professions, the more “emotionalism, religiosity, and close domestic ties of traditional women had to be replaced with rationality, scientific knowledge, and corporate loyalties” (Vicinus 41). On the other hand, the success of women’s professions depended also on the prosperity of women’s colleges, on women’s “canvassing for money, convincing parents and young women, and even testifying before government committees” (Vicinus 41). We can observe this move away from sentimental altruism and feminine self-sacrifice to professionalism and independence in Vita Sackville-
West’s novel *All Passion Spent*, Virginia Woolf’s novels *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, and Woolf’s *Three Guineas*.

*Between Old Philanthropy and the New: Mrs. Dalloway*

Almost all of the characters in Virginia Woolf’s first modernist novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, are involved in some form of philanthropic activity. Clarissa’s husband Richard Dalloway, a Conservative MP, sits on numerous parliamentary committees designed to redress social ills; every walk in London reminds him of the London traffic, the malpractices of the police, costermongers in the streets, prostitutes, and the poor who all need his intervention. Lady Bexborough and Lady Millicent Bruton, Miss Kilman, Peter Walsh, Doctor and Lady Bradshaw, Hugh Whitbread and others are concerned with a great number of philanthropic projects: emigration to Canada, immigration from the third world, child welfare, the after care of the epileptic, prostitution, poverty, public morality, protection of birds in Norfolk, female vagrancy, the malpractices of the police, charitable bazaars, a Bill concerning shell-shocked soldiers from the War, and undernourished children in military training. Richard and Hugh go to help Lady Bruton write a letter to further the cause of emigration to Canada; and so on. This variety of projects points to Woolf’s active engagement with questions of public policy in her novel at a time when the welfare state was under way in Britain.

Like Sackville-West’s *All Passion Spent*, Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* emphasizes and affirms egotism as part of the philanthropic endeavor of the British ruling class. Egotism is a quality that appeals to Clarissa with her instinct for knowing people instantly. She reflects about her close friend of many years Sally that Sally “had the simplest egotism, the most open desire to be
brought first always, and Clarissa loved her for being still like that” (172). Philanthropists who claim untempered self-denial and brandish their moral superiority like Miss Kilman and Sir William Bradshaw are represented as monstrous and tyrannical, “without kindness or grace” (125). Peter Walsh, a former Socialist at Oxford, a rejected suitor still in love with Clarissa, is also faulted for his uncompromising criticisms of Clarissa’s private foibles. Lady Millicent Bruton, on the other hand, though “more interested in politics than people” (105), is delightfully humorous in her obsession with philanthropy.

Lady Bruton’s project about emigrating young people into Canada is an example of many ill-conceived but enthusiastically promoted projects on the part of meddling amateurs. It is ironically presented in the novel as the product of her frustrated and pent up egotism. Lady Bruton is a “strong martial woman, well nourished, well descended, of direct impulses, downright feelings, and little introspective power” (109); it would have suited her better to have been a man and taken a place among the military commanders that descended once from her family. As things are, Lady Bruton is not involved in philanthropy professionally, and her power is limited to influencing public opinion through the intervention of Hugh Whitbread and Richard Dalloway. These are the characters that Lady Bruton invites to lunch, in order to ask them the favor of writing a letter promoting emigration on her behalf.

The authentic experience captured here is not so much that philanthropy empowers lady Bruton, but that it is an only partial palliative for her lack of more clout in public life. Philanthropy, “the liberator of pent up egotism” (109)\(^\text{10}\), becomes in Woolf’s description a

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\(^{10}\) For a more theoretical perspective on giving as liberating for women, see Kathryn Simpson’s “The Paradox of the Gift: Gift-Giving as a Disruptive Force in ‘Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street’.” Simpson claims, “My focus on the gift economy aims, in part, to offer another angle from which to consider Woolf’s ambivalent relationship to and representation of market economies...As I will argue, the operation of a gift economy acts as a
largely physiological activity: it rises within Lady Bruton now her youth is past; it must be “eject[ed] upon some object—it may be Emigration, it may be Emancipation;” around it “the essence of her soul is daily secreted” while this venture, instead of saving the nation, becomes “largely lady Bruton,” the pearl that this remarkable lady “secretes” in her heart (109). While Woolf criticizes Lady Bruton’s charity, she also affirms it as a venue for energetic and talented but ill-prepared women into public life.

While *Mrs. Dalloway* dwells favorably on the charity of upper-class men and women such as Lady Bexborough and Richard Dalloway, M.P., and even Lady Bruton, it marginalizes shabby philanthropists such as Miss Kilman. Unlike Lady Slane in *All Passion Spent*, Lady Bexborough and Lady Bruton in *Mrs. Dalloway* not only do not withdraw into private life but become an inspiration for the society hostess Clarissa. The Dalloways admire “these great swells, these Duchesses, these hoary old Countesses” (76) and “the public-spirited, British Empire, tariff-reform, governing-class spirit” that they represent (76). Clarissa Dalloway greatly admires Lady Bexborough’s “perfectly right and stoical bearing” when Lady Bexborough opens a bazaar with the telegram announcing her favorite son’s death in the war in her hand. Mrs. Dalloway wishes she were more like Lady Bexborough: “She would have been, in the first place, dark like Lady Bexborough, with a skin of crumpled leather and beautiful eyes. She would have been, like Lady Bexborough, slow and stately, rather large; interested in politics like a man; with a country house; very dignified, very sincere” (*Mrs. Dalloway* 10). In a revealing
passage at the end of the novel Clarissa identifies Lady Bexborough with success: “She had wanted success. Lady Bexborough and the rest of it” (185).

By contrast, Doris Kilman, Mrs. Dalloway daughter’s history tutor, is a failure: she is “clumsy, hot,” and “dressed in a mackintosh coat” (12); she does not know how to shop; she loses her job and suffers discrimination as a German in Britain during the war; she is envious of Mrs. Dalloway. Miss Kilman tears down the disguises of Mrs. Dalloway’s privileged existence: “Year after year she wore that coat; she perspired; she was never in the room five minutes without making you feel her superiority, your inferiority; how poor she was; how rich you were; how she lived in a slum without a cushion or a bed or a rug or whatever it might be, all her soul rusted with that grievance sticking in it, her dismissal from school during the War—poor embittered unfortunate creature!” (Mrs. Dalloway 12). With her history degree and her self-denial (she spares money from her meager income for causes she believes in), Miss Kilman challenges the philanthropy of establishment ladies who “did nothing, believed nothing” (125). Even next to the hypocrisy and egotism of other characters, such as Hugh Whitbread and Lady Bruton, no one arouses Clarissa’s blinding anger like Miss Kilman does. Her figure stands for the anxieties that surrounded the birth of redistributive social policies in Britain (the “New Philanthropy”) and the rise to power of the Labour party, the same formidable party that will put Richard out of parliamentary work (Mrs. Dalloway 111).

Clarissa herself remembers a time when she and Sally Seton and Peter Walsh read William Morris and planned for a better world. It was her adventurous and romantic friend Sally who gave her a copy of Morris, wrapped in brown paper. They sat “hour after hour, talking in her bedroom at the top of the house, talking about life, how they were to reform the world. They meant to found a society to abolish private property, and actually had a letter written, though not
sent out” (*Mrs. Dalloway* 33). Eventually, the demands of their class and sex led them elsewhere: Sally became Lady Rossetter and lived in a large house near Manchester; Clarissa married Richard, whom Peter always considered a little dull, and settled into the role of the society hostess. The road to politics that Richard takes, the way into colonial administration, are closed to her because of her gender; Peter Walsh expresses typical gender expectations when he says, “the future of civilization lies … in the hands of young *men* like that [my italics]; of young men as he was, thirty years ago; with their love of abstract principles; getting books sent out to them all the way from London to a peak in the Himalayas; reading science, reading philosophy” (*Mrs. Dalloway* 50).

Clarissa’s affirmation of egoism transpires in her criticism of (masculine) philanthropy; despite her admiration for her husband Richard’s public spirit and parliamentary committee work, she feels indifferent to the public causes to which Richard devotes so much of his time: “She cared much more for her roses than for the Armenians. Hunted out of existence, maimed, frozen, the victims of cruelty and injustice … no, she could feel nothing for the Albanians, or was it the Armenians? But she loved her roses” (*Mrs. Dalloway* 120).11 Clarissa is convinced that “the veriest frumps, the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall) … can’t be dealt with … by Acts of Parliament” (*Mrs. Dalloway* 4). Parliamentary reform is still a masculine domain against which society ladies like Mrs. Dalloway affirm the importance of feminine self-interest.

11 This reference probably addresses the Armenian massacre of 1914-1918. Encyclopaedia Britannica includes the following note about the Armenian massacre: “*Armenians* from the Caucasus region of the Russian Empire formed volunteer battalions to help the Russian army against the Turks. Early in 1915 these battalions recruited Turkish *Armenians* from behind the Turkish lines. In response, the Turkish government ordered the deportation of about 1,750,000 *Armenians* to Syria and Mesopotamia. In the course of this forced exodus, about 600,000 *Armenians* died of starvation or were killed by Turkish soldiers and police while en route in the desert” (“*Armenian massacres.* *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* 2007).
In *Mrs. Dalloway*, former pillars of Victorian philanthropy such as love and religion are rejected in favor of privacy, individualism, and even eccentricity: “Love and religion,” exclaims Clarissa, “how detestable, how detestable they are!” (126). The principles of Proportion and Conversion Dr. Bradshaw so smugly recommends to his patients are for Clarissa simply a modern disguise for patriarchal tyranny; however, so are parliamentary reforms and trade union politics that come “penitentially disguised as brotherly love through factories and parliaments; [offer] help, but [desire] power; [smite] out of [their] way roughly the dissentient, or dissatisfied” and bear “some venerable name; love, duty, self-sacrifice” (100). Clarissa’s class position is evident in her mistrust to the Labor politics and mass politics that Habermas blames for the demise of the bourgeois public sphere at the beginning of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, this mistrust in modern benevolence is not a rejection of altruism or philanthropy. Despite Clarissa’s mistrust of masculine philanthropy, she is eventually unable to break away completely from her feminine altruistic role. For Clarissa, as for Victorian women, altruism and philanthropy are still ways of disciplining the giver; despite Mrs. Dalloway’s agnosticism, good works provide her with a secular religion, “this atheist’s religion of doing good for the sake of goodness” (*Mrs. Dalloway* 78). Insecure about her own life, Clarissa focuses on her parties as her only gift, “an offering for the sake of offering” (*Mrs. Dalloway* 122). There she can do good unobtrusively and out of natural instinct, “take some raw youth, twist him, turn him, wake him up, set him going” (*Mrs. Dalloway* 77). Her private altruism as a society lady is motivated by not so much happiness as by a sense of doom:

Oddly enough, she was one of the most thorough-going skeptics he had ever met and possibly …. possibly she said to herself, As we are a doomed race, chained to a sinking ship (her favourite reading as a girl was Huxley and Tyndall, and they were fond of nautical metaphors), as the whole thing is a bad joke, let us, at any
rate, do our part; mitigate the sufferings of our fellow prisoners (Huxley again); decorate the dungeon with flowers and air-cushions; be as decent as we possibly can. Those ruffians, the Gods, shan’t have it all their own way—her notion being that the Gods, who never lost a chance of hurting, thwarting, and spoiling human lives were seriously put out if, all the same, you behaved like a lady. (*Mrs. Dalloway* 77)

In Clarissa’s stoicism *Mrs. Dalloway* ambiguously celebrates *noblesse oblige* while rejecting the confines of women’s philanthropic roles and claiming women’s place in the wider sphere of the professions. It remains for Clarissa’s daughter, the free-spirited Elizabeth Dalloway, to confront the radical world of mass politics (Elizabeth temporarily befriends the “radical” Mrs. Kilman) and to join the professions (she dreams of becoming a veterinarian). The novel celebrates Elizabeth’s exuberance; as Elizabeth enters Clarissa’s drawing room Peter Walsh hears in the sounds of Big Ben an echo of Elizabeth’s youthful egotism: “The sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour stuck out between them with extraordinary vigour, as if a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate, were swinging dumb-bells this way and that” (48).

*The Gift of Painting: To the Lighthouse*

Philanthropy plays a significant role in the lives of the Ramsays in Woolf’s novel *To the Lighthouse*. At dinner, the philosopher Mr. Ramsay and his houseguests discuss such political and public issues like the Labour government, unemployment and poverty, and the wages of the fishermen. With a Victorian sense of public duty, Mr. Ramsay regrets the (perhaps inevitable) existence of a slave class: “Perhaps the greatest good requires the existence of a slave class. The liftman in the Tube is an eternal necessity. The thought was distasteful to him” (43). Mrs. Ramsay admires her husband’s public commitment: “[Mr. Ramsay] went to the heart of things. He cared about fishermen and their wages. He could not sleep for thinking of them. It was
altogether different when he spoke; one did not feel then, pray heaven you don’t see how little I care, because one did care” (95). Even the awkward philosophy student Charles Tansley shares dreams about “settlements, and teaching, and working men, and helping his own class, and lectures” (Lighthouse 12).

In addition to her love and devotion to her family and family friends, Mrs. Ramsay does a little district visiting, thereby allowing the reader a glimpse in the changing philanthropic scene of the early twentieth century. In the opening scene of the novel, she is knitting a stocking for the Lighthouse keeper’s boy, “who was threatened with tubercular hip” (5); soon thereafter she visits a sick woman in the town. Like a budding C.O.S. worker, she brings “a note-book and a pencil with which she [writes] down in columns carefully ruled for the purpose wages and spendings, employment and unemployment, in the hope that thus she would cease to be a private woman whose charity was half a sop for her own indignation, half a relief to her own curiosity, and become what with her untrained mind she greatly admired, an investigator, elucidating the social problem” (9). Unlike Mrs. Ramsay, her daughter Nancy wonders “What does one send to the Lighthouse?” She has lost interest in the philanthropic duties that her mother carried out and has no hope of mastering the role of the charitable lady (146). Lily Briscoe, too, prefers her painting. Lily Briscoe and the poet Mr. Carmichael feel disconcerted by Mrs. Ramsay’s “instinct to go, an instinct like the swallows for the south, the artichokes for the sun, turning her infallibly to her human race, making her nest in its heart” (Lighthouse 196).

Whereas the “narrow” and particular concerns of Mrs. Dalloway as a philanthropist are mocked by her family, Mr. Ramsay’s passion for politics is admired by his wife and respected by his friends. Mrs. Ramsay fears that her ignorance of and indifference to wages and unemployment might be exposed at dinner: “Pray heaven that the inside of my mind may not be
exposed,” for each thought, “The others are feeling this. They are outraged and indignant with the government about the fishermen. Whereas, I feel nothing at all” (94). Yet Mrs. Dalloway wishes she could take time from raising her children in order to build a modern hospital and a dairy: “to take people by the scruff of their necks and make them see. No hospital on the whole island. It was a disgrace. Milk delivered to your door in London positively brown with dirt. It should be made illegal. A model dairy and a hospital up here—those two things she would have liked to do, herself’ (Lighthouse 58). Her children jest with her and laugh at her earnest interest in these issues, but it was women like Mrs. Ramsay who made regulation of consumer products in the early twentieth century reality.12

Mrs. Ramsay’s compassion is subordinated to gender expectations and the demands of the family; it affords her a degree of influence and power just as it defrauds her of privacy and a public life. Her giving is ambiguous, formidable, and moving. At home, Mrs. Ramsay welcomes, comforts, and supports her family and friends, and uses her influence to arrange the marriage of Paul and Minta Rayley. Lily thinks that “[t]here was something frightening about her. She was irresistible. Always she got her own way in the end” (101). At the same time, Mrs. Ramsay feels that “she [is] nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions” (32). Mrs. Ramsay’s “capacity to surround and protect” and her love and support for her husband leave her “lavished and spent” (38), “in exquisite abandonment to exhaustion” (38). In her son

12 “[The National Consumer League] in the United States began under the direction of Josephine Shaw Lowell in 1890. Later, under Kelley’s leadership, as General Secretary from its founding in 1898 till her death in 1932, the National Consumer’s League and its local affiliates grew dramatically in numbers and strength. By 1908 they had become the single most important political force behind the passage and enforcement of labor legislation for women and children at both the state and Federal levels” (Sklar, Kathryn Kish. The Autobiography of Florence Kelley. Introduction, 11).
James’s eyes she is a thousand times lovelier but also more vulnerable than his father; she is “a column of spray” (37), “a rosy-flowered fruit tree laid with leaves and dancing boughs into which the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of his father, the egotistical man, plunged and smote, demanding sympathy” (Lighthouse 38). It is this married woman’s fate that the aspiring artist Lily Briscoe attempts to avoid, and at the same time, Mrs. Ramsay’s beauty and compassion haunt her painting and are essential to Lily’s development as an artist.

Lily’s development into a professional painter is marked by her desire to emancipate herself from the woman’s role of emotionally supporting men like Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley. After Mrs. Ramsay’s death, she revisits the summer house of the Ramsay family and finds Mr. Ramsay’s demands for sympathy and attention destructive of her concentration as an artist: “he permeated, he prevailed, he imposed himself. He changed everything. She could not see the colour; she could not see the lines [of the painting]” (149). Fearful of Mr. Ramsay’s need, and unable to express her compassion when it really comes (Lighthouse 170), Lily grapples with the memory of the late Mrs. Ramsay: “Mrs. Ramsay had given. Giving, giving, giving, she had died—and had left all this. Really, she was angry with Mrs. Ramsay” (Lighthouse 149). Lily thinks that “it was all Mrs. Ramsay’s fault” (150). Lily needs to vanquish the spirit of her symbolic mother, the womanly, maternal Mrs. Ramsay, in order to finish her painting.

Lily’s rejection of Mrs. Ramsay’s philanthropic role is not, however, a rejection of giving and gratitude. In a moment of revelation, Lily sees Mrs. Ramsay as an artist after her own fashion: she creates by “making of the moment something permanent” (as in another sphere Lily tried to make the moment permanent). Lily realizes that she owes her inspiration to the Ramsay family and to Mrs. Ramsay: “She owed it all to her” (161). Her painting beckons her with the anguish that Mr. Ramsay’s demands and Mrs. Ramsay’s memory evoked: “Why always be
drawn out and haled away? Why not left in peace…?” Painting Mrs. Ramsay reading a story to James makes Lily feel “like an unborn soul, a soul reft of body, hesitating on some windy pinnacle and exposed without protection to all the blasts of doubt” (Lighthouse 158). In the anguish and rapture of creation, Lily calls out a vision of Mrs. Ramsay on the empty steps of the house, and draws that last line in the center of her painting that finally completes her work of art.

The Causes of Poverty and Virginia Woolf’s Three Guineas

The movement towards greater efficiency of philanthropic and state activities facilitated a change of focus from the moral to the material. Even the Charity Organization Society under the leadership of Helen Bosanquet had to consider causes for poverty and inefficiency like poor nutrition. The “Causes of Pauperism” section from the Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, co-authored by Helen Bosanquet and C.S. Loch of the C.O.S. together with a number of other Commissioners in 1909, lists character as only one of the causes of poverty. Along with excessive drinking, want of thrift, bad management, early and improvident marriages, and gambling, this report cites overcrowding, imprisonment, casual labor, unhealthy trades and unsanitary work-places, low wages, old age, and even charitable relief among the causes of poverty (Report 284-300).

Ascribed to the Victorians, “character” only appeared in the mid-nineteenth century and assumed a major role in the 1860s and 1870s “in prescribing differential treatment for the deserving and undeserving poor, and in legitimizing the admission of some working men to the franchise and the exclusion of others” (Harris 249). Philanthropists like Bosanquet inherited and continued to mold the notion of character in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century.
Even when the cause of poverty were “a diseased mind or body” (67), Bosanquet and the Charity Organization Society continued to look for solutions in education and in individual moral improvement. Like Samuel Smiles, Bosanquet continued to insist on “foresight, sobriety and self-command” (140), and the C.O.S. trained its members to strike at the root of social ills “in the minds of the people themselves” by stimulating energies, insisting upon responsibilities, training the faculties, all “to make them efficient” (Bosanquet 114).

In both the Report and in Bosanquet’s writing, “failure of character rather than …any particular economic cause” as well as “the expectation of relief” are the main reasons for destitution (qtd. in Report 292). Yet despite Bosanquet’s insistence on molding character and on the disciplining role of philanthropy, the new trend towards greater efficiency, charity organization and case studies that manifested itself in Booth and Rowntree’s survey forced even the fiercely individualistic C.O.S. to consider environment as one of the causes for poverty. In her 1903 work, *The Strength of the People*, Helen Bosanquet is forced to admit that “[e]ven apart from measurable differences in development, the efficiency of the worker depends very largely upon the actual food he eats” (65). Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas* also draws on the developing trend towards “scientific” casework and statistical surveys in order to make an argument for professionalization of women’s writing.

*Three Guineas*

*Three Guineas* is written as advice to a charitable giver, and recommends a charitable donation of three guineas, together with advice on how to spend it. Published by the Hogarth Press in 1938, *Three Guineas* itself is a contribution to several charitable causes: the prevention
of the atrocities of war, providing education for women and helping women in the professions. Like many fundraising ventures, it starts with a description of heart-wrenching photographs documenting the atrocities of war: a mutilated body, dead children, a house “torn open” by a bomb (Three Guineas 20-21).\textsuperscript{13} The emotional appeal of the pictures is clear: they awaken “horror and disgust” immediately “however different the education, the traditions behind us” (21). One might expect to see the philanthropist immediately send money to the Spanish Government; or to the Red Cross, for that matter; but this philanthropist wavers, asks questions, feels that the emotion “demands something more positive than a name written on a sheet of paper; an hour spent listening to speeches; a cheque written for whatever sum we can afford” (Three Guineas 22-23). Instead, he sends his question about how to prevent such atrocities to a professional writer, who is also a woman; and receives her advice that the best way to prevent war would be to invest three guineas in the education and professional development of women. This development is significant in many ways. First, it shifts the attention from immediate concerns to long-term projects (planning); second, it highlights the cause of women as equally important and crucial as the cause of war devastation; and third, it deals with the professionalization of women’s writing. 

Three Guineas (1938) was preceded by Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own (1929) and the even earlier essays on women and writing like “Women and Fiction,” “Women and

\textsuperscript{13} “They are not pleasant photographs to look upon. They are photographs of dead bodies for the most part. This morning’s collection contains what the photographs of what might be a man’s body, or a woman’s; it is so mutilated that it might, on the other hand, be the body of a pig. But those certainly are dead children, and that undoubtedly is the section of a house. A bomb has torn open the side; there is still a bird-cage hanging in what was presumably the sitting-room, but the rest of the house looks like nothing so much as a bunch of spillikins suspended in mid air” (Three Guineas 20-21).
Leisure,” “The Intellectual Status of Women,” “Professions for Women,” “Men and Women,” and “Women Novelists.” In all of the above essays, Woolf is interested in the “evolution” of women’s emancipation and writing (Woolf, *Women* 67). “What, for example,” she asks, “was the origin of the extraordinary outburst in the eighteenth century of novel writing by women? Why did it begin then, and not in the time of the Elizabethan renaissance?” (Woolf, *Women* 69).

The question of tradition and the canon and how to develop and work within a canon of women’s writing is one of the major preoccupations of these books. The second question that concerns Woolf, and this is the question I see as most akin to the preoccupations of social casework, is what material conditions are necessary in order for women to write good literature. She launches an investigation into women’s writing and the lack thereof before the eighteenth century by asking a series of sociological questions and wishing for a team of psychologists or other scholars from the women’s colleges Newnham and Girton to make it their project to provide the answers:

> What one wants, I thought—and why does not some brilliant student at Newnham or Girton supply it? — is a mass of information; at what age did [the woman writer] marry; how many children had she as a rule; what was her house like; had she a room to herself; did she do the cooking; was she likely to have a servant? (Woolf, *Room* 47)

To answer questions about women’s writing and abilities, one can no longer, as Woolf demonstrates, merely address the metaphysical subject of women and fiction—notably, the page she starts with the title “Women and Fiction” is still unwritten in the final section of *A Room of One’s Own*. Instead, Woolf attempts to recreate what the Elizabethan woman did “from eight in the morning until eight at night” (*Room* 48). Woolf’s solutions based on her investigation into women’s lives are five hundred pounds a year, a room of her own, and a better-endowed
women’s education. These are solutions that look much like the ones recommended by social workers at the time.

In her essay “Women and Fiction,” Woolf celebrates the opening of the professions to women; this to her is a change comparable to ceasing to live underground (Women 50), a freedom to see the light of the outer world. Now it would even be possible for women to act for themselves, but also to direct their attention “from the personal center which engaged it exclusively in the past to the impersonal” (50). She expects that women’s novels will become more critical of society; that “the office of the gadfly to the state, which has been so far a male prerogative, will now be discharged by women also. Their novels will deal with social evils and remedies” (Women 50-51).

If nothing else this visionary passage featuring a female poet-savior makes us throw a second, questioning, glance at Woolf’s declaration, only two pages earlier, that “it is much more important to be oneself than anything else” (Room 115). By avoiding masculine rhetoric and peroration, by satirizing the demands usually made upon women (“to remember [their] responsibilities, to be higher, more spiritual; how much depends upon [them], and what an influence [they] can exert upon the future” (Room 114), Woolf contrives to write a page just as she leaves it unwritten, to carve out a space for female rhetoric just as she deplores (male) rhetoric, to assert a noble ideal of a female cultural tradition while deploring the lack thereof. In pursuing her goals, Woolf is no less altruistic than her predecessors, as she herself states: “Thus when I ask you to write more books I am urging you to do what will be for your own good and for the good of the world at large” (Room 113).

It is significant, moreover, that inasmuch as Woolf maintains that “gifts, whether of mind or of character can[not] be weighed like sugar and butter, not even in Cambridge” (Room 109),
we have to observe that she is not averse to weighing the sugar and the butter. Just at the moment when debates about welfare, urban housing, sanitation, minimum pay and duration of working days dominated politics, she ceases the moment as well as the argument made available by public welfare debates, in order to appeal for what concerns her most closely—the fate of women and writing. In a social climate of ever increasing public-mindedness which at the same time possessed a renewed consciousness about the rights of each and every individual to be protected by the commonwealth, Woolf replicates the rhetoric of the welfare state and gears it to the interests and special needs of women-poets. She uses an excerpt from Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch’s book *The Art of Writing* (1916) in order to critique the injustices and inattentiveness of the “commonwealth” to the fate of young and poor poets. After invoking the sad fate of John Clare and James Thomson, the first an English peasant poet of the Romantic school, and the second a Scottish Victorian poet, victims of poverty and the class system, Quiller-Couch proceeds to call upon the reader to face the “dreadful facts” (111). Notice that it is no longer the poets’ ability or some personal failing, but “some fault in our commonwealth” that takes responsibility for Clare’s end in a mad-house, and for Thomson’s death by laudanum:

> It is -- however dishonoring to us as a nation--certain that, by some fault in our commonwealth, the poor poet has not in these days, nor has had for two hundred years, a dog’s chance. Believe me—three hundred and twenty elementary schools—we may prate of democracy, but actually, a poor child in England has little more hope than had the some of an Athenian slave to be emancipated into that intellectual freedom of which great writings are born. (qtd. in *Room* 111-112)

And here is how Woolf turns this “welfare rhetoric” in favor of women-writers:

> That is it. Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two
hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time. Women have had less intellectual freedom than the sons of Athenian slaves. Women, then, have not had a dog’s chance of writing poetry. That is why I have laid so much stress on money and a room of one’s own. (Room 112)

Despite her use of social casework rhetoric, Woolf does not unambiguously become a voice for parliamentary reform in favor of women’s education and women’s professions. In fact, in her essays, such as “Women and Fiction,” she consistently makes a distinction between the artist and the reformer, the “gadfly to the state” and the “butterfly” artist (Woolf, *Women* 51).

Although Woolf does not directly call for welfare reform, she does call for the redistribution of resources within a capitalist economy when she dreams of a philanthropic woman car manufacturer. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf deplores the fact that the charitable treasurers of some women’s colleges have to beg for old and discarded clothes to be sold at a bazaar. It would be different, she contends, if women were “the champions of the capitalist system” and if there was a woman motor-car manufacturer who “with a stroke of her pen, could endow the women’s colleges with two or three hundred thousand pounds apiece” (123). As it is, women have to beg for “money, or failing money, for fruit, books, or cast-off clothing to sell at a bazaar” (*Three Guineas* 76). On the one hand, it would seem that Woolf rejects philanthropy as a solution; on the other hand, she embraces large-scale corporate donations to the same purpose. Implicit in her dream for wealthier benefactors is the rhetoric of welfare and the New Liberal “citizenship of entitlement.”

This vision of redistributive justice in *Three Guineas* naturally leads to or is complemented by a critique of the intimate sphere of the family. It is not philanthropy as such, but the philanthropy of the private house that interferes with emancipation. Women are therefore poor because they have been confined for centuries to the private house, with its “nullity, its
immorality, its hypocrisy, its servility” (135). Its oppressiveness urged women to gladly “undertake any task however menial, exercise any fascination however fatal that enabled her to escape.” The Victorian home creates the Victorian lady, the “Angel of the House,” who often has no choice but to be “altruistic:”

In short, there are only two conclusions to which we can come about the educated man’s wife—the first one is that she is the most altruistic of beings who prefers to spend her share of the common fund upon his pleasures and causes; the second, and more probable, if less credible is not that she is the most altruistic of beings, but that her spiritual right to a share of half her husband’s income peters out in practice to an actual right to board, lodging and a small annual allowance for pocket money and dress. (Three Guineas 103)

Trapped by the public/private split, woman is forced to pay for the education of her brothers and for the comfort of her family and the prosperity of her nation; her isolated and limited life, and the lack of good education and independent opinion force her to embrace with fascination unreal loyalties like nation, Empire, and war: “[t]hus consciously she desired “our splendid Empire”; unconsciously she desired our splendid war” (Three Guineas 72).

To summarize, the emancipation of woman requires charitable contributions by women magnates and by charitable men; it requires that women go into the professions and succeed at them, which in turn can only take place if women colleges are handsomely endowed. As an act of canvassing, Three Guineas itself asks for charitable contributions to women’s educational institutions. Finally, as a true instructional text, Three Guineas discusses the proper conduct of professional women.

Like Helen Bosanquet’s report on poverty, Three Guineas addresses not only the donations that women need in order to join the professions but the character and self-discipline that should complement these donations. In a tone that invokes a sermon, Three Guineas
demands the charity for women for the sake of the public good, so that there will be not more war atrocities and corruption of public life. For this purpose, she not only recommends investments in women’s education and professionalization, but she instructs and educates the recipients of these contributions about how to best make use of them. They “must refuse to sell [their] brain for the sake of money” and they “must rid [themselves] of the pride of nationality;” and also if offered “badges, orders, or degrees,” they must “fling them back in the giver’s face” (146). In addition, they should only receive a modest remuneration for their work because “extreme poverty is undesirable,” and “extreme wealth is also undesirable (126). In other words, in order to succeed in the professions, the daughters of educated men should be professional. Those who wish to enter the professions are ethically allowed “some wealth, some knowledge and some service to real loyalties” (145). In a further invocation of sin, Woolf demands from her female readers no less than resistance to worldly temptation—insofar as such resistance is possible in the professional world. To sell her feminist agenda to the public is a sense of larger mission—a mission that bears upon the good of the whole community.

Virginia Woolf’s stoical daughters (the professional women she envisions and instructs in Three Guineas) are not very far in their altruism and dedication to social amelioration from their stoical fathers. Leslie Stephen, for example, makes similar appeals to duty in the absence of personal or material reward in his Science of Ethics. “For my part,” he says, “I accept the altruistic theory, and I accept what I am told to be its legitimate and inseparable conclusion—namely, that the path of duty does not coincide with the path of happiness” (qtd. in Kaufmann 26). In the opinion of agnostics like Mr. Leslie Stephen, “all that can be done is to minimize the misery which cannot be annulled,” and this again points to a very professional and scholarly interpretation of duty to society.
According to the Salvation Army Yearbook of 1913, the main goal of its practice of charity was moral and spiritual regeneration of the helper as well as the helped, and it required of all involved “truthfulness, honesty, sobriety of behaviour, non-conformity to the world, purity, unselfishness, forgivableness, humility, patience, industry, and perseverance” (Salvation Army [1913] 63). In other words, it required “self denial,” a quality so long ascribed to women as to become a trait of essentialized femininity. The Salvation Army declared its message in its annual publications along similar lines: “[t]he Salvation Army message includes the call to holiness…a heart renewed by the Holy Ghost—put right with God, and then kept right! A heart perfect in its loyalty to God, irrespective of consequences; perfect in obedience” (Salvation Army [1963] 26).

Like the Salvation Army, Woolf, too, demands “poverty, chastity, derision and freedom from unreal loyalties.” She discourses on personal temptation and prizes. She hopes to unite the virtues of a marginalized femininity with the benefits of professional life. This, she feels, will be the best contribution of women to social reform and to the abolition of wars.

**Conclusion**

Both Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West argue for the professionalization of women’s writing in close connection to the welfare debates and the birth of organized social work at the turn of the twentieth century. Despite the anxieties of mass politics and class politics that one finds in their novels, Sackville-West and Woolf ultimately forge a compromise between the self-interest of the individual woman artist and the incipient welfare reforms of the New Liberals.
In spite of these writers’ opposition to the patriarchal ideologies of altruism and Victorian character, one finds in their work admiration and nostalgia for the aristocratic figure who gives of her bounty. The characters in their novels, Deborah Slane, Clarissa Dalloway, and Mrs. Ramsay, all come to life out of their “network of visiting, leaving cards, being kind to people” (Mrs. Dalloway 77). They inspire “extraordinary exaltation” with their “charity, comprehension, absolution” as well as with a final “wild carouse” (Mrs. Dalloway 37).

In the fraught atmosphere and turbulent politics of the early twentieth century, women writers recognize the elusiveness of philanthropic gifts. Yet the gift is no less present in their works. Both femininity and charity, in short, become objects of desire in a modernist project designed to keep women and giving at the center of one’s attention.14

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14 For Derrida, too, gift is desire, the striving towards the impossible: “[d]esire and the desire to give would be the same thing, a sort of tautology” (Given Time 4-5).
Empire and Welfare

Introduction

In 1822, seven years into “Britain’s century” (Binn 21), William Seward Hall dedicated a dramatic poem to the rising empire of British philanthropy. The poem was published in London, dedicated to the King, and it illustrated the “Dignity and Importance” of “the warm and diffusive PHILANTHROPY which animate[d] both PRINCE and PEOPLE.” In the poem, Philanthropy appears “dresst in imperial regalia” and seated on a “magnificent Throne” (B2) to announce the approaching triumph of Christianity and “true religions” around the world:

To the whole earth for empire I lay claim,
To make the spacious world a Heaven, I aim. (Hall 73)

The vehicles of this Heavenly empire on earth are presently revealed to be the sons of Albion. The Statue of Britannia arises, “adorned with the trophies of her numerous Charities and generous acts” (15), and her philanthropic roles in abolishing slavery and saving primitive people from the evils of superstition, savagery, cannibalism, idol-worship, slavery, infanticide, patricide, human sacrifice are all praised. Philanthropy abroad is presented as an extension of the tender care that Albion extends to its own sons and daughters: merciful treatment of criminals, protection for debtors, widows, orphans and the poor are bright examples of Christian love such as is dearly needed in the darker and unenlightened corners of the earth. The justification for British imperial expansion is an unapologetic, torch-bearing civilizing mission. The abolition of
slavery in 1807, is especially praised in this context, and enlisted as a good reason for expanding British colonial presence:

See British Sons (a generous Band!)
Unite as Friends to Afric’s land,
T’improve its Lot—thus wide expand
Philanthropy. (Hall 49)

Bringing true wisdom, true religion, and liberty, Britannia’s rule over the world is not only praised, but sanctified by the values of Christianity, and humanity. In this way, as early as 1822, philanthropy has clearly become the mainstay of the elaborate ideological construction of the triumphant British Raj.

Compare this praise of tender-hearted love to the gloomy prediction of the end of the British Empire in the fantasy novel of 1905 entitled The Decline and Fall of the British Empire. A brief account of those causes which resulted in the destruction of our late ally, together with a comparison between the British and Roman Empires Appointed for the use of the National Schools of Japan—Tokio 2005. Among other things (such as the growth of refinement and luxury, the decline in intellectual and religious life, national decay, excessive taxation and municipal extravagance), this fantasy about the end of Britannia points to irresponsible generosity as one of the main reasons for the disintegration of British territories, prosperity and power. Like Roman citizens,

[the English] came to look to the State for everything. It educated, fed, whipped, and in some instances clothed their children. It lit their houses and lent them light literature …; it carried them to and fro on tramcars; it gave them cheap lodgings, and conducted scores of similar costly undertakings on principles which will be recognized by the smallest office boy in Tokio as ignoring the mere elements of political economy. (Decline and Fall 30)
Sins of extravagance and luxury such as running Public Libraries with serious books that were an inadequate investment because they were poorly used, and presenting free meals to British school children are only some of the plentiful evidence of “the most disastrous acts of that false philanthropy which did so much to ruin England” (*Decline and Fall* 13). Excessive philanthropy ostensibly stands as a warning for the rulers and citizens of a hypothetical Japanese Empire of the early twenty-first century; in reality, however, this London pamphlet from 1905 speaks of a deep uneasiness about state philanthropy. While at the turn of the nineteenth century state-run philanthropy was taken up as a useful instrument in the hands of missionaries and empire-builders, by the early twentieth, its edge seems to have been rendered blunt with generous use.

Moreover, as *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* demonstrates, at the turn of the twentieth century state welfare was perceived as philanthropy on the part of the state, just as the abolition of slavery in 1822, a cause taken by activists and women in England, was perceived as the great act of Britannia in the early nineteenth century. The pamphleteer is blaming the state because it should not be in the business of philanthropy, but agrees in fact with a widely held view that state welfare is in fact philanthropy—a view not commonly held today. This conflation of philanthropy and state welfare or of philanthropy and empire seems even more significant when we consider that by the end of the twentieth century and after the birth of the welfare state in Britain, philanthropy was nearly forgotten and replaced by a rhetoric of economic rights and the responsibilities of the state for its citizens. It is important to keep in mind that at the beginning of the twentieth century, just when modernism was gaining ground in literature and the social insurance debates were raging in Britain, philanthropy carried a different, culturally inscribed, meaning.
If the last of the British Empire largely disappeared under Harold Macmillan, Prime Minister between 1957 and 1963 (Binn 93), the beginning of its end was being felt before and around World War I, again the period of modernist ascendancy. A number of critics have addressed the modernists’ engagement with questions of empire as evident in the works of Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, W.B Yeats, H.D. Lawrence, Gertrude Stein, Katherine Mansfield, E.M. Forster, and others. Critics have noted the connection between modernism and primitivism and claimed the interdependence between modernity and empire, between the colonies and the metropolis, and between imperialism and modernism. However, few literary critics and theorists have discussed modernist writing in the context of imperial philanthropy and the role of the modernist as philanthropist of empire.

This chapter is going to explore the connections among philanthropy, empire, and modernism in Edward Morgan Forster’s two novels, *Howards End* (1910) and *A Passage to India* (1924); in Vita Sackville-West’s novel *All Passion Spent* (1931); and in Rebecca West’s *The Judge* (1922) and her travelogue of Yugoslavia *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941). These modern and modernist writers argued that the philanthropy of empire was limited and hypocritical, and that it had failed both Britain’s enthusiastic pioneers and explorers (like Adela in E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* and Richard in Rebecca West’s *The Judge*) and its poorer and more abject classes (such as Leonard Bast in Forster’s *Howards End* and Roger in *The Judge* along with colonial subjects like Dr. Aziz).

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15 Theorists such as Terry Eagleton, Frederick Jameson and Edward Said discussed modernism and imperialism in their essays collected in 1990 under the title *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*. More recently, another collection, *Modernism and Empire* (2000), edited by Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby, furthered the same debate.
A Passage to India discusses the failure of British philanthropy in India as a signal of the approaching end to British imperial rule and also argues that philanthropy is the key to Indian self-determination. Howards End, The Judge, and All Passion Spent discuss domestic poverty, liberal and Salvationist philanthropy, and private donations against the background of foreign wealth and waning British imperial ambitions. Black Lamb and Grey Falcon turns the gaze of the Western reader to the Balkans in order to find in the difference of the Balkan people an inspiration for a more militant sort of philanthropy that would enable Britain to join the war against Nazism. Ultimately, these readings of early twentieth-century novels engaging imperialism and philanthropy will reveal how modern understanding of alienation and detachment was informed by their insight into the disintegration of both empire and voluntarist philanthropy; and how these writers used arguments from the empire and welfare debates in order to affirm the social, sexual, and economic liberation of the modern subject.

Historical Perspectives on Empire and Welfare.

Historians such as Brian Harrison, Anne McClintock, and Uday Mehta have pointed to the connection between imperial philanthropy and welfare in the metropolis, between the urban other and the imperial other, and between liberalism and imperial paternalism respectively. Anne McClintock in particular has noted how the discourse of philanthropic surveillance and social exploration in late-nineteenth-century Britain draws on the discourse of imperial conquest. She has singled out the example of William Booth’s work inspired by Henry Morton Stanley’s In Darkest Africa, entitled In Darkest England and the Way Out, and published in 1890, as proof that the structures of discipline and power permeate not only the far extensions of empire but
also the heart of its metropolis. McClintock sees a relationship between the journalistic writings and parliamentary reports on the English poor and the epistemological problems of later modernist writings; “like colonial landscapes,” urban slums were pictured as “anachronistic worlds of deprivation and unreality, zones without language, history of reason that could be described only by negative analogy, in terms of what they were not” (McClintock 120).16 The prominence of both empire and philanthropy in public debates (exemplified by journalism and parliamentary writings) in early twentieth-century Britain is reason enough to interrogate further the alleged detachment of modernist writers from the structures of institutional power.

As I have noted in the introduction to my dissertation, modernism emerged in the middle of philanthropy and welfare debates early in the twentieth century. At the same time, modernism coincided with deep-rooted misgivings about the future of the British Empire and fears about national degeneration. The ailing empire needed fast and effective remedies and capable and healthy soldiers and administrators, and such concerns colored both the imperial and philanthropy debates. On the twenty-fifth (Silver) Jubilee of one of the major British philanthropic publications, Burdette’s Hospital and Charities, the editor of the book, Sir Henry Burdette, addressed his readers as all those “who wish by their personal service to contribute to the uplifting and well-being of the people and institutions of Empire.” He hoped to be of

16 “Foreshadowing Conrad’s colonial landscapes and the landscape of Forster’s A Passage to India, the urban slums were depicted as epistemological problems—as anachronistic worlds of deprivation and unreality, zones without language, history of reason that could be described only by negative analogy, in terms of what they were not. The strangeness and density of the urban spectacle resisted penetration by the intruder’s empirical eye as an enigma resists knowledge. Walter Besant’s All Sorts and Conditions of Men described the East Enders as having no institutions of their own, no gentry, no theatres—they were describable only by negatives. Like colonial landscapes, the slums were figured as inhabiting an anachronistic space, representing a temporal regression within industrial modernity to a time beyond the recall of memory” (McClintock 120).
particular assistance to “the great army of zealous, capable, earnest workers” whose letters had brought him “into relations with practically every portion of the British Dominions and many countries throughout the world” (7). In a similar vein, the opening paragraph of chapter VIII in the same publication sensitized the reader to the social and political importance of improving orphanages by referring to the “greatest assets of national wealth” and the need to “husband the resources of empire:”

If Child-life is one of the great assets of national wealth, then everything that concerns the mental, moral and physical training of children becomes not simply a matter of philanthropic and religious interest, but of deep social and political importance; and, among the many problems that call for attention, not the least is that which deals with the status and efficiency of the Empire, and check the leakage of young life that is daily feeding the ranks of the unemployed and unemployable. (Burdette 165)

If in the first line of this paragraph Burdette calls on British patriotism in order to legitimize philanthropy, by the end of the paragraph he has welded imperialism and welfare, the colony abroad and the “ranks of the unemployed and unemployable” at home into a common concern.

Historians Geoffrey Finlayson, Brian Harrison and Edward Royle have shown that the disintegration of empire promoted an expanding social service sector within the United Kingdom. Concerns about physical deterioration exacerbated around and after the Boer War (1899-1902) when the poor health of military volunteers caused national concern about the “security and glory” of the British Empire (Royle 207). If the empire was ailing, it needed even more capable administrators and soldiers; this was inevitable in the face of growing “international competition” (Finlayson 134). In a chapter on empire and welfare, Harrison discusses at length the connection between the two paternalistic regimes of empire and welfare.
He argues that empire promoted both paternalism and philanthropy at home and weakened the laissez-faire spirit of liberalism. He points out that Edwardians agreed on the “need for a healthy and expanding population to populate and defend the empire, and the Liberal imperialist policy of ‘national efficiency’” (Harrison 67-8).17 According to Harrison, in Edwardian England imperialism and welfare reinforced one another in many other ways. Towards the middle of the twentieth century, Commonwealth precedents were successfully used in emerging British legislation on nationalization, compulsory industrial arbitration, family allowances, and the attack on sweated labour. For instance, New Zealand’s Labour government was a pioneer in family allowances and the smooth transition to compulsory pensions. The example of New Zealand was cited by Beveridge as an excellent precedent for those types of social legislation (69).

The joint paternalism of empire and welfare is criticized in E.M. Forster’s work Howards End. The plot of the novel brings together Henry Wilcox, a millionaire and imperialist, Margaret and Helen Schlegel, humanitarians and idealists, and Leonard Bast, the impoverished clerk at the Porphyryan Fire Insurance Company. A good part of the novel revolves around the Schlegel sisters’ enthusiasm to help the adventurous and intelligent Leonard, and “to show him how he may get upsides with life” (120). In this interest, they several times seek the advice and

17 “The two spheres, empire and welfare, interacted. Edwardians increasingly recognized the need for a healthy and expanding population to populate and defend the empire, and the Liberal imperialist policy of “national efficiency” showed signs of capturing Edwardian centrist opinion. Slum-based disease threatened nations with larger rural populations, and when her empire thirsted for settlers, emigration was seen as a palliative for domestic problems which could postpone the need for a direct attack on poverty at home. Empire was also seen as an opportunity for realizing world-wide the recurrent British dream of domestic rural settlement. Some even saw overseas adventurism as a diversion from socialism and as reinforcing social discipline. When confronted by Liberalism, imperialism and social reform had much in common, and their attack on laissez faire in one sphere could readily spill over into other spheres” (Harrison 67-8).
cooperation of Henry Wilcox, with disastrous effects. Mr. Wilcox, head of “the Imperial and West African Rubber Company”(164), has little sympathy for the poor, although he subscribes to charities; he believes that “[a]s civilizations moves forward, the shoe is bound to pinch in places, and it’s absurd to pretend that any one is responsible personally” (161). Henry Wilcox embodies the foreign wealth that rapidly accumulated in British hands as a result of the “scramble for Africa” of the 1880s and 1890s. His investments in Cyprus and West Africa make him confident and powerful, a “reassuring name on company prospectuses” (109). But the ruin of the insignificant clerk Leonard Bast finally proves also Mr. Wilcox’s ruin. Mediating between the Basts and the Wilcoxes, the Schlegel sisters provide the link between classes that was often perceived as missing in British social life, and re-emphasize the social responsibilities of the new British plutocracy. Howards End is particularly emblematic of the importance of the welfare debates in Edwardian literature and culture because it was published in 1910, the year before the British Parliament passed the National Insurance Bill, and only a year after the Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress was published in 1909. The progressive and redistributory taxation of Lloyd George’s budget of 1909 finally overcame the opposition of the House of Lords in 1911 (Finlayson 165).

Henry Wilcox’s wealth represents the unprecedented colonial expansion that took place in the early twentieth century. Just like philanthropy, imperial expansion underwent a shift towards further state involvement and bureaucratization during the Edwardian era. One by one, British colonies were gaining their independence, but contrary to expectations, the bureaucratic apparatus of empire grew. The number of Colonial office employees increased from 109 in 1900-1901 to 1,286 in April 1950 (Harrison 63). Even as British colonies were becoming more independent, the Kingdom grew more consciously paternalistic and invested more into managing
and assisting the Dominions. This is very similar to what was happening in the field of philanthropy and public assistance in Britain. Bentley B. Gilbert, a historian of welfare quoted in Finlayson, said that social policy “evolved, like the British empire, in a fit of absence of mind” (254). Such characterizations signal the forgetting that has accompanied the shift in philanthropy and the beginnings of the welfare state in Britain. Contemporary texts, however, present sufficient evidence of concerted public debate over these issues.

_The Judge, The Salvation Army, and the “Little Englander.”_

Rebecca West was not averse to bringing inexorable destiny to her works, chiefly through the vehicle of biology and psychoanalysis. One such example is her Freudian reading of mother-and-son relationships in _The Judge_ (1922). The mother in the novel, Marion, has two sons, Richard and Roger. While Richard is the illegitimate son of her sweetheart Harry, Roger is the fruit of a marital rape by the deceitful Peacey, Harry’s servant. Richard grows up to be a substitute for Marion’s lost sweetheart, the beloved son who comforts her during her lonely and bitter nights, and compensates her for the wrongs that men have done to her in this world. Marion “side[s] with her triumphant son and against her son who need[s] her pity,” knowing well that thereby “[t]hey would all be unworthy and they would all be destroyed” (_The Judge_ 329). Eventually Marion, who is associated both with the land and with Empire, fails both her sons; while the abject Roger is ailing cut off from her love, the ambitious Richard returns from his imperial ventures “cold and famined” (36). In the end of the novel she drowns herself so that

18 Rebecca West mentions in her letters that Thomas Hardy liked _The Judge_ and considered it “the only book ever written as gloomy as his own” (Scott, _Selected Letters_, 47).
Ellen, Richard’s sweetheart, and a radical socialist and feminist, can take her place. Ellen’s commitment to Labour politics promises a fresh approach to the class hypocrisy that Marion’s sexual relationships with men make so apparent; but she has nothing of Marion’s sophisticated knowledge of sexual (im)morality.

Marion’s very different sons present a commentary on class, empire, and racial degeneration as well as the Oedipal complex. Richard’s and Roger’s vastly different fortunes in the world seem to be determined by Marion’s love: her smothering affection for Richard, the “triumphant” son, and her cruelty to Roger, the son who was forced upon her through an act of deceit. But Richard’s triumph and Roger’s failure are also determined by their class origin; while Richard is the illegitimate son of the local squire, Roger is the son of the squire’s repellent butler. Peacey’s (the butler’s) hypocritical malevolence produces Marion’s loathed son, whose “horrid little body stripped for the bath” makes his mother wonder “whether very much force would be needed to kill it” (303). Marion’s inextinguishable desire to obliterate Roger and her inability to reward his sickly innocence with any semblance of affection do not prevent her from realizing his worthiness; she knows that despite of her loathing Roger is “so full of love that it [he] accepted the empty sham of feeling she gave it[him] and breathed in it, and filled it with its[his] own love, and was so innocent that it[he] did not detect that nobody had really given it[him] anything, thus redeeming her from guilt” (The Judge 299).

The Judge can also be read as a commentary on the British debate over imperialism versus isolationism. For the characters of the novel, neither philanthropy at home (like the philanthropy of the Salvation Army) nor British imperialism abroad is an adequate way of addressing their needs. West’s novel also places maternity and the family at the center of rising arguments over philanthropy, welfare, and imperialism. Despite West’s negative portrayal of the
Hallelujah Army (a thinly veiled Salvation Army), the novel suggests the catastrophic consequences of maternal neglect (and of neglect of social welfare at home).

Whereas Richard, who is involved in the imperial project, is portrayed as successful and his brother is portrayed as a failure, it is significant that both brothers and Marion are doomed by the end of the novel. Like Mother England, Marion is proud of Richard’s South American travels and career as a chemist. In terms of empire, it is Richard, the beloved son, whose name is connected with imperial conquest. His imperial exploration starts with his exploration and conquest of his mother’s body: “Oh, you beautiful Mummie. You’ve such lots and lots of hair. If there were two little men just as big as my fingers, they could go into your hair, one at each ear, and walk about it like people do in the African forests, couldn’t they? And they’d meet in your parting, and one would say to the other, “Mr. Livingstone, I presume?” (302). To prove himself worthy Richard becomes a sailor at sixteen, “so that he should be admirable to his mother” (319). Travel in Marion’s eyes “would afford him a thousand excitements that would evoke his magnificence” (319), and so she becomes tacitly complicit with his decision to leave home and make himself into a man. While Richard returns from Latin America rich, his adventures around the world leave him “cold and famined” (The Judge 36). Roger, however, who has been denied possession of his mother’s body from the very first, has no chance of imperial magnificence.

While Richard is a self-made man, the weak Roger seeks maternal or charitable protection in order to survive. Richard returns from South America as “one of the lords of the earth” (328). He is successful, rich, virile, and a scientist, whose job is to make dynamite, “the material of militarism, which is the curse of the nations” (27). Even their childhood games differentiate the triumphant, conquering, and virile Richard from the weakly, feckless, and
clinging Roger19: while Richard likes to pretend that he is driving the Trans-Andean express, Roger whines to make it a domestic train: “Make it the London, Tilbury and Prittlebay train! Make it the London, Tilbury and Prittlebay train!” (296). 20 “[U]nexclusive and unadventurous” (295), Roger “like[s] playing on the sands of Prittlebay in summer when they [are] covered with trippers’ children” (295). The popular Victorian seaside resort at Prittlebay is as far as Roger’s fantasy would take him; he remains “the meek Little Engander who fears lest England should grow too big” (Ritortus 294). His association with the London workers taking their vacation in the wake of the 1870 Bank Holidays Act suggests his need to be protected by some form of welfare. Rejected by both his mother and father, he finally seeks love and protection with the Hallelujah Army.

While Richard strikes Ellen with his “terrifying strength and immensity” (27), Roger is portrayed as weak and effeminate. While Richard invents sagas, “concerning the adventures of the family in some previous animal existence, when they had been rabbits and lived in a burrow in the park at Torque Hall, or crocodiles who sloshed about in the Thames mud, or lions and tigers on Kerith Island” (298), Roger likes fairy-tales. In his gentleness of manner, in his revulsion at bad language that he retains even as a grown man, Roger is the antithesis of virile

19 Roger’s physical description evokes Reactive Attachment Disorder of Infancy and Early Childhood, a disorder that links physical symptoms such as Roger’s to emotional deprivation and lack of maternal bonding in infants. See Harold I. Kaplan, Benjamin J. Sadock, M.D., in Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry, Vol. 2, pp. 2354-2359, Sixth edition.

20 Prittlebay is probably Southend, a popular seaside resort during the Victorian era. Originally the south end of the village of Prittlewell, Southend attracted thousands of excursionists during Bank Holiday weekends, particularly in the first week of August. The LTS railway line connects London, Tilbury, and Southend. In his association with the Bank Holiday crowd, Roger once again underscores his need to be protected (like the London workers exercising their right to leisure) by some form of welfare.
manhood, a boy as good “as if he were a little girl” (*The Judge* 294). Both Marion and Poppy (the fallen woman Roger travels with) are stronger-willed than he is.

Roger’s futile search for a suitable job and love leads him to find employment with the Hallelujah Army (a thinly veiled reference to the Salvation Army and its Labor colonies). Here philanthropy is represented as a poor substitute for motherly love. Just as the labor colonies are mere palliatives in the eyes of the radically-minded Ellen (Richard’s sweetheart), the Hallelujah Army is ultimately unable to save Roger from his destiny or to compensate him for the love that he did not get from his mother. He remains, in spite of philanthropy, Mother England’s unwanted son. His uniform, “cut unskillfully out of poor cloth,” does not keep away the cold of “the mean winter day,” and rather blends with its “soiled tones of grey” (375). The preaching of Captain Simpson seems harsh to his ears and lacking in love: “It’s a shame not to show people Gentle Jesus” (388). And yet, for all the repulsiveness of its manner and appearance, in her heart Marion recognizes that Roger is a deserving child: his repulsiveness proceeds from no moral flaw; he is “golden-hearted” (308); he loves her with “inexterminable love;” and “there [is] nothing in his soul save sickly, deserving innocence” (320). Marion understands that Roger has gone to the Hallelujah Army because he has not found love with her; and she implores Richard before her suicide to be kind to Roger and his friend Poppy: “Oh, don’t hate [Poppy]. And don’t hate Roger. He’s gone to Jesus for the love I ought to have given him” (*The Judge* 396).

The Hallelujah Army (Salvation Army), however, provides little protection for Roger, who is deceived by Captain Simpson’s as well as Poppy’s sham love. In *The Judge*, the Hallelujah Army is presented as colonizing and bringing to ruin the English countryside. To Ellen, who is Marion’s successor in Richard’s affection, the Hallelujah Army is contemptuous. She has heard its Labour colonies denounced at Labour Meetings, and she believes that “[t]here
is no way of settling the question of unemployment until the capitalist system’s overturned.”

These, Ellen thinks, are “mere palliatives” by means of which “the pious gave themselves the
pleasure of feeling that they were dealing with the immense problem of poverty when they were
merely taking a few hundred men and setting them to work in uneconomic conditions” (389).

The Hallelujah Army colonies and farms are presented as ugly and unnatural failures in the novel
from the point of view of Marion, who is a farmer’s daughter. The Labour Colony has made the
countryside “squalid with tin huts;” the slope is “defaced by a geometric planting of fruit
trees...in such stiff lines, and even from a distance so evidently sickly, that they looked like
orphan fruit-trees that were being brought up in a Poor Law orchard” (*The Judge* 294). Having
taken Roothing Castle, the Hallelujah Army further enrages Marion by putting up a notice at the
entrance, “Visitors are requested to assist the Hallelujah Army in keeping the castle select.” The
death of Mrs. More’s baby provides Marion with an opportunity to criticize small holdings,
farms under 50 acres each established with the Small Holdings Act of 1892. 21 According to
Finlayson, the Salvation Army colonies were advocated by Charles Booth “for the most
undisciplined poor” and started by William Booth “to emphasize the need for personal
redemption,” but by the end of the Boer War in 1902 were found unpractical. Labour unions
opposed them because they produced cheap goods (Finalyson 180-1).

21 The Small Holdings Act of 1892 was created to provide unemployed city workers with a livelihood. In
July 1939 a committee was appointed to inquire into the success of this settlement scheme. It concluded that “the
difficulties encountered in the transfer of unemployed workers to small holdings are such as to temper the
enthusiasm of persons who see land settlement as one of the major solutions of Britain’s unemployment problem.”
The *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Land Settlement* pointed to the high cost, high turnover, and
recruitment issues as particular problems with the scheme. It also stated that “forty-seven percent of the men
transferred to training for land settlement under the English program (outside Durham) gave up the struggle to
achieve independence on their own bit of land” (Greene 249).
The colony plans of the Salvation Army included the City Colony, the Farm Colony, and the Over-Sea Colony, a scheme that started with the salvation of the lost in the city slums, their training in city and farm colonies, and their exportation overseas. Their subjects were “not, educate them as you will, exactly the most promising material for the making of the future citizens and rulers of the Empire” (Booth 74); and yet, this is what General Booth wanted them to be. Booth looked for an alternative to the Casual Ward and the Poor Law, whose institutional care “dehumanizes the individual” and treats him “as if he were only a number of series or a cog in a wheel, without any regard to the character, the aspirations, the temptations, and the idiosyncrasies of the man” (80).

Salvation Army workers themselves were an imperial army. The Salvation Army included such ranks as Staff Officer, Field Officer, Local Officer, and Soldier, and these military ranks were open to women as well as to men. One of the most successful and largest philanthropic organizations, in 1914 the Army had over 16,000 Officers in 58 countries; every week it held 47,000 Indoor and 33,180 Outdoor Meetings; its Brass Bands numbered 1,674, with 23,313 Bandsmen; and its Songster Brigades had 13,092 members (Salvation Army [1914] 7). The success of the Army proved the enticement of power and discipline in the changing world of charitable activity.

In the words of a Salvation officer, “Experience has fully proved that in war every operation from the greatest to the smallest, ought to be under the absolute direction of one mind, and that every subordinate agent, in his degree, ought to obey implicitly, and with the show of cheerfulness, orders which he disapproves, or of which the reasons are kept secret from him” (“Government” 18). The Army workers called themselves soldiers and obeyed their Staff, Field,
and Local officers. They followed a code called “Orders and Regulations,” had Brass Bands, wore uniforms, and in other ways resembled a military hierarchy.

The military ethos of the Hallelujah Army in *The Judge* fails Roger in two ways. On the one hand, it mistreats Roger, being a poor substitute for motherly love. On the other hand, it deprives him of opportunities being a poor substitute for imperial conquest. Roger’s final approach to Marion is an attempt to convert her, the only conquest he knows: “I’ve got a reason for staying out here. I know Mother’s not got Jesus.” But even this attempt at conquest he soon abandons: “If she’s ashamed of me now that I’m one of Jesus’s soldiers, I won’t come in. I’ll go and wrestle on my knees for her soul, but I won’t hurt her by coming in” (*The Judge* 378). Even as a “soldier of Jesus” Roger never attains the masculinity of Richard; he will never command his friend Poppy’s attention the way the imperious Richard does; and he will consistently appeal to feminine virtues like purity and innocence, and to prefer “[g]entle Jesus, meak and mild” to the thundering God of Captain Simpson of the Hallelujah Army (388). Marion’s and England’s emasculated son, an embodiment of the socially abject, he is doomed economically and emotionally.

*The Judge* reveals the premonition of danger at the explosive combination of imperial ventures abroad and criminal neglect at home that moved contemporary critics of imperial expansion. As early as 1899, *The Contemporary Review* published an article on British trade which expressed concern over the neglect of the national industries and agriculture. It worried over “[t]he rising plutocracy” (Ritortus 296) of the new Rome, deplored the condition of English workers, and warned of the gloomy future of an overextended empire: “Wealth, after all, is not the chief end to be attained; it does not replace men—Englishmen, who decay through having their occupation, their trade, and their livelihood taken from them by our capital employed
abroad” (293). The portrayal of the ruined countryside and the self-destruction of Marion’s children in *The Judge* register these contemporary anxieties over national decay. Even when Roger is away, Marion constantly expects him at the door: “come in rags, come in an idiot hope of escaping justice, after some fatuous and squalid crime, to destroy Richard and herself” (*The Judge* 330). Roger is Marion’s nemesis but so is Richard, for whom she sacrifices herself, and who, in the end, is the son who raises the knife against his half-brother.

When Rebecca West placed the farmer’s daughter Marion at the center of her narrative in *The Judge*, many contemporaries had turned their attention away from Empire and towards the English countryside as the nation’s greatest capital. In 1910, Lloyd George22 evoked the “insane hunt for gold in South Africa” in order to make the case for domestic social reform. He renounced an elusive Eldorado in favor of the riches of English nature:

> The fact of the matter is, that the greatest capitalist in this country is nature. What is it that has made this the wealthiest land under the sun? It is the richness and convenience of its great coal deposits, not only excellent in quality, but so deposited as to be within convenient access to the sea, so that it is ready for export to other lands without the handicap of a prohibitive land transport. It is nature, too, that has made it possible for other minerals to be brought from other countries at an insignificant expense. We see it in our large coastline everywhere indented by estuaries and creeks that constitute some of the finest natural harbours in the world. These advantages have enabled us to build up the greatest mercantile marine the world has ever seen. We have a climate that has not only kept us to the mark and made us a vigorous and energetic race, but one that has peculiar qualities of moisture not attractive from a tourist’s point of view, but invaluable to the manufacturer of cotton and woolen fabrics. There is also the great fact that nature has made us an island and that the sea, like a deep and wide

22 Lloyd George was leader of the Liberal party from 1916 to 1922 when he was forced to resign. He represented the radical wing of the Liberal party. Inspired by the German welfare system (he visited Germany in 1908), Lloyd George spearheaded the welfare state in Britain with the National Insurance Act (1911). As Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Herbert Henry Asquith cabinet he framed the People’s Budget of 1909. The House of Lords defeated the People’s Budget, an act that ultimately led to the curtailing of the Lords’ powers.
moat, has protected us from the ravages and incursions of Continental marauders for centuries. (56)

In these treasures, the toiler also has his rightful share; and if he has it not, he should at least have the right to have his children protected “from hunger in the dark days of misfortune” (Lloyd George 57). It is as if empire has come full circle to its origins, and the rhetoric of empire now echoes the rhetoric of the “Little Englander.” The combination of the two would perhaps prove to be fatal for the Liberal Party.23

E. M. Forster, V. Sackville-West, and British Philanthropy in India

Forster’s most popular novel about the British Empire, A Passage to India, published in 1924, questioned the possibilities for mutual understanding between two communities as different as the Anglo-Indian and the Indian. The novel describes the failure of colonial administration as the lack of kindness on the part of the Anglo-Indian community; the galvanizing forces behind Indian nationalism are, to the contrary, the compassion and pathos of Persian poetry, the universal love of Hindu religion, the benevolence of wealthy Indians. The partiality of Indians towards mercy (which includes sympathy) and generosity and their rejection of coldly administered justice stands in contrast to the contractual and bureaucratic approach to government and law preferred by Anglo-Indians in their colonial endeavors. As Dr. Aziz tells Fielding, “Mr. Fielding, no one can ever realize how much kindness we Indians need, we do not even realize it ourselves. But we know when it has been given. We do not forget, though we

23 In 1922 Lloyd George, leader of the Liberal Party, was forced to resign. The Labour party became the official opposition.
may seem to. Kindness, more kindness, and even after that more kindness. I assure you it is the only hope” (Forster, Passage 116-117). While Aziz takes over British Victorian charitable causes such as the liberation of Indian women from the purdah, British modernist subjects like Adela and Fielding move beyond the confines of both philanthropy and empire.

The Anglo-Indian colonial administration is presented in the novel as completely devoid of philanthropic zeal. This representation corresponds to the foundations and practices of British rule in India at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. After 1813, “when the Charter Renewal Act lifted the last restrictions on missionaries going to India,” there were a number of evangelical philanthropists who did their part for the empire as well as for philanthropy. Mary Ann Lind points out that both the Evangelical movement and the Utilitarians were concerned with philanthropy, whether through moral or social reform. However, both the liberal and the evangelical movements waned in the wake of the Indian mutiny in 1847. As a direct result of the mutiny, the Crown replaced the East India Company as ruler of India in 1848. The colonial administration became increasingly bureaucratic in the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. India was “to be run like a well-oiled machine in which power was exercised by a small group of enlightened men” (Lind 25).

In support of the same argument about the increasing bureaucratization of Indian administration, Mary Procida has emphasized the disappearance of the “mythic ideal of the ICS [Indian Civil Service] officer.” The “lone man on horseback, traversing his vast district, dispensing justice from his saddle, and employing his encyclopaedic knowledge of India and an almost intuitive understanding of its ‘natives’ to serve as the mabap (mother and father) of the people within his jurisdiction” gave way to the colonial administrators “in desk chairs writing reports and dealing with the contents of their dispatch boxes (13). A good example of a colonial
administrator of this bureaucratic type in Forster’s novel is Ronny Heaslop, who believes that people should work out their own religion and is far from being “mother and father” of the Indians. Unlike the sympathetic Mrs. Moore, his mother, the City Magistrate is not polite to his Indian subjects; he is not “a missionary or a Labour member or a vague sentimental sympathetic literary man. [He’s] just a servant of the Government.” He expresses his credo as a ruler of India, when he says, “We’re not pleasant in India. And we don’t intend to be pleasant. We’ve something more important to do” (Passage 50).

These bureaucratic attitudes of the British administration and military determined the indifferent and even callous way in which British women (wives of colonial administrators for the most part) responded to Indians. Historians Mary Ann Lind and Mary A. Procida point out the meager involvement of memsahibs in philanthropic and welfare activities. Procida argues that the Anglo-Indian way of life liberated women from the confines of gender roles and enabled them to participate in masculine activities such as hunting, sports, and ruling their husbands’ districts while Lind focuses more on the lives of that “miniscule part of the British community in India” who did commit their lives to helping Indians and maintained the imperialist idealism that animated British colonialism at the turn of the nineteenth century (Lind 109). In spite of the fact that some memsahibs engaged in welfare activities, most memsahibs did not do so, not even during the war efforts. Thus when Iris Portal volunteered to help in a Salvation Army hospital during World War II, her friends called her “dotty” and teased her about “banging the tambourine.” There was a dire need for memsahib volunteers, but Portal only succeeded to recruit two, and they lasted ten days only (Lind 50). Men who wanted to do reform and philanthropic work received similar treatment, even when they occupied important positions in the administration of India. The Commissioner of Lahore, Frank Lugard Brayne, for instance,
was an enthusiast of village reform, Indian women’s liberation, and irrigation innovations. He wielded considerable influence, but was still ridiculed for his ideas, which were labeled “Braynewaves” (Lind 81).

In contrast to historians’ findings, *A Passage to India* portrays the Anglo-Indian wives not as liberated from stifling feminine roles but as living in a sort of purdah, out of touch with the reality of India and of their own humanity. Forster’s description of Anglo-Indian women draws on popular stereotypes about colonial wives. In Victorian England Anglo-Indian women were regarded as selfish and spoilt for their lavish lifestyles, their servants, the sports and idleness that occupied their leisure time, and the abundance of freedom they enjoyed without any of the public responsibilities shouldered by other Victorian women. Forster’s portrayal of Anglo-Indian women focuses primarily on their attitude to Indians. In the beginning of the novel an English nurse, who has worked in the Native State, declares her horror and disgust at her Indian patients. She advises Anglo-Indians that their only hope in the foreign country is to hold themselves “sternly aloof.” Mrs. Callendar, wife of the Civil Surgeon, goes even further and suggests that “the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let them die” (*Passage* 27). Forster’s Indians argue that the memsahibs of long standing in the subcontinent are the worst representatives of their British rulers. Newcomers like Adela and Mrs. Moore are appalled at the lack of affection and the failure of communication between Indians and Anglo-Indians; Adela fears that her marriage to Ronny, the City Magistrate, will make her like the others, “ungenerous and snobby about Indians,” and she “should feel too ashamed for words if [she] turned like them” (146). The
failure of British philanthropy in India makes it impossible to uphold the old ideology of empire according to which “England holds India for her own good” (112).24

Unlike the British colonial administrators in India, the Nawab Bahadur (a representative of the Indian wealthy class) is a good example of enlightened self-interest and philanthropic government. A “big proprietor and a philanthropist, a man of benevolence and decision,” he is respected by the Indian community and has a reputation for generosity and hospitality. Nawab Bahadur’s favorite remark is, “Give, do not lend; after death who will thank you?” and he believes that it is a disgrace to die rich (Passage 37). After the unexpected positive resolution of the lawsuit against Aziz, Nawab Bahadur happens to be the only person who can prevent an Indian riot. He checks Mahmoud Ali, who shrieks “Down with the Collector, down with the Superintendent of Police,” and cools the passions of the crowd about to attack the hospital. His “speech about Justice, Courage, Liberty, and Prudence, ranged under heads” (237) prevents the threatened raid of the hospital and the violence of the mob. The reasons for his action are twofold, prudence and self-preservation: he acts upon the knowledge that “nothing was gained by attacking the English, who had fallen into their own pit and had better be left there; moreover, he had great possessions and deprecated anarchy” (235). His public influence and his reputation for generosity suggest that India possesses the resources for self government, including its own benevolent class.

24 Where British philanthropy in India exists, as with the missionaries Mr. Graysford and Mr. Sorley, it is often ineffective and short sighted. Unlike the Anglo-Indian wives, the missionaries in Forster’s novel are dedicated to bringing the souls of the native subjects into an egalitarian afterlife, but they are notoriously ineffective at making true converts: their followers increase at times of famine when Mr. Graysford and Mr. Sorley hand out food and duly drop in more prosperous years (Forster, 101) to the kind men’s consternation and surprise. Indeed, Mr. Graysford and Mr. Sorley are comic characters that evoke Dickensian single-trait character portrayal. They are given to metaphysical discussions of the fate of the soul of animals in the afterlife, and leave the general impression of being divorced from reality (37-8).
Dr. Aziz’s admiration for the Indian moguls and his idealistic desire to liberate Indian women from the purdah also make a strong argument for an independent India but also inscribe India in the British Victorian philanthropic tradition. Aziz admires the generosity of the Indian emperors and praises “[g]ood will, and more good will and more good will” (Passage 52); he imagines a utopian society where “[w]e punish no one, no one, and in the evening we will give a great banquet with a nautch and lovely girls shall shine on every side of the tank with fireworks in their hands, and all shall be feasting and happiness until the next day, when there shall be justice as before—fifty rupees, a hundred, a thousand—till peace comes” (71). In addition to this cultural philanthropic myth, after the trial Aziz becomes convinced that only the end of the purdah will bring reform to India, and he devotes most of his poetry to this cause. His embrace of women’s emancipation contrasts with the position of Indian nationalists whose rhetoric applauded “the estimable Indian woman who devoted herself to home and family” (Procida 81) and opposed her virtues to the vices of the Anglo-Indian woman.

Anglo-Indians had long “cast purdah as the major obstacle to Indian womens’ full-fledged participation in civil society and imperial politics and to India’s advancement as a nation” (Procida 177). Indian women were “presented as the segment of Indian society most resistant to change and, simultaneously, as its most oppressed social group” (Procida 166). Queen Victoria herself “personally encouraged the vicereines to become involved in [philanthropic] activities; she herself took an interest in reports by women doctors associated with the Zenana Mission Movement of the 1870s” (Lind 29). As Frank Prochaska has written in his study Royal Bounty, the Crown deliberately fostered its image of benevolent protector of the people to survive the democratic upheavals at the turn of the twentieth century. Colonial administrators appointed themselves protectors of Indian womanhood and criticized abuses such
as child marriage, maltreatment of widows, seclusion of women (purdah) and inadequate education for girls. This is why when Dr. Aziz takes charge of philanthropic causes involving Indian women, he is making a claim for an independent India and a claim for Indian women’s independence. At the same time, Aziz’s embrace of women’s liberation is a harbinger of the new modernist sensibility that rejects domesticity for women and advocates their entrance into the public sphere, politics and the professions.

The introduction to The Annual Charities Register and Digest of 1911, along with many other philanthropic publications, recommended that the charity worker “check the individual judgment,” and repeatedly evoked a scientific ideal of charity that scarcely includes anything personal: “Doctors have to be educated methodically, registered, and certificated. Charity is the work of the social physician. It is to the interest of the community that it should not be entrusted to novices, or to dilettanti, or to quacks” (xix). Forster’s India, and Dr. Aziz in particular, add to this debate their rejection of organizational strictures and their preference for individual expression. Aziz reflects, “We can’t build up India except on what we feel. What is the use of all these reforms, and Conciliation Committees for Mohurram, and shall we cut the tazia short or shall we carry it another route, and Councils of Notables and official parties where the English sneer at our skins?” (Passage 117). Aziz’s philanthropy not only affirms Indian independence but also the autonomy of the modernist subject from state and imperial bureaucracies.

All Passion Spent

The most well-known example of British philanthropy in India was the Lady Dufferin Fund, or “The Countess Dufferin’s Fund for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women in
India.” Founded by the wife of the viceroy in 1885, in the words of Mary Procida, it “enjoyed the official patronage of the British aristocracy, Indian rulers, and even Queen Victoria herself” (171). It was customary for the present vicereine to be the titular head of the Lady Dufferin Fund, as a continuation of the work started by its founder. Although the goals of the Fund included “providing medical education for women doctors, hospital assistants, nurses and midwives, and to provide medical relief to the women (and children) of India through the establishment of hospitals, dispensaries, and wards under female supervision,” most of the vicereines and memsahibs primarily raised money for the Fund, and had little to do with the actual work to accomplish these goals. The money was distributed to the branches or the organization around India, and the actual care for Indian women and children was undertaken by women doctors recruited in Europe and the United States (Procida 174).

An example of a philanthropic Vicereine in modernist literature is Vita Sackville-West’s character Lady Deborah Slane in the novel *All Passion Spent*. While traveling across India on a viceregal visit, Lady Slane reluctantly stops looking at the landscape and at the butterflies in order to take up her duty and talk about the ophthalmia among the Indians to the wives of the missionaries (Sackville-West 138). She is not unkind, but her inclination is to spend her life more simply and more creatively. Empire, which bejewels her with riches and surrounds her with the deserved affection of her subordinates cannot make up for the career of an artist she has always craved. Philanthropy proves a weak substitute for the life of the creative self; it is a self-destructive self-abnegation rather than heroic selflessness. In many ways, Lady Slane is a good example of a philanthropic administrator; her portrait indicates both the sporadic interest of colonialists in Indian welfare, and their waning enthusiasm for active philanthropic action. Lady Slane finally rejects the philanthropic life altogether to spend her last years in peace and fond
friendships in a house in Hampstead. When she comes to Hampstead, “scarcely a part of London, so sleepy and village-like, with its warm red-brick houses and vistas of trees and distance that reminded her pleasantly of a Constable painting” (87), Lady Slane gives us reason to believe that she is relinquishing Empire and imperial and bourgeois philanthropy, for a more spiritual, individualist, and pre-capitalist life.

One might think so except for the final touch of empire, Mr. FitzGeorge’s enormous treasure, which briefly makes its way into Lady Slane’s hands. Deborah Slane becomes the heir to Mr. FitzGeorge’s collection of artifacts from all over the world, to dispose of as she chooses. Like the gifts of Empire, Mr. FitzGeorge’s gifts are the gifts of a stranger, and she bequeaths the collection to a public museum, and the money to the poor (Sackville-West 276). Once again, she seems ready to “fade slowly, to drift gently out of existence” (88), possibly as a premonition of the fate of the British Empire. Nevertheless, she is looking forward not merely to a gentle ending to life, but to as much pleasure as she can get from it. Her intimate relationship with her maid Genoux, her friendship with Mr. Bucktrout, and even Mr. FitzGeorge’s belated confession of love, are among the pleasures of her older years. Her gift of money and a priceless collection to the public museum is, on the one hand, a renunciation of Empire; however, on the other hand, it continues the imperial project by transferring the possession of treasures acquired abroad to a British museum that would enrich the life of the Metropolis with the riches of the world. Thus Lady Slane’s renunciation of Empire is indeed a premonition of the Empire’s end; like the crumbling house in Hampstead, invaded by spiders, wisps of hay and ivy, Empire, according to All Passion Spent, has entered its sunset stage. In this stage, attention is being transferred from imperial philanthropy to the welfare of the British nation, which is the beneficiary of FitzGeorge’s collection.
As seen in *A Passage to India* and in *All Passion Spent*, modernist writers saw philanthropy and empire as interconnected, and they repeatedly traced the relationship between modernist individualism and art on the one hand, and the possibilities of philanthropy and empire on the other. While the individualist characters in the two novels (Henry Fielding, Adela Quested, and Lady Slane) reject both philanthropy and empire, seeing them as obstacles to authentic human friendship and artistic fulfillment, the romantic idea of philanthropy continues to disturb the modernist imagination. Whether it is the myth of Esmiis Esmoor created by the Indians to honor the goodness of the mother of the imperial administrator Ronny Heaslop, or a belated foreign treasure that finds its way into the British public museum, the ideal of the imperial philanthropy is continuously re-inscribed in the modernist project. At the same time, it is clear from modernist writing that philanthropy has lost its ideological power as a justification for empire; philanthropy is both a subterfuge for gross acts of self-enrichment and an ideal by itself flawed. Nevertheless, modernist writers see possibilities for strengthening individualism and self-determination through the discussion of welfare and philanthropy.

**Rebecca West and the Balkans**

*At the Margins of Europe*

A similar transference of philanthropy from empire to the rising nation state is evidenced by Rebecca West’s major work, *Black Lamb, Grey Falcon*. Published in the autumn of 1941 in New York, and early in 1942 in London, *Black Lamb, Grey Falcon* was the outcome of Rebecca West’s three trips to Yugoslavia and her passion for the history, politics, and the people of the Balkans. According to Victoria Glendinning, Rebecca West made three trips to Yugoslavia: one
in the autumn of 1935, during which she was ill some of the time; one in the spring of 1937 with Henry Andrews, and a third in the early summer of 1938 (153-4). These trips are woven into one lengthy (500,000 words) and fantastic “travelogue” that Carl Rollyson called the “thousand and one nights” of “a modern Scheherazade” (Rebecca West 209).

It is hard to introduce Rebecca West’s massive work to the reader with any accuracy. Scholars have often remarked on its genre ambiguity and called it a mixture of “travel guide, scholarly history, anti-imperialist tract, and autobiography” (Lesinska 139). In Black Lamb, Grey Falcon, West discusses the history of the small Balkan nations in their struggle for existence and self-determination against empires: the Ottoman Empire, which overran the peninsula in the fourteenth century; the Austrian Empire; and Russia. In addition, she anticipates the German onslaught on Yugoslavia and throughout Europe; examines the role of Italy, the Roman emperors and Napoleon; recounts the past glory of Byzantium; and addresses British benevolence on the Balkans. In her prologue, West describes the history of violence that the Western public usually associates with the Balkans, including the assassination of King Alexander and Franz Ferdinand, and how the violent history of the Balkans has been translated into images of savagery and barbarity in the Western imagination.

Rebecca West’s enchantment with the Balkans has been variously interpreted. For Bonnie Kime Scott, “Yugoslavia is the colonial ‘other’ of numerous invading cultures, and a resource for seeing the psychological ‘primitive’ which West sees as the basis for the modern Western mind” (2: 150). In The Literary Legacy of Rebecca West, Carl Rollyson describes the travelogue as “a pastoral, a yearning for an idealized past, where men were men and women were women” (148). Zofia Lesinska interprets Black Lamb and Grey Falcon as “West’s representation of interwar Yugoslavia as the space of postcolonial difference within Europe”
Lesinska notes West’s “two-fold orientalizing trap” in her tendency to demonize Turkey and to romanticize the South Slavs (140), but she also stresses the anti-imperialism of West’s text: “First and foremost, Black Lamb and Grey Falcon challenges the ethnocentrism of Western knowledge. Throughout the text West struggles with the limitations of language and literary genres to create in her work a space for a marginalized nation, for the disadvantaged, for the poor, for women” (144). Thus, her work has a philanthropic, as well as personal exigence. It is undeniable that the life and customs of the Balkans are represented as romantically different from those in the West, but they are also represented with sympathy.25

The visibility of South Slav life, what West perceives as a well-known form of public display, is a special point of interest to the Western traveler. This “quality of visibility” makes the Balkans “so specially enchanting” and constitutes the major difference between the West and the East. At the sanatorium in Croatia, the author is surprised to see the patients enact their grief. It is unusual to the Western eye that the sufferers are “evidently preoccupied with the imaginative realization of their sickness;” the women clutching handkerchiefs to their lips “with the plangent pathos of la dame aux camélias, ” and men with “the sunrise mixed with sunset glamour of the young Keats.” Instead of interfering, their families sit around them and watch “these theatrical impersonations” with sympathy, “as audiences should” (Black Lamb 78).

Similarly, in Split, she witnesses a scene she would have never seen in the West: a young woman

25 Maria Todorova has argued that while scholars such as Edward Said have questioned Orientalism, the Balkans remain even today a frozen image of alterity: “Geographically inextricable from Europe, yet culturally constructed as “the other,” the Balkans became, in time, the object of a number of externalized political, ideological and cultural frustration[s] and have served as a repository of negative characteristics against which a positive and self-congratulatory image of the “European” and “the west” has been constructed. Balkanism conveniently exempted “the west” from charges of racism, colonialism, Eurocentrism and Christian intolerance: the Balkans, after all, are in Europe, they are white and they are predominantly Christian” (“The Balkans: From Discovery to Invention” 45).
on a stretcher who has lost all desire to live, and an old one in a chair who expresses love of
life, being carried on a ship. A crowd of mourners accompanies the beautiful listless girl; her
grave illness is apparently a well-known tragedy in the town (202). Women in Split are proud of
their femininity, of being able to bear and sustain life; and men enact virility accordingly. In
their insistence to represent the pleasant as well as unpleasant aspects of life, and in their habit of
self-examination, West finds a poetic intensity. It is perhaps this intensity, this theatrical flavor,
that gives *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* its special quality.

Not only do suffering, love, and death have a self-reflective, performative quality on the
Balkans, ideas and myths also continuously stand at a distance from themselves. One such
Balkan myth is the legend of the treachery of Brankowitch, one of King Lazar’s nobles, and how
his betrayal brought King Lazar’s defeat at the battle of Kossovo. Even Rebecca West’s Serbian
chauffeur Dragutin, who tells her the story, questions the veracity of the myth; perhaps, he says,
it was created to “take the sting out of [the truth].” Maybe it is true that Brankowitch betrayed
Lazar; or it may be that Brankowitch did not receive King Lazar’s orders; or most likely, as the
folk song has it, King Lazar lost the battle at Kossovo because he did not wish to fight, but to
gain a heavenly kingdom for eternity. The writer concludes that the South Slavs have the ability
to continuously question the myths they create: “With an inconsistency that was not dangerous
because it was admitted, they let their myth and the criticism of it coexist in their minds” (*Black
Lamb* 902). This may be the key to understanding West’s own inconsistencies in *Black Lamb
and Grey Falcon*. Perhaps the subjectivity which has often struck readers as controversial and
sometimes absurd, is modeled after what West understands to be the poetic self-examination of
the Slavs: a mixture of visibility and ambiguity, the ability to believe in a myth and to doubt it at
one and the same time. Just as the South Slavs poetically examine life “from the point of view of
[their] own experience,” in her writing, Rebecca West distances herself from her British home in order to examine her own ambiguous relationship with empire, philanthropy, liberalism, war, gender, and the Balkans.

“Never in the Balkans has Empire meant trusteeship.”

One of the major goals in writing her longest and best received book was to show the devastation that the greed and the mismanagement of empires have worked on the peninsula. *Black Lamb and Black Falcon* is a meditation on the detriments and benefits of empires among other things. Yugoslavia makes obvious (it manifests) the disadvantages of Empire. The story of the journey through Croatia, Dalmatia, Macedonia, Old Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia recounts over and over again the evils of foreign misrule:

I can think of no more striking relic of a crime than the despoilment of Macedonia and Old Serbia, where the Turks for five hundred years robbed the native population till they got them down to a point beyond which the process could not be carried any further without danger of leaving no victims to be robbed in the future. The poverty of Bosnians and Herzegovinians, except the Moslems and the Jews, is as ghastly an indictment of both the Turks and their successors, the Austrians. Dalmatia was picked clean by Venice. Croatia has been held back from prosperity by Hungarian control in countless ways that have left it half an age behind its Western neighbours in material prosperity. Never in the Balkans has Empire meant trusteeship. (*Black Lamb* 1092)

This and many similar passages make it clear that the author meant to expose the hypocrisy of empire in its philanthropic ideals, and that Rebecca West firmly stood behind her own words when she declared in the same travelogue, “I hate the corpses of empires, they stink as nothing else.” And yet, the careful reader will be somewhat puzzled by such a conclusion. First of all, he or she will have a hard time defining empire in Rebecca West’s cosmos; second, the reader
will be struck by the many strands of counter-argument, asserting that although empires are hideous, there is “a certain magnificence about a great empire in being” (*Black Lamb* 280).

Not only are there many empires in the book, but also the oppressed Balkan nations themselves reflect the brilliance of old Constantinople, its “austere Byzantine splendour” (*Black Lamb* 551). In the Persian designs on the sleeve of a Macedonian peasant’s dress, in the abstract, nonrepresentational embroideries of Balkan women, in the still, dignified, proud postures of women and “the pious gravity of the soldiers” (870) Rebecca West sees a culture that has fed on “the sweetness from the overturned cup of Constantinople” (639). In the religious obeisances of Balkan Christianity she finds the magic of the early church and a communal mass that pleasantly relies more on the visual than on the literary. The frescoes at Grachanitsa remind her of El Greco and the “[Byzantine] treasure house of tradition” where he found his inspiration (869). Serbia is also the heir to Byzantium with its identification between king and saint: it still kneels and prays in front of the mummified body of King Lazar, the last of the Namanyas. The “mythic piety” and reverence of the Slavs for their kings, dying and dead, the magical visibility of life on the Balkans in West’s account reach out to the glory of Byzantine civilization for credibility.

The enchantment with the civilization of Byzantium troubles the simplicity of the structure of the book. Empires are not merely decaying corpses, it appears, but repositories of art, glory, and last but not least, philanthropy. The British Empire also does, or used to do, a lot of good. Even though she confesses herself an “exasperated critic” of the British empire, West has also never been “fool enough to condemn man for conceiving the imperial theory, or to deny that it had often proved magnificent in practice” (1089). Rebecca West’s view of the imperial theory that colonization brings civilization and order is that it is “more than half humbug,” but she nevertheless believes in the philanthropy that sometimes follows imperial conquest: it
inspires to action those who fight plagues, floods, drought and famine, and those who provide justice which, “if not actually blind when governors and governed came into conflict, was as a general rule blindfolded” (1090). In a conversation with their friend and guide through Yugoslavia, the poet Constantine, both the narrator and her husband defend the uses of empire. In the words of West’s husband, “[I]f a people have wholly gone under, without a fringe that has kept its independence and its own folk-ways, strangers must butt in and help it get on its feet again. The trouble is that the kind of stranger who likes helping unfortunate people usually does not leave to set about it unless other members of his group see a military or commercial advantage to be got out of it.”26 Constantine, whose opinion it is that the new nation-states like Yugoslavia should treat their own malaria and raise their own downtrodden masses, agrees that there is some truth to it, although not a lot of poetry (Black Lamb 388).

In Eminent Victorians Lytton Strachey mocked Victorian benevolence and empire when he described General Gordon’s dedication to charity and spiritual pursuits. The General lived alone “[e]xcept for his boys and paupers,” and ate his “frugal meals” at a table with a drawer so that the loaf and plate could be quickly swept underneath when his poor visitors came. He was particularly fond of his “ragged street arabs and rough sailor-lads” and called them his “Wangs,” like the soldiers of the Ever Victorious Army which he himself assembled and trained in Shanghai (219-20). Unlike Strachey, in Black Lamb and Grey Falcon, the mature West seems to allow and support the ideal of imperial benevolence and of a philanthropic individual.

26 Carl Rollyson notes in his biography of Rebecca West that Henry’s father, Lewis Andrews, and his two brothers, had a successful import-export business. Because of it, Lewis’s family took residence in Burma where Henry was born (143). Victoria Glendinning notes that the Andrews family “joined the British East India merchant company of Wallace brothers and were posted to Rangoon.” There they were re-Anglicized and may be said to have been a part of the British Empire (131-2).
Sometimes, she speculates, the Balkans can accept the gifts of the West without fear, as the mines at Kossovska Mitrovitsa show. Here the individuals that empire creates, “so entirely excellent, so single-minded and honest and fastidious” (*Black Lamb* 952), are finally doing some good for the impoverished Slavs; “it seemed.” West concludes after some deliberation, “probable that this contact was innocent” (938). The mines are managed by British and American engineers, under the leadership of the benevolent, liberal Gospodin Mac, originally from Scotland. The family of the Macs has been long involved in the projects of empire: they have lived for over twenty years in South America working a similar business, and after a short retirement in Scotland have been called again to their duty in Serbia where Gospodin Mac’s expertise seems indispensable. And while Mrs. Mac, like all people who have long lived in exile, sometimes gets paranoid about the unfamiliar world around engulfing her like “a spreading sore, bubo of a plague that will infect and kill if there is not instant flight to the aseptic” (945), she has enough discipline and self-possession not to interfere with the foreign culture and to act in the best interests of the Balkan workers. This trip to the mines is not chaperoned by Constantine, and it reveals Western values, protestant ethics, and benevolent capitalism at the center of the Balkans at their best. England itself, “exists with the consent of the Gospodin Macs” (*Black Lamb* 957).

Gospodin Mac is a benevolent employer who promotes tolerance and understanding between the different Balkan ethnicities that work for him. He champions the cause of the Albanians who were not so well received by Serbs and Croats because they had acted on behalf of Turkey when Serbia was under Turkish rule, partly because the Albanians are good workers,

27 “Gospodin,” the Serbian word for “Mister.”
partly because they are charming, and partly because he admires their trade unionism. He
does not hesitate to fire a British engineer and his wife who treat the workers disrespectfully; he
generously compensates an Albanian peasant and his family for the land that the mine takes
over; he is paternalistic; he cares about the ecological devastation that his mine wreaks
sometimes on the mountain; he is revered by his chauffeur for bringing to Serbia the septic tank
(928); he donates money for a local school; and last but not least, he brings the “glint of money”
(946) to this devastated region of Europe.

West blames the demise of empires on overextension and suggests that moderation and
healthy habits can salvage some of the advantages of colonialism. She evokes masturbation in
order to conjure the image of a healthy, and (sexually) vibrant imperialism: the Turkish empire
came to ruin because “A people that extends its empire too far from its base commits the sin of
Onan and spills its seed upon the ground” (Black Lamb 908). This statement sounds strange
against West’s commentary on Turkey and its sensuality as the only philanthropist on the
Balkans, but it serves to introduce her discussion of racial degeneration in Britain. Empire
overextended can lead to racial degeneration and empire too vast leads to destruction and self-
destruction. Even the high-minded, civilized British pioneers, who “had gone into strange lands
as youths, it might almost be said as children” and had overcome “climates that were torturing
misconducts of the sun and snows, and events that were monstrous births that should have been
kept in bottles in the Surgeon’s Hall of circumstance” (937), are helpless to save either South-
Eastern Europe or England. Moreover, “[England] would certainly not save them, if their
existence was at stake. These people stood for life; it is impossible to maintain that a large part
of England does not stand for death” (948). The individuals that imperial exploration produces,
and especially the scrupulous, fair-minded and benevolent individuals, preserve in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* their halo of glory.

*Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is Rebecca West’s attempt to salvage the liberal individualist and philanthropist from the wreckage of history and from the failures of imperialism. In his book on *Liberalism and Empire*, Uday Singh Mehta points out not only that “liberalism and empire were tightly braided threads” (194), but that empire rested on liberal ideas, including “the unselfish idea:” “The will to power that liberals do express for the empire is always as a beneficial compensation for someone else’s powerlessness relative to a more elevated order.” (191). Rebecca West seems to attempt to disentangle the threads but in fact affirms a Victorian ideal of empire and of imperial philanthropy. She calls for the defense of empire and nation when she relates the legend of the Serbian King Lazar and his troops, allegedly betrayed by Brankowitch and by their own indecisiveness. Like this Balkan betrayal, there is a curse on British progressive explorers, a force that binds them to destruction as surely as their intentions are “wholly admirable” (*Black Lamb* 948). The disease of the West, “its corruption,” “its desire for death,” and “its complacency towards its disease” (952) originate in a mysterious lack if vitality, sexual and biological. In order for the West to survive, according to *Black Lamb, Grey Falcon*, it needs to revisit the ideals of liberalism, philanthropy, and empire or be defeated by “a dark force impelling [liberal and progressive people] to trace with their actions, so delicate and graceful when considered separately, a hideous and gloomy pattern” (*Black Lamb* 952).
It is interesting that Rebecca West situates the Balkans on the map of British imperial politics and philanthropy as early as the prologue of her work. The Balkans may not be on the map of the British Empire, but they have “played a curious role in the history of British benevolence” (*Black Lamb* 19). West asserts that from the nineteenth century onwards, the Balkans were a favorite subject of British public concern, with different philanthropists adopting different “pet Balkan people” and their causes (*Black Lamb* 20). The theme of philanthropy, and of British philanthropy in particular, runs through the lengthy narrative somewhat surprisingly for a charity-basher such as the young Rebecca appeared to be in her writings for *The Clarion* in 1912. In an article about the Personal Service Association, the young Rebecca West had criticized philanthropists as smug, hypocritical, oppressive towards the poor, and self-serving. In the opening paragraph of the article, she had defined charity as follows:

Charity is an ugly trick. It is a virtue grown by the rich on the graves of the poor. Unless it is accompanied by sincere revolt against the present social system, it is cheap moral swagger. In former times it was used as fire insurance by the rich, but now that the fear of Hell has gone along with the rest of revealed religion, it is used either to gild mean lives with nobility or as a political instrument. (Marcus 127)

28 “English persons…of humanitarian and reformist disposition constantly went out to the Balkan peninsula to see who was in fact ill-treating whom, and, being by the very nature of their perfectionist faith unable to accept the horrid hypothesis that everybody was ill-treating everybody else, all came back with a pet Balkan people established in their hearts as suffering and innocent, eternally the massacree and never the massacrer. The same sort of person, devoted to good works and austerities, who is traditionally supposed to keep a cat and a parrot, often set up on the hearth an image of the Albanian or the Bulgarian or the Serbian or the Macedonian Greek people, which had all the force and blandness of pious fantasy. The Bulgarians as preferred by the Buxton brothers, and the Albanians as championed by Miss Durham, strongly resembled Sir Joshua Reynolds’s picture of the Infant Samuel” (*Black Lamb* 20).
Even though West distrusted charity, the care with which she recorded every aspect of life on the Balkans testifies both to her concern for the past, present, and future of the South Slavs and to her attempt to “sensitize,” to borrow Bonnie Kime Scott’s words for it, “the public to a country that she feared would disappear with the advance of fascism” (1: 235). Carl Rollyson has noted that West spent five years of her life, at a great financial cost and “to the utter exhaustion of her mind and body,” on her book about Yugolsavia (Rebecca West 207). In this, she approached the austerity and devotion of the humanitarians and adventurers she mentions in her travelogue.

Quite unlike the young Rebecca, the author of Black Lamb and Grey Falcon not only records the good works of various benefactors of the peninsula, but (together with her husband) gets involved in charitable ventures herself. For instance, Rebecca and Henry Andrews give pennies away to beggars, girls, children with flowers, a belly dancer, and old Moslem women; they donate money to a church; they help a young man find work at the mines in Kosovska Mitrovitsa; they discuss literature with an eager young man; they buy a requisitioned white horse and return it to its owner; and they generally express and act upon their concern for Yugoslavia and Europe under the impending Nazi invasion. In reality, Henry Andrews did a lot during the first years of Hitler’s regime to save his friends in Germany and Eastern Europe by using his business contacts and at a great risk to himself. Both West and Andrews were aware sooner than most of their contemporaries of the dangers and meaning of the Nazi regime, and they worried about the future of Europe29 (Rollyson, Rebecca 157).

29 In chapter 14, “Anticipating the Apocalypse,” Carl Rollyson describes Rebecca’s worry about Henry and quotes her as saying, “He risked his life again and again to get people and their money out of Germany, never giving way to fear” (157).
The acts of philanthropy as West describes them in her book differ from and oppose the Victorian spirit of public mindedness. They are not calculated to educate or control, and the writer expresses a keen sympathy for the acts of subversion on the part of the poor who contrive ways to use charity to their own benefit. Although Rebecca West repeatedly gives pennies to beggars, she enjoys her contact with the people with whom she interacts; she is more interested in the resourcefulness, beauty, and immediacy of the poor people she meets than in social engineering. Her altruism is associated with pleasure, just as Victorian charity is associated with duty. In this her ideas of gift-giving differ from those of her Swabian chauffeur.

A Swabian is “a German belonging to one of those families which were settled by Maria Theresa on the lands round the Danube between Budapest and Belgrade, because they had gone out of cultivation during the Turkish occupation and had to be recolonized” (Black Lamb 262). A gentle and comical figure, the chauffeur tries repeatedly to prevent Rebecca and her husband from giving pennies to the undeserving and to direct their “disposition to wastefulness” to better channels. As “a gentle and scrupulous being,” the chauffeur prefers to give his mite to the citizens of the poor Bosnia, Herzegovina and Macedonia rather than to the better-off population of Croatia and Dalmatia, who “had never known the misery of Turkish rule” (Black Lamb 274). He is very disapproving, however, when West attempts to give pennies to three beautiful young girls in Gruda, to gypsies, and to her belly-dancing acquaintance, Astra.

In her spontaneous generosity, West also differed from the most influential charitable organization in Britain, the Charity Organization Society. The head of the organization, C. S. Loch, described the responsibilities of the charitable and the methods of scientific casework and assistance in the 1911 edition of The Annual Charities Register and Digest. The charitable, he maintained, “must learn all the circumstances, by the consideration of which he will be enabled
to decide whether or how he can help effectually.” In order to do this, the almoner will need three kinds of knowledge: “a knowledge of the particular facts and of the social life of the class of which the person in distress is a member (for this purpose the services of an inquiry officer may be desirable), and a general knowledge of character—combined with a discernment of the value of evidence, and, thirdly, a knowledge of the modes and possibilities of charitable assistance (for these purposes a well-educated and instructed almoner is indispensable).” In addition to making inquiries and doing casework, it is necessary, argued Loch, “to check the individual judgment” and solicit the consultation of a committee. This committee should consist of “members of different classes and having various kinds of influence and special knowledge.” Finally, not merely anyone can give assistance: “Many have no aptitude for almoner’s work; none can do it to good purpose without study and training” (xix). The bureaucratic air of the new social casework of the C.O.S. was antithetical to both Victorian philanthropy and to modernist individualism. West’s indiscriminate charity in Yugoslavia is a reaction as much against the Victorian public-mindedness as it is against the constraints that C.O.S. put on individual judgment and self-expression. In her descriptions of both benefactors and beneficiaries of charity, the author repeatedly sides with the unpredictable and resourceful “dilettanti” (Loch xix) against the fabric of social conventions and constraints.

In Dalmatia, near the village of Gruda, West and her companions see “three young girls, lovely as primroses,” perhaps fifteen or sixteen, and beautiful as goddesses. They are nicely individualized in their beauty: “This was no case of a racial tendency imposing itself on the mass, each germ-cell had made an individual effort at beauty. One was black, one was chestnut, one was ash-blonde; they were alike only in their golden skins, their fine eyebrows, their full yet neat mouths, the straightness of their bodies within their heavy black woolen gowns.” The girls
carry little bouquets and step forward, “laughing and stretching out their hands and crying out, ‘Pennies, pennies,’ as if they [are] not only begging but were ridiculing the ideas of beggary and benevolence alike” (Black Lamb 262). Moved by their youth, beauty, poverty, and good humor, the two search for three tenpenny pieces, but have none. They need to ask for help their Swabian chauffeur, but he pretends he only has one tenpenny piece and comments that this generosity is very wrongheaded: “It is very wrong. They should not beg at all. Begging is disgraceful. And even if it were excusable, three tenpenny pieces is far too much” (Black Lamb 263). In the opinion of the chauffeur, irresponsible gift-giving of this sort encourages the young to impudence and will bear ill fruits when they are older. Admitting that her action is in some way wrong, the author nevertheless enjoys the impulse toward generosity.

Even though the narrator’s generosity to the three beautiful girls at Gruda is unpremeditated and far from disciplining, it is an impulsive tribute to their exotic attraction. Even though the writer realizes that “in spite of their beauty [the girls] would be poor all their lives long” (Black Lamb 263), and that this is a “violation of a promise” all women understand, she experiences her encounter with them much more as a delight than as a sobering or depressing incident.

West’s generosity is an affirmation of her own independence also in the way in which West deals with her chauffeur and with the belly-dancer Astra. While the chauffeur disparages the “danseuse de ventre” Astra, who dances in cafes, Rebecca West befriends, listens to, learns dancing from, and helps monetarily her marginalized friend. Even though the Swabian chauffeur has taken the “white man’s burden” to maintain civilization in this corner of Europe, West does not treat him charitably. He comes across as a figure from a morality play whose presence rebukes West for her lack of good sense and her husband for his carelessness in allowing her to
befriend persons of dubious reputation. The chauffeur goes so far as to hide the author’s bag in a Sarajevo cafe in case West should feel a “charitable impulse towards [her] unsuitable friend” (314). His self-righteous propriety overwhelms the writer. She can scarcely reply to his rebuke because she fears that he will, “in the loathsome manner of a miracle play,” answer, “I am Reason” or “I am Conscience,” and that it would be true” (310). Nevertheless, his common sense is blind to the truth: “He spoke with authority out of the mass of his ideal world, which was almost as solid as if it were real because it had been conceived by his solid mind: a world in which people with money were also reasonable people, who did not give alms to the unworthy and stayed indoors when it was not safe outdoors. And in its blindish-looking eyes begged us to remember that we were English and therefore to refrain from acting like these Slavs” (Black Lamb 314). By rejecting his “truth” of what makes a good citizen, Rebecca West erodes the claims of empire and class to a civilizing and philanthropic purpose. Being on the fringes of Europe and “acting like these Slavs” empowers her to take a second look at philanthropy and to emancipate it from its didacticism and control.

Even though West resists the discipline of bourgeois public spiritedness, she embraces the philanthropy of the Dalmatian aristocracy. In her portrayal of the family of the Cardinal of Korchula she takes the conservative position that deplores the politics of street pressure and looks nostalgically back to the philanthropy and patronage of noblesse oblige. The Cardinal and his family care a lot about the people of Yugoslavia; they believe that now the Balkan Slavs have an opportunity to resist the discrimination and oppression of empire and govern themselves so that their country prospers; but they deplore the Communist theory which calls for a redistribution of wealth. Social conservatives, these hereditary Dalmatian aristocrats believe that they know best what the people of Korchula want: jobs, and water, and trees, and opportunities
for development of the region; they, too, are the caring fathers of their people and are trying hard to get what is necessary for the community as fast as possible (217). West believes that their concern for the people is genuine but fears that their days are outnumbered; the world in the twentieth century, a world that opens new possibilities for the participation of the masses in the public sphere and brings new challenges to democracy, will not conform to their expectations. They are as outdated as the aristocracy of Britain. As they sit in their parlor, they are as if being engulfed by the oblivion of history: “Innocent in their misapprehension, bright with charity and public spirit, but puzzled by the noise of some distant riot for which their intimate knowledge of the civic affairs had not prepared them, the father and mother and son sat in the white circle under the chandelier, the darkness in the courtyard and beyond now entirely night” (Black Lamb 218).

West’s admiration for noblesse oblige goes hand in hand with her idealized and even pastoral depiction of the subjects of such philanthropy. In opposition to the public-mindedness of her Swabian chauffeur, for whom she retains a measure of respect, the author celebrates the resourcefulness and vitality of the poor. She sympathizes with the aspirations of two “old-fashioned Christian Socialists” (Black Lamb 755), a lawyer and his wife, who discuss a robbery gone awry in Macedonia (the lawyer and his wife contend that the robbers had been punished too severely). And in Bitolj, West admires the daring of “a miserable old Moslem woman, like all her kind veiled and swathed in black” (760) who approaches her several times begging for alms. Since West cannot distinguish the second and third beggar from the first, she gives her alms every time believing it is a different mendicant. The clever woman even “bargain[s] with a cab driver to take her the short drive across the bridge at the fee of half a dinar.” The outraged citizens of Bitolj who witness these transactions finally interfere on Rebecca West’s behalf; they
stop the dishonest beggar whose tricks disgrace their town. Soon after this incident, the waiter in a café at the edge of the river tries to slip a ten-dinar coin Constantine gives him up his sleeve. He is “quite admirable when he was asked to send it down again.” Such incidents, objectionable to the “public-spirited population of Bitolj,” are amusing and entirely enjoyable to the author. She celebrates the individualism of the perpetrators and characterizes the incidents as “that amusing rascally parasitism which is a part of the Arabian Nights atmosphere” of the city (761). The giving and receiving of gifts engender other humorous moments in the book such as the episode where the author and her husband decide to purchase a requisitioned white pack-horse and return it to its owner. Such orientalizing approach signals West’s retreat from her youthful class protest and her former condemnation of philanthropy.

Although West sympathizes with the clever Moslem beggar and with the cunning waiter in Bitolj, she clearly describes both in terms of class. This distinction between the West and the Balkans in class terms is especially visible in her humorous descriptions of the comic ransoming of the horse. The purchase of the horse is realized with the mediation of a happy Constantine, who is as excited as a man who has just received an inheritance (Black Lamb 780). West’s husband thinks that it is quite “an agreeable thing to do” (780). The matter is directed with great ceremony and when it is finally ascertained that the English people are willing to pay the equivalent of six dollars for the horse and a deed of gift is written, the owner of the horse finally appears looking angry instead of pleased. He is “a bearded man wearing a round fur cap and tawny homespuns” (781). The occasion is represented as a theatrical happening; the crowd, says the narrator, “behaved like a stage crowd, turning to each other and making gestures of surprise” and sharing the latest developments. It finally transpires that the owner of the horse has taken them for traveling moneylenders and expects that they would exact an outrageous interest on
their gift. As if in a final twist of this comical story, when he finally understands the truth, the owner of the horse thanks his benefactors profusely—talking “tough baby.” Perhaps he is a former immigrant to America who had gotten involved with the wrong crowd. Another former immigrant, a shoemaker from Toronto, passes by, rebuking the couple for their whimsical charity: “Is it true that you have bought this man’s horse back for him? For crying out loud, why did you do it? Why did you do it?” (Black Lamb 782). When the owner of the horse, dressed in Balkan costumes uses the words and mannerisms of a lower-class American, he manifests in a comic twist the class position that the Balkans occupy in the Western imagination. To West, the Balkans embody the best of the vitality, resilience, common sense, fighting spirit, humor, and sincerity that are commonly ascribed to the lower classes. Ironically, in her book about the Balkans, Rebecca West legitimizes philanthropy with the same admiration for the working classes that the young Rebecca West used to denounce charity in England. Only the personal aspect of West’s benevolence and her affective relationships with the people she encounters separate the people she helps in Yugoslavia from the unfortunate subjects of the Personal Service Association.30

Rebecca West’s Feminist Historiography

Balkan history and politics in Black Lamb serve as a foil for Western history and politics. West’s Balkans are depicted in sharply contrasting tones: bloody and repulsive as well as pleasure-loving; masculine as well as feminine. Despite the fact that these dichotomies tend to

break down in West’s own narrative, they effectively further her argument in favor of Britain’s entrance in the war against Nazi Germany. In her interpretation of the difficult yet hopeful Balkan history, Rebecca West explores feminine philanthropy versus masculine aggression in order to argue that goodness is essential to the survival of the nation (the Yugoslavian nations as well as the British nation). Thus she creates a notion of feminine history or a philanthropic history.

In West’s narrative, the history of the Balkans was an uncharitable history even before the Turkish conquest of the peninsular; its present is rooted in superstitious observances like the ones that take place at the sacrificial rock on which the innocent are slaughtered so that people can gain glory in heaven (the battle at Sarajevo) or benefit in this life (so that women can beget children, for instance). Its origin leads back to the atrocities of the Byzantine emperor Bazil, also called Bulgar killer, who defeated the army of the powerful Bulgarian emperor Samuel. After taking fifteen thousand of the Bulgarian soldiers prisoners, he blinded them all, leaving only one one-eyed man for every hundred so that he might guide the rest home to their emperor. When Samuel saw his army all blind, he died, as Constantine said, “for he was a true emperor” (*Black Lamb* 757-8). Such haunting evidence of history’s cruelty leaves its mark on the religious beliefs of the people, from the sacrifices on the rock to the worship of a crucified Christ to the cult of Mithras. The reason for this unpleasant and uncharitable history seems to be the masculine principle:

All women believe that some day something supremely agreeable will happen, and that afterwards all of life will be agreeable. All men believe that some day they will do something supremely disagreeable, and that afterwards life will move on so exalted a plane that all considerations of the agreeable and disagreeable will prove petty and superfluous. The female creed has the defect of passivity, but it is surely preferable. (*Black Lamb* 430)
The proof of this statement is our knowledge of history, as it has been made by men; a symbol of this belief is the cult of Mithras, in which women were not allowed as worshippers, that celebrates the origin of life from the blood and marrow of a dying bull and the beasts from its sperm. In the book, pleasure and charity are repeatedly gendered feminine, and empire and the destructive tendency in humans—masculine. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* can be read as a feminist historiography, which uses a newly defined philanthropy-as-pleasure in order to question progress and masculine accounts of it.31

*Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* has often been criticized for essentializing gender characteristics and for its ambiguous attitude towards homosexuality. Bonnie Kime Scott, for instance, concludes that West “essentializes, dividing the functions of humanity into feminine nurture and masculine culture. Whereas their part of the labor should be to provide a potentializing, truly “cultural” environment, men inflict the institution of war instead” (2: 160). West’s book offers a gallery of attractive femininity, and it is often the women who elicit her admiration: the “Bulbul,” “liquid with generosity” (*Black Lamb* 324), the maternal, curvaceous belly-dancer Astra, the mother of the Bulbul whose household “rock[s] gently on a tide of giving and receiving” (399) and who parts graciously with her guest by giving her a bunch of lilacs and sprinklings her hands with a scent of rose oil (401). Observing the proud mothers and wives of Korchula, and the value that their men place on the ability of woman to give pleasure and beget

31 In his book *Rebecca West: Heroism, Rebellion, and the Female Epic*, Bernard Schweizer discusses *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*’s epic and feminist qualities: “Besides identifying a catalog of formal characteristics that constitute the book’s epic framework, I also demonstrate how the ideologically charged elements of heroism, quest, and cultural critique are given a distinctly feminist coloring in *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*. Specifically, West argues that spiritual and philosophical knowledge, as well as the pursuit of beauty, are true objects of the female quest, thereby expressing her preference for brains over brawn. Moreover, she elevates suffrage, emancipation, and the attainment of women’s rights to the status of legitimate objects of heroism, considering any success in these areas as evidence of women’s epic calling.” (12).
and raise children, West remarks, “It is strange, it is heartening, to stray into a world where men are still men and women still women” (208). West uses the cultural myths of gender in order to raise questions about history and oppression in the minds of her readers. She attributes the failure of British empire to the kind of degeneration of the race that can no longer produce “real men: men who have “mastery over material” other than driving a car and who look more virile than either “the cityish kind who wears spectacles without shame” or “the high-nosed young man, who is somebody’s secretary or is in the Foreign Office” (Black Lamb 208). 32

At the same time, however, on the Balkans West is aware of the oppression of women who are forced to wear the veil, the black costumes at Mostar, or dance in heavy woolen gowns. She sympathizes with the sad faces of the women in Tzerna Gora, a Macedonian town notorious for the heartless exploitation of wives. In a masculine culture she takes to be a standard for virility, she observes Slav soldiers who seem “devout and dedicated” as nuns but can also be fierce warriors (Black Lamb 401), a more androgynous image of the male gender than the narrative acknowledges. Similarly, West celebrates the adventurous adolescent schoolgirls steeped in the radical rhetoric of Stepniak, Kropotkin, and Tolstoy side by side with the maternal and curvaceous figures of Astra and the Bulbul: the “little dears” from aristocratic families in Dalmatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Croatia learn Russian in the imperial boarding school for girls only to put it to subversive uses by reading the Russian anarchists and Christian socialists (353). Neither is Oriental pleasure, which Rebecca West calls “the only foreign missionary which has ever benefited the Balkans” (1093), always ennobling on the Balkans.

32 Lesinska has suggested also that “[r]eflections on the gender configurations in Yugoslavia and in the industrialized world prompt West to examine received interpretations of cultural progress and regress” (149).
Despite the deceptiveness of Balkan visibility and the elusive simplicity of gender on this “Arabian nights” peninsular, West manages to deploy the cultural constructs of gender in order to create the cultural myth of a good society, a society of cooperation and caring:

Goodness is adorable, and it is immortal. When it is trodden down into the earth it springs up again, and human beings scrabble in the dust to find the first green seedling of its return. The stock cannot survive except by the mutual kindness of men and women, of old and young, of state and individual. Hatred comes before love, and gives the hater strange and delicious pleasures, but its works are short-lived; the head is cut from the body before the time of natural death, the lie is told to frustrate the other rogue’s plan before it comes to fruit. Sooner or later society tires of making a mosaic of these evil fragments; and even if the rule of hatred lasts some centuries it occupies no place in real time, it is a hiatus in reality, and not the vastest material thefts, not world-wide raids on mines and granaries, can give it substance. (Black Lamb 1146)

An example of such society is Yugoslavia, a country that is not only more heteronormative but more philanthropic. Because of the Yugoslavian resistance to Nazi invasion, West called them “benefactors of the West” (Black Lamb 1149). Just like in the fourteenth century when they stopped the Turkish invasion in Europe, the Yugoslavs had again “given Great Britain a valuable respite” (1149). West’s praise of philanthropy in Black Lamb, Grey Falcon is part of her conservative characterization of gender and intertwined with her recurrent references to biology, procreation, nation, and empire. A perfectly philanthropic society, she argues, has clearly delineated gender boundaries; in this ideal society, both (masculine) resistance and (feminine) pleasure are essential to survival. In contrast with her early and radical works, in Black Lamb Rebecca West engages questions of philanthropy only to argue that the survival of Western civilization depends on reinstating the rigid class and gender boundaries of her Balkan political imaginary.
Conclusion

The works examined in this chapter by no means exhaust the wealth of modernist responses to the issues of empire and philanthropy. Modernism responded to the failure of imperial philanthropy with such works as Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, which explored the degeneration of the noble and honorable imperial adventurer into savagery, inhumanity and dishonor. It variously shored the ruins of a crumbling civilization against stoicism, or art (Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*), or even religion (T.S Eliot’s *The Four Quartets*). But if the British Empire was crumbling, the myth of imperial philanthropy endured. When philanthropy was no longer part of the imperial project, it returned to the heart of the empire, as in William Booth’s *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, to mediate the welfare problems of the metropolis. Even when Vita Sackville-West’s Vicereine withdrew in her last English home, empire and welfare found their way to her doorstep. And when, on the eve of the Second World War, Rebecca West visited Yugoslavia, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* testified to the enduring interest of modernism in the intertwining strands of British imperialism, philanthropy, and modernist subjectivity.
American Philanthropy:

the Great War, Immigration, and the Progressive Era

Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Conceptions of American Philanthropy

American individualism and the pursuit of the American dream, as they are represented in the works of Horatio Alger, extol virtues such as loyalty, hard work, thrift, faith, clean living and private enterprise. Upon examination, however, we find that philanthropy, sympathy, compassion, and the helping hand are intricately connected with Alger’s vision of individual success. Alger’s homeless boys and lost young men are often lifted out of their poverty and set on the path of success by the hand of a providential benefactor. One of the short stories by Alger, “Thomas Mordeaunt’s Investment” provides a key example of this.

In “Thomas Mordaunt’s Investment,” a story set in mid-nineteenth-century Boston, Thomas Mordaunt, a merchant, happens to prevent the suicide of a young man who is trying to fling himself into the river to “terminate a life [he has] wasted” (Horatio Alger Digital Serials Project). The merchant “lend[s him] a helping hand”; he takes the young man to his home, learns his name and life story, hears how he frittered away his fortune on drink and “carousals,” and provides him with five hundred dollars on the sole condition that Frederick Evan (this strange young man) will pledge to “abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors.” The promise is made, and the Frederick leaves. Seven years later, the merchant’s gift comes back to him in the form of a twenty-thousand dollar check: Frederick, having become rich in the California gold rush, comes back to inquire how Thomas Mordaunt is doing at a time of economic crisis. He saves his benefactor from ruin and becomes a partner in his firm. The story ends with a Biblical
allusion: “The bread which the merchant had cast upon the waters had come back to him after many days. But it was his greatest satisfaction that he had rescued a young man from destruction, and led him back from wrong courses to a useful and honorable life” (Horatio Alger Digital Serials Project).

The story “Thomas Mordaunt’s Investment” addresses an economy of giving and philanthropy. Mordaunt supposedly “casts his bread on the water” when he rescues Frederick; the giver seemingly does not expect a return. But the story nevertheless teaches the readers that there is a return for every gift, and not only in heaven. The reward for Thomas Mordaunt is not only moral (“his greatest satisfaction” is “that he had rescued a young man from destruction”), but it is also material. In addition to the intangible returns of generosity, Mr. Mordaunt receives back his original “investment” with interest: philanthropy is packaged as a business transaction. The young man who receives the gift does not remain indebted to the merchant; he proceeds to put Mr. Mordaunt in his debt. The circle of exchange is complete here; and in addition to restitution, the giving and the philanthropy produce economic growth: the original gift of $500 makes Frederick’s fortune in California and saves Mr. Mordaunt’s firm from the “sudden commercial crisis.” Philanthropy makes sense on the market as well as in the moral realm; the gift is represented as an enlightened way to credit both your soul and your purse.

During the Gilded Age, the business tycoons and the captains of industry who had acquired immense fortunes took American philanthropy further away from its communal, Biblical interpretation, and encased it in a business suit. In his essay “Wealth,” published in the North American Review in June 1889, Andrew Carnegie stated that “The problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth, that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship.” Carnegie believed that “The man who dies rich dies
disgraced” and recommended that millionaires invest their wealth during their lifetimes to uplift the “best of the masses of the people” and provide ladders for the poor with “naturally bright minds.” Carnegie preferred to sponsor cultural and artistic charities: universities, public libraries, hospitals and research, public parks, music and art, swimming pools, and churches.

For Carnegie, philanthropy was a continuation of business practice, a matter of “the proper administration of wealth,” a duty for those of “superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer.” In his Darwinist interpretation, the best, brightest, and most successful were called upon to facilitate the evolution of the race and to benefit the community by becoming “the mere trustee[s] and agent[s] for [their] poorer brethren.” The essay attracted attention and some dispute in England: “An English critic, astounded by the brashness of Carnegie’s scheme, named it the gospel of wealth to distinguish it from the gospel of Christianity. With customary good humor Carnegie accepted the label, and, as usual, he won the encounter; for who can deny that “the gospel of wealth” sounds better and stronger than “wealth” (Bremner 106-7). Carnegie’s philanthropy is a good example of the individualistic philosophy behind organized charitable trusts administered by the very wealthy at the turn of the twentieth century.

Organized or impulsive, personal or communal, philanthropy in the United States has received its fair share of criticism. Robert Bremner 1960 book on American Philanthropy, for example, dwells on the various attacks on this institution.33 Bremner’s work raises questions

33 Criticism of philanthropy and distrust of philanthropists are of course not peculiar to the United States, but there has been no lack of either in this country. Our literature abounds in portraits of foolish and hypocritical philanthropists. Newspaper and magazine editors decry the activities of “do gooders” and “bleeding hearts”; conservatives denounce “sentimental humanitarianism”; and radicals sneer at the “palliatives” offered by the “mere philanthropic reform.” The prejudice against philanthropy is felt even by its practitioners. Many of our most active and generous benefactors resent being called philanthropists and deny that their works have philanthropic purpose. Until quite recently theoretical writings on the subject of philanthropy seem to have consisted mainly, and sometimes exclusively, in condemnations of “unwise giving” (Bremner 2).
about the possibility of giving that underlie the discourse of philanthropy, yet it provides the reader with a concise history of American gift-giving and investigates the multiplicity of American attitudes to philanthropic work. He offers a nuanced affirmation of giving, public and private, as well as an ongoing inquiry into the methods, motives, consequences, and purpose of philanthropy. According to his study, generosity, despite its contradictions, has been an essential part of American identity:

Ever since the seventeenth century, when Cotton Mather announced that Boston’s helpfulness and readiness to every good work were well and favorably known in Heaven, Americans have regarded themselves as an unusually philanthropic people. In the twentieth century, celebration of American philanthropy has reached such heights that one can scarcely read a newspaper or magazine without being reminded, in editorials or advertisements, that the United States is the country with a heart, that giving is the great American game, and that philanthropy ranks as one of the leading industries of the age. Americans seem never to tire of saying, or of hearing, that they are generous to a fault—the most compassionate, open-handed people the world has ever known. The philanthropic streak in the national character is taken so much for granted that it is sometimes deemed more a genial failing than an asset or virtue. (Bremner 1-2)

But how did Americans perceive generosity and how did they treat this national virtue (or fault) in American writing at the turn of the last century?

In the first decade and a half of the twentieth century, “[o]pportunities for giving, already numerous in 1900, increased enormously.” A number of national organizations, such as “the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, National Tuberculosis Association, American Cancer Society, Goodwill Industries, the Lighthouse, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Urban League, American Association for Labor Legislation, National Child Labor Committee, and a hundred other leagues, associations and committees came into being.” Carnegie’s largest foundation, Carnegie Corporation, was established in 1911, and the
war in Europe called for a different kind of relief. Much like in the case of Britain, the end of
the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century marked a period of growing
philanthropy debates, a time when “scientific philanthropy” was popular, and the
professionalization of social work was taking shape (Bremner 123, 193).

In this chapter, I am going to examine early twentieth-century works such as the novels
and stories of Anzia Yezierska (especially Arrogant Beggar (1927), Salome of the Tenements,
(1923), and Red Ribbon on a White Horse (1950)), and Edith Wharton’s short novel Summer
(1917). I am particularly interested in the ways in which these authors construct and question the
possibility of the gift in the context of war relief, philanthropy, progressive reform, social work,
and immigration. This chapter will address gifts portrayed in their fiction as well as the writers’
personal involvement in philanthropy, such as Edith Wharton’s work with the Belgian refugees
during the First World War or Anzia Yezierska’s experiences with the Educational Alliance.
While Wharton came to philanthropy from a position of privilege and power, Anzia Yezierska
and her immigrant characters approached the same issue from the perspective of beneficiaries of
enlightened humanitarianism. Despite their differences in perspective and background, however,
both authors reveal the importance as well as the elusive and perhaps illusory character of giving
in their work.

**Giving Beyond the Gift**

Bremner is not the only writer who has noted that it is problematic to give an account of
philanthropy. The debate about giving goes back at least as far as Henry David Thoreau. Even
before Carnegie brashly proclaimed his gospel of philanthropy, the American radical tradition, as
represented by Thoreau, saw philanthropy as a weakness, rather than firmness of character, and distanced itself from both institutional philanthropy and almsgiving. In his essay “Resistance to Civil Government” published in 1849, Henry David Thoreau deplored the lack of virility induced by philanthropy in the American man:

[The American man] had dwindled into an Odd Fellow,—one who may be known by the development of his organ of gregariousness, and a manifest lack of intellect and cheerful self-reliance; whose first and chief concern, on coming into the world, is to see that the almshouses are in good repair; and, before yet he has lawfully donned the virile garb, to collect a fund for the support of the widows and orphans that may be; who, in short, ventures to live only by the aid of the mutual insurance company, which has promised to bury him decently. (Thoreau 717)

Thoreau wrote about philanthropy again in *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (1854) where he noted the self-serving intent of many philanthropists. His friend and contemporary Ralph Waldo Emerson addressed the same issue in his essay “The Gift” where he claimed that “the expectation of gratitude is mean, and is continually punished by the total insensibility of the obliged person” (lines 9972-3). Both Emerson and Thoreau looked for true gifts beyond the object of the gift or the mere act of giving. For these thinkers, in order for there to be a true gift, there should be more than a gift: heart, soul, love, superfluity, promise, individual achievement or essence would be some conditions for the actualization of benevolence and gift.

For Thoreau, it is good to encourage philanthropy only when the philanthropist’s “whole heart and soul and life” are in it (*Walden*, line 2236). In all other cases, Thoreau advises, “[d]o not stay to be an overseer of the poor, but endeavor to become one of the worthies of the world” (lines 2405-2407). In the same text, Thoreau declares that philanthropy is only the “stem and leaves” of man, but the true gift is achievement, “the flower and the fruit of a man”:
I would not subtract anything from the praise that is due to philanthropy, but merely demand justice for all who by their lives and works are a blessing to mankind. I do not value chiefly a man’s uprightness and benevolence, which are, as it were, his stem and leaves. Those plants of whose greenness withered we make herb tea for the sick serve but a humble use, and are most employed by quacks. I want the flower and fruit of a man: that some fragrance be wafted over from him to me, and some ripeness flavor our intercourse. His goodness must not be a partial and transitory act, but a constant superfluity, which costs him nothing and of which he is unconscious. This is a charity that hides a multitude of sins” (Walden, lines 2344-2354).

Thoreau’s discussion of the gift foreshadows Derrida’s interpretation of giving in Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money. Both Thoreau and Derrida notice the impossibility of the gift as simple economic exchange, the inappropriateness and limitations of duty, indebtedness, and self-conscious generosity. For Thoreau philanthropy deserves nothing but “praise” on the one hand; yet, on the other hand, it is mere quackery because it so often is self-serving and based on calculation. And similarly, for Derrida, the gift excludes reciprocity, exchange, return, debt: “For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt. If the other gives me back or owes me or has to give me back what I give him or her, there will not have been a gift, whether this restitution is immediate or whether it is programmed by complex calculation of a long-term deferral or difference” (Derrida, Given Time 12). Thus, for Derrida, the gift “is annulled each time there is restitution or countergift” (Given Time 12). For an authentic gift, if there is such a thing, would exclude obligation: “The donee owes it to himself even not to give back, he ought not owe [il devoir de-ne-pas]: the donor ought not to count on restitution.” Furthermore, in order for this condition to be satisfied, the gift must be forgotten in an absolute way: “It is thus necessary, at the limit, that [the donor] not recognize the gift as gift. If he recognizes it as gift, if the gift appears to him as such, if the present is present to him as present, the simple recognition suffices to annul the gift” (13).
From this perspective, philanthropy is impossible, as well as any gift giving, or at least any giving, says Derrida, “where there is subject and object” (Given Time 24). Giving is a quasi-“transcendental illusion” (30), yet it is talked about, denounced, criticized, wished upon. Thoreau criticizes philanthropists for seeing something of their own diseases in the world when attempting to cure them, for seeking selfish ends; yet he acknowledges the desirability of the gift: philanthropists owe the world the gift of courage and not despair, health and ease and not disease (Walden 2357-8). In the excerpt from Walden Thoreau equates ultimate giving with fertility, the “flower and fruit of man” (line 2354) thus paradoxically affirming its value. For Derrida, too, gift is desire, the striving towards the impossible: “[d]esire and the desire to give would be the same thing, a sort of tautology” (Given Time 4-5).

Because giving simultaneously is and is not really possible, we owe it more than “a sort of adoring and faithful abdication, a simple movement of faith in the face of what exceeds the limits of experience, knowledge, science, economy—and even philosophy” (Derrida, Given Time 30). Even if the gift is not phenomenal, if it is a transcendental illusion, a desire, or something towards which we always feel impelled, we still have an obligation to render an account of the gift. In other words, we need to know about the impossibility of the gift as we give: we need to know how to give.34

34 “But the effort to think the groundless ground of this quasi-“transcendental illusion” should not be either—if it is going to be a matter of thinking—a sort of adoring and faithful abdication, a simple movement of faith in the face of that which exceeds the limits of experience, knowledge, science, economy—and even philosophy. On the contrary, it is a matter—desire beyond desire—of responding faithfully but also as rigorously as possible both to the injunction or the order of the gift (“give” “[donne”]) as well as to the injunction or the order of meaning. (presence, science, knowledge): Know still what giving wants to say, know how to give, know what you want and what to say when you give, know what you intended to give, know how the gift annuls itself, commit yourself [engage-toi] even if commitment is the destruction of the gift, give economy its chance” (Derrida, Given Time 30).
Perhaps it is not surprising that the problematic of the gift and the heightened awareness of its impossibility occupies many modernist writers. A period of great social, economic, and political upheavals, the end of the nineteenth and the first three decades of the twentieth century witnessed unprecedented Immigration, the tribulations of the Great War and the Great Depression, the Progressive movement and the New Deal. Derrida’s own essays on the gift are an extensive analysis of a story by Baudlaire, “Counterfeit Money,” a story of a donation of a counterfeit coin to a beggar. Moreover, Derrida includes in his lectures a discussion of an anthropological study by Marcel Mauss published in 1925 under the title “The Gift.” In the lengthy conclusion to his essay, Mauss takes the opportunity to extol “charity, social service, and solidarity” as topics central to contemporary French democracy: “The themes of the gift, of the freedom and the obligation inherent in the gift, of generosity and self-interest that are linked in giving, are reappearing in French society, as a dominant motive too long forgotten” (68). Mauss praises “[s]ocial security, the solicitude arising from reciprocity and cooperation, and that of the occupational groupings, of all those legal entities upon which English law bestows the name of ‘Friendly Societies’” (69) as a return to an economy of the gift.

Even though many modernist writers on both sides of the Atlantic would have refused to share Mauss’s optimism about Friendly Societies and Social Security, they continued to discuss philanthropy, altruism, and welfare even (or perhaps because of) their focus on the individual mind and on writing itself. For most modernists, as well as for Derrida, neither the state-based economy of gift-giving, nor philanthropy represents true giving. As phenomena of giving both philanthropy and welfare annul the gift. Yet modernist discourses of philanthropy, welfare, and altruism are movements towards the promise of the gift; they render an account of the (im)possibility of the gift that agrees in spirit with Derrida’s later injunction, “Know still what
Edith Wharton and Charity: The Philanthropist Herself

Two major biographers of Edith Wharton, Shari Benstock and R.W.B. Lewis, as well as other scholars and researchers, point out her extensive involvement with philanthropic activities during her stay in France at the time of the First World War. Most, if not all, accounts of Wharton’s charity, however, are surrounded by disavowals of her interest in philanthropic work and by references to the novelist’s critical attitude to charity. This attitude is corroborated by a reading of Edith Wharton’s letters from the war period and her only short story to come out of her charity work, “The Refugees.” In spite of the reservations Wharton had about charitable women and their activities, her involvement in philanthropic ventures during the war was astounding. It included four different organizations that provided work for unemployed seamstresses, sheltered Belgian refugees and war orphans, and provided convalescent home for tubercular patients; in addition, Wharton managed to write war articles and edit a publication to popularize her refugee cause and to collect funds to keep her charities afloat.

Even though Wharton was not a sentimental philanthropist, there is no question about her enthusiasm and dedication to her numerous causes. As early as September 1914, she confessed to Bernard Berenson the weariness that her heroic efforts in France cost her. Writing with “a hand shaking with fatigue & guided by a brain wobbling with imbecility,” she was at the end of her tether: “I’m not used to philanthropy, and since I got back & took over my work-room from
Walter’s heroic shoulders I’ve been at it every day from 8 a.m. till dinner. As soon as peace is declared I shall renounce good works forever!” (Wharton, Letters 341). Such disavowals need to be interpreted in the context of a complex understanding of charity and giving.

Wharton’s philanthropic activities between 1914 and 1918 were so engrossing that she barely found time for writing fiction. Her only notable fictional writing from the war years were a couple of short stories and the short novel Summer, and the latter, she confided to André Gide, she only managed to do “in fits and starts because of the refugees” (Wharton, Letters 397).

Wharton’s letters to friends and family are filled with anything but sentimentality about her refugees and workrooms; seldom mentioned, the philanthropic work of which she made such a success, appears often as “dull drudgery,” but one that kept her “busy & interested” and alleviated the sorrow and oppression of the war (379, 339). The major books that came out of her philanthropic and fundraising endeavors at that time were not fictional; they included two publications, her first-hand impressions from the front, Fighting France: From Dunkerque to Belfort (1915), and her edition of poems, articles, drawings, and paintings by famous contributors donated to benefit the refugee cause, The Book of the Homeless (1915). The proceeds (about $15,000) from the sale of The Book of the Homeless and from the auction of its contents went to her American Hostels and the Children of Flanders Rescue Committee (Wharton, Letters 359, note 1).

In her 1994 biography of Edith Wharton, Shari Benstock devotes a chapter entitled “Charities” to Wharton’s war activities in France. She describes a wide array of committees, organizations and homes under the umbrella of “Mrs. Wharton’s Charities.” Benstock quotes Wharton’s letters to emphasize that she looked at her philanthropic activities as a person of action rather than a sentimentalist: “‘I’m not used to philanthropy,’ she wrote to Berenson in
fatigued handwriting. The “fluffy fuzzy” people, she said, had all left Paris; those who remained assisted in war relief” (Benstock 308). Benstock’s biography provides a very detailed account of Edith Wharton’s philanthropic organizations and argues that they were ventures on a corporate scale.

Shocked by the destruction of the Louvain library and the damage to the Rheims cathedral as much as by the human casualties of the war, Edith Wharton and Henry James “were drawn into active participation in the war effort” (Benstock 304). James opened his Watchbell Street studio in London to Belgian refugees and accepted the chairmanship of the American Volunteer Motor-Ambulance Corp” (305). Edith, who felt “cheerful and calm” and found the beginning of the war “thrillingly interesting,” was asked by the Comtesse d’Haussonville, president of the French Red Cross affiliate, to start a workroom. The novelist raised almost $2,000 and found the space for an ouvroir and employed neighborhood seamstresses left without work for 20 cents a day for six hours of work and a hot meal (303). “Mrs. Wharton’s Charities” grew to become “the most diverse privately funded charity in France during the war, second in size only to the American Hospital at Neuilly” (Benstock 303).

The Battle of the Marne, which cost each side a half-million casualties, raged in the area northeast of Paris described in Wharton’s A Motor-Flight Through France. The “philanthropic lady” treasurer of Wharton’s ouvroir, fled Paris with the $2,000 meant to support the workroom. Wharton returned to Paris to help her 50 women employees. She traced and recovered the money and found new quarters for her employees (Benstock 305). The ouvroir donated their clothes to hospitals and charities, including the Red Cross, but when hope of a quick victory disappeared, Edith made the workroom self-supporting by selling their dresses, blouses, special low-necked shirts for American artists in Montparnasse at a 5 percent profit. Because of the
dearth in luxury clothing during the war, she succeeded very well at this venture (306): “One year after it opened, the ouvroir employed a permanent staff of ten women and provided temporary work for another fifty. In that time, they had produced 15,200 garments, sales of which brought a profit of $5,000. Edith claimed that hers was the first “paying” workroom in Paris, a source of great pride to her (306).

In September 1914, “Edith joined in creating the “Foyer Franco-Belge,” a clearinghouse for refugees run by Charles du Bos, translator of The House of Mirth, and writer André Gide. The organization aimed to make people self-sufficient, to “give people confidence, hope, and the practical help to become independent” (306-7). Operating on her “conservative social and economic philosophy,” Edith Wharton’s hostels ran on “strict business principles” (307). Without any previous business experience, she “presided over an international organization whose administrative and finance structures resembled a modern-day corporation and whose physical operations spread out across the city and into the countryside” (Benstock 307).

After the Battle of Ypres, which wiped out four fifths of the 250,000 British force, massacred and displaced thousands of infants and children, and deprived 10,000 people of their homes, Wharton “mounted a ‘Belgian appeal’ in American newspapers, becoming a ‘brazen beggar’ to the New York-Newport society worlds she satirized in her books and stories.

35 To feed, clothe, and provide medical care for the displaced, Edith and some friends founded the “American Hostels for Refugees,” which began its work with about $250 cash, three donated houses, and some furniture. Within a fortnight, two of these houses had been converted into institutional residences for a hundred refugees and the third house operated as a restaurant that fed 550 people a day. A free clinic and medical dispensary opened, and soon a clothing depot. Each step in easing the suffering of the war’s victims led to expansion of the hostels’ operation. Founding a day nursery and a workroom where fifty women made garments for the clothing depot, the organization also created several schools offering courses in sewing and lace-making, and language training in English and French. The hostels established an employment agency and financial assistance office (Benstock 306).
Between September 1914 and December 1915, she raised $82,000. Adjusted for inflation, this sum amounts today to over $1,000,000. Her fund-raising activities during the next four years were on a scale that in our time only corporations could undertake” (Benstock 307). In addition to workrooms and the “American Hostel for Refugees,” they included the “Children of Flanders Rescue Committee” and convalescent homes for tuberculosis patients (“Maisons Américaines de Convalescence” and Tuberculous War-Victims). These “managed twenty-one houses in Paris and outlying regions” by June 1917 (Benstock 331). For her dedicated work for France and Belgium, Wharton was awarded high distinction: the French made her Chevalier of the Legion of Honor and King Albert of Belgium presented her with the Medal of Queen Elizabeth and named her Chevalier of the Order of Leopold (Lewis 387).

Wharton’s major biographers, R.W.B. Lewis and Shari Benstock, devote large chapters to the novelist’s philanthropic and charitable activities and give an interpretation of Wharton’s relationship to philanthropy. They emphasize the incidental character of Wharton’s involvement (she got involved because the “fluffy fuzzy” people had left Paris and hardworking individuals like Wharton had to fill the gap). Lewis quotes the French newspaper Figaro on Mrs. Wharton’s unassuming charity thus: “This enormous and varied work is a silent work; this energy, this apostle’s faith, are hidden beneath an air, hard to describe, of deceptive nonchalance, of smiling grace—an air of having really nothing to do in life and no other concern except to observe approvingly the good things being done by other people” (qtd. in Lewis 386). An article in Le Temps remarked, “she does good works without seeming to notice it” (qtd. in Lewis 387). This was an image that Wharton herself perpetuated through private anecdotes and in her writing; she repeated “as a bon mot Percy Lubbock’s quip that he could forgive her for her industry because she “so visibly” hated what she was doing” (Benstock 311).
Wharton’s ironic description of her charitable activities and her disavowals of her own importance have to be discussed in the context of concealment or forgetfulness which according to Derrida is necessary for constructing the idea of a genuine gift. This idea is repeatedly addressed by other twentieth-century writers, from modernist Lytton Strachey’s *Eminent Victorians* to anthropologist Marcel Mauss’ essay “The Gift.” Not only did Wharton distance herself from philanthropy and philanthropists, but the French press, commenting on her Legion of Honor award, constructed her rhetorically as doing “good works without seeming to notice” (qtd. in Lewis 387).

There are several aspects of Wharton’s activities that throw doubt on the authenticity of such forgetful philanthropic gifts. First of all, the reports of Wharton’s friends and associates leave us with the impression of a woman with indomitable will, difficult character, and commanding presence. Her close friend Henry James, himself involved in helping refugees, imagined her as a “great generalissima” (Benstock 311). A number of her associates grew frustrated that “Edith was capricious and given to reversals of mood and opinion” (Benstock 335). Walter Berry, one of her closest friends and associates, complained in February 1915: “It’s appalling here. I am more and more fed-up with the obsession of refugees and relief” (qtd. in Benstock 310).

Second, the consuming nature and large scale of the writer’s charities speak of concerted and conscientious effort. Benstock claims that Wharton’s activities were those of a “modern-day corporation” (307), yet she does not explain how such activities could have been successfully planned and completed by a person with an “innate distaste for anything like ‘social service’” (311). Lewis states that ‘[t]he range of Edith Wharton’s activity in 1915 staggers the mind.” He quotes the words of Walter Berry that “[a]ll the Belgians in Paris are feeding out of
Edith’s hands” (Lewis 378-9). The intensity of the work and the deprivations of the war took their toll on Wharton’s health: a flu in January 1917 developed into pneumonia and heart complications (Benstock 333).

Finally, because a gift must be spontaneous, Edith Wharton’s charity is narrated as separate from both organized philanthropy and the noblesse oblige of her own class. It is personal and “spontaneous”: “She saw the women and children, heard their cries and smelled their misery... Her New York friend Eunice Maynard spoke of Edith’s tenderness and sympathy: “Every face—adults and children alike—lit with pleasure when she entered the wards” (Benstock 323-4). Benstock employs sensory details in order to render the authenticity of Wharton’s charity and to distinguish it from “fake” and inadequate gift-giving (which presumably the readers suspect): Wharton “saw the women and children, heard their cries and smelled their misery” (324). But how is she different from the “friendly visitor” who very much like the subject of this description came to “give hope to those who had lost everything, she set the tone and example for those who worked with her” (Benstock 324)? It is apparently the “spontaneity” on which the narrative insists that separates Wharton’s charity from that of organized philanthropy or the condescending gifts of Lady Bountiful, a spontaneity that the “corporative” narrative has already undermined.36

36 Alan Price sees Wharton as straddling two worlds of philanthropy, the private model and the corporate one: “Wharton lived through the passage of one world into another. After the Armistice she could no longer count on a meritocracy of the elite. No longer was philanthropy based on the private model of noblesse oblige; during a few short weeks in 1917 it shifted to the corporate model of the American Red Cross, with economies of scale and huge amounts of money raised through advertising and coordinated public appeals. The character of the world had changed. With the coming of the First World War, Edith Wharton experienced the end of the age of innocence” (Price 181).
This spontaneity is parallel to Derrida’s and Mauss’ discussion of the “madness” that inheres in the gift. For Wharton, the madness of giving counterbalances the madness of war. It is only the hard work she puts herself through with her charities that keeps her sane: “‘The sadness of all things is beyond words,’ she wrote Sara Norton, ‘and hard work is the only escape from it’” (qtd. in Lewis 384). But war relief gave her a somewhat elusive relief from private pain; on one instance, she shared with Berenson, how “[t]he ouvroir and the oeuvres help to keep one from hanging over the abyss of the war, but not, alas, from breathing the chill of one’s private abyss” (Benstock 312). All this paints a complex picture of Wharton the rescue and charity worker: a philanthropist in doubt about philanthropy to which she nevertheless dedicated all her energy. In this, Edith Wharton parallels British modernist writers such as Woolf, West, and Forster.

Wharton’s story “The Refugees” reveals some of the ambiguities that she felt defined philanthropic work. In the story, Charlie Durant, an American Professor of Romance Languages, finds himself entangled in the stream of Belgian refugees on his way from Louvain to England. Even though he has not suffered either dispossession or atrocity, his shy disposition and a series of misunderstandings lead him to pose as a refugee for the family of his enthusiastic rescuer, Miss Audrey Rushworth. This is a curious story of egoism and compassion, philanthropy and self-centeredness, and maybe more importantly of role reversal: in it the shy Professor acts as a compassionate rescuer, the insignificant Aunt Audrey experiences an adventure that helps her create a life for herself, and the rescuers themselves become the rescued.

First, I am interested in Edith Wharton’s perception of philanthropic work and the work with refugees in particular. Both this story and Edith Wharton’s Preface to *The Book of the Homeless* spell her understanding of the experience of displacement. As an expatriate American
living in Paris, Wharton would have felt more acutely the agony of nostalgia and the confusion of deracination. I want to argue that these personal experiences of the writer gave her a sincere interest in the fate of the Belgian refugees and a heart-felt compassion for their suffering.

*The Book of the Homeless* features two introductions: one by Theodore Roosevelt, introducing Mrs. Wharton’s charities, and the refugee cause, and exhorting Americans to do what they can for the cause of civilization and humanitarianism: “We owe to Mrs. Wharton all the assistance we can give. We owe this assistance to the good name of America, the women and the old men who have suffered such dreadful wrong for absolutely no fault of theirs”(x). The second introduction is Wharton’s own Preface. It starts with the real story of a young refugee that Mrs. Wharton knows first-hand: “a little acrobat from a strolling circus” who had “never before been separated from his family or from his circus.” After describing a list of the familiar things of home that the acrobat boy has lost (“the tent and the platform, the big drum, the dancing dogs, the tight-rope and the spangles”), the writer pictures him in the care of charitable Parisians, a page in a good livery with a good pay, who nevertheless cannot get adapted to his expatriate state:

He tried...he really tried...but the life was too lonely. Nobody knew anything about the only things he knew, or was particularly interested in the programme of the last performance the company had given at Liege or Maubeuge. The little acrobat could not understand. He told his friends at the Hostels how lonely and puzzled he was, and they tried to help him. But he couldn’t sleep at night, because he was used to being up till nearly daylight; and one night he went up to the attic of the hotel, broke open several trunks full of valuables stored there by rich lodgers, and made off with some of the contents. He was caught, of course, and the things he had stolen were produced in court. They were the spangled dresses belonging to a Turkish family, and the embroidered coats of a lady’s lap-dog. (Wharton, *Homeless* xix)
This opening excerpt from the Preface is somewhat surprising as a fundraising piece: first, the refugee’s need is not primarily for money, job or shelter; if this were not the case, why is not the circus boy content with the love and care he receives by benevolent rescuers at the hotel? The story makes an appeal for both financial assistance and sympathy, for relief as well as for personal involvement. But what a sentimental philanthropist would offer would always fall short of what the boy has lost and what he craves: his familiares and his past. And second, the example of philanthropy that Edith Wharton gives in fact shows how philanthropy fails to make the acrobat boy happy. The reader, however, is led to believe that he or she should donate money precisely because the money is not required; the gift is not enough. Or, rather, the gift that is required transcends the monetary exchange that the preface calls for; the gift is not solicited by the boy himself; and in order for the solicitation to function it must negate and contradict its own message.

The circus origins of the boy himself remind us of the idealized image of the profession in Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times*. Yet at the same time he is a thief, and he remains anonymous for the readers. This leads me to my second point, the image of the other in the refugee, and the image of the other (of savagery, monstrosity) created by the war. The acrobat boy is an Other not only by virtue of his profession and his theft; he is associated with the Oriental, the racially Other by what he chooses to steal: “the spangled dresses belonging to a Turkish family, and the embroidered coats of a lady’s lap-dog” (xix).
In the story “The Refugees,” the refugees are described through the eyes of the shy, middle-aged, bald, lame, and reserved Professor Durant as a mass, “herded creatures,” and a powerful “eddy” that tosses the hapless traveler down its current: “at Boulogne he found himself caught in the central eddy of fugitives, tossed about among them like one of themselves” (Wharton, *Collected Stories* 574). When he attempts to extricate himself from the crowd, a refugee steps on his lame foot (the professor suffers from “a slight congenital lameness”), an act that persuades him that the only course of action is to become resigned to the powerful human current. When he arrives in London, Durant again is conscious of the danger of the fugitive flow: “On the platform at Charing Cross he stood motionless, trying to protect his lame leg and yet to take up as little room as possible, while he waited for the tide to flow by and canalize itself” (Wharton, *Collected Stories* 571).

This mass is guided and cared for by government officials and philanthropists: both Charlie and the refugees are “pitched” on the boat, “dealt with compassionately but firmly by the fagged officials at Folkestone,” they are “jammed” on the “endless” train, and have “chocolate and buns thrust on [them] by ministering angels with high heels and powdered noses” (571). While the refugees (and the helpless Durant) are a “stagnant mass,” the charity workers are the active agents that “crisscross” their waters in a flurry of activity. Obtaining at least one refugee, and a quality one at that, has become the occupation of the fashionable. Characters such as the aristocratic Lady Beausedge and the Duchess of Bolchester have turned rescue work into a competitive sport or a consumerist pursuit, just like shopping. Miss Rushworth compares the fruitless pursuit of refugees by Lady Beausedge to shopping at Harrods: “as wild as she does on
sales days at Harrods,” Caroline “never can make up her mind between bargains, and rushes about like a madwoman till it’s too late” (Wharton, *Collected Stories* 577).

When Caroline’s family joins Miss Rushworth on the train, it transpires that their journey has been much like an unsuccessful shopping spree; while the family, maid, and two dogs have only managed to “fetch down one old woman with a pipe,” the inconspicuous Miss Rushworth has fetched a Professor from Louvain (or so she thinks). The further objectification of the refugees transpires in the jealousies between Caroline (Lady Beasuredge) and the Duchess who vie for “a prima donna of the Brussels Opera” and for Professor Durant, but are disappointed in humble old refugee ladies without any distinction. In the end, the refugees have so flooded the market that they have depreciated: “they’ve become rather a drug on the market, poor dears” (Wharton, *Collected Stories* 592).

A further point about difference and the portrayal of the refugee is revealed through the eyes of the would-be refugee himself. Charlie mistakes all the jealousy that his rescuer Miss Rushworth feels for her sister-in-law, Lady Beasuredge, for a product of the atrocities and the war. Even though “[a]ffliction is supposed to soften,” and such jealousy is unnatural and shocking, Durant attributes it to the “natural” causes of war and thinks that apparently “in such monstrous doses [affliction] ha[s] the opposite effect” (Wharton, *Collected Stories* 574).

Moreover, not knowing that Miss Rushworth is an English lady, Charlie Durant fears that her chatter may be a sexual innuendo; this impression is reinforced by his knowledge of continental women and by his supposition that she is a continental refugee herself: “An uncomfortable redness rose to Charlie Durant’s forehead. With these foreign women you could never tell: his brief continental experiences had taught him that” (576). What the refugee offers is thus adventure; Charlie becomes the great Adventure in Miss Rushworth’s inconspicuous life leading
her to a complete change of circumstances and marriage at the end of the story: “She’s just been promoted again, and she’s going to marry the Bishop of the Macaroon Islands next month” (593). The refugee cause has swept Miss Rushworth, both literally and metaphorically, on unfamiliar shores.

Even though Edith Wharton does not present a convincing and more personal image of the impoverished and shipwrecked refugee (represented here by a substitute), she paints an intimate and convincing portrait of the philanthropist, perhaps poking fun at her own activities as well. It is significant that all of the characters in the story play the role of philanthropist: Charlie, who is shaken out of his reserve and “gentle egotism” (Collected Stories 572) desires to protect the frail and “diaphanous” (572) Audrey Rushworth although at the same time he vaguely hopes that she can help him out financially. Charlie is caught in the current of refugees not only literally, but emotionally: one of the reasons why he is on a ship to London at all is that “most of his remaining francs had gone to the various appeals for funds that penetrated even to his lost corner” in Normandy (570). Even in his penniless state, he wishes “he could help the doomed wretches” (571). At the end of the story, he has joined the Y.M.C.A. to help with whatever he can in the war effort: in his case, by minding a library. Miss Rushworth, on the other hand, has been transformed from a victim with tears running down her face begging for a refugee to a philanthropic worker of authority and importance to whom one refugee has little significance: “There’s no danger of her being forgotten—it’s she who does the forgetting now” (593).

To Edith Wharton, then, the engagement with Others in a philanthropic way is a double-edged sword, a poisonous gift that blurs the boundaries between help and victimization, power and powerlessness. It is true that as a writer, she focuses her discussion more on the portrait of the philanthropist than on that of the object of philanthropy. The main characters in “The
Refugees” are privileged observers or philanthropists; as such, they have the power to cross the distance between passivity and action and to fashion themselves as part of the war relief effort. Wharton’s criticism of philanthropy is that it reveals the philanthropists’ bad taste; as the perspicacious and wise Lord Beausedge says, “Damned bad taste, all that sort of thing” (*Collected Stories* 586). Philanthropy turns society ladies into frantic shoppers for celebrity refugees, ill-educated French speakers, and poorly advised meddlers:

The refugees were spread out about him in a stagnant mass, through which, over which, almost, there squeezed darted, skimmed and crisscrossed the light battalions of the benevolent. People with badges were everywhere, philanthropists of both sexes and all ages, sorting, directing, exhorting, contradicting, saying, “Wee, wee,” and “Oh, no,” and “This way, please—oh, dear, what *is* ‘this way’ in French?”, and “I beg your pardon, but that bed warmer belongs to my old woman”; and industriously adding, by all the means known to philanthropy, to the distress and bewilderment of their victims. (*Collected Stories* 572)

And yet in spite of the criticism and the irony with which philanthropy’s “bad taste” is dissected in the story, something of the vitality of shopping, of the resilient competitiveness of consumerism sheds a benevolent light on benevolence. It is, after all, philanthropy, with all its falsities, that inspires new life into the dried out, diaphanous wings of Miss Audrey Rushworth. While at first she reminds Charlie of “a last year’s moth shaken out of the curtains of an empty room” (*Collected Stories* 572), she brightens with her success until “her cheeks are pink with triumph” (585) and finally, she ends up a Colonel (perhaps in the Salvation Army), a commanding and imposing presence. It is both significant and emphatically stated that the momentous transformation of Miss Rushworth’s life, comic, endearing and somewhat ominous, is built on a pretense, a mistake, and on a generous lie: Miss Rushworth is not a refugee, she is not a continental adventuress who uses sexual innuendo, but these are the false pretenses which
intrigue and mesmerize Charlie to visit her home. Moreover, Miss Rushworth’s change in status and power rests on the rescue of the involuntary imposter, the socially acceptable caller, the perfect refugee Professor Durant.

_Fighting France. From Dunkerque to Belport_

The war that has given new life to Miss Rushworth’s diaphanous wings, has given a new meaning to faith and philanthropy, and has found a more prominent place for women both at the front and at home. This seems to be the argument in Wharton’s travel writing from the front, _Fighting France. From Dunkerque to Belport_. In her descriptions of war-ravaged frontline villages and towns and of the people who withstand and prevail over the destruction of war, Wharton centers her attention on frailty: the frailty of the stone cathedrals ravaged by shelling and fire, of human life, of the Sisters of Charity who stand up courageously to a ferocious enemy, of the peonies that grow in the ruins. But by doing so she is not merely proclaiming the need to protect such frailty and to pity such vulnerability; instead, she affirms its active side and its heroic strength: “My pink peonies were not introduced to point to the stale allegory of unconscious Nature veiling Man’s havoc: they are put on my first page [of the Lorraigne and Vosges chapter] as a symbol of conscious human energy coming back to replant and rebuild the wilderness” ( _Fighting France_ 95). These peonies seem to blossom “in the very prints of [Sister Julie’s] sturdy boots” as she tells of the women who have taken the place of the men in the fields (104). Women like Soeur Gabrielle from Clermont, Soeur Julie from Gerbéviller, and Soeur Theresia from Pont-a-Mousson are Wharton’s admired “indomitable breed”(112). But what she
celebrates is not so much their gentleness and compassion, but their “exhileration, energy, and hot resolve to dominate the disaster” (225).

Even the scorched walls of the Rheims Cathedral announce this intent: touched by the savagery of war, the stones of the Cathedral bring together the beautiful and the horrible, the alien and the familiar, life and death, and Heaven and Hell: “a structure so strange and beautiful that one must search the Inferno, or some tale of Eastern magic, for words to picture the luminous, unearthly vision” (Fighting France 185). It is a memorable image and “not like any cathedral on earth”(184). As if living flesh, the stones of the cathedral are “bruised,” diseased and dying, but the Rheims Cathedral is not crying out to the reader for compassion. It transcends pity and reaches for the sublime. This is, as the last paragraph says, “what ‘France is like’” (237). The French people have been moved to action and pity by the horror of war until “[t]he whole civilian part of the nation seems merged in one symbolic figure, carrying help and hope to the fighters or passionately bent above the wounded” (237). The symbolic collective pieta that Wharton describes is hard to pity because she (France) is the one who pities, and she is the one who helps. Wharton’s appeal for fighting France, just like her refugee appeal in The Book of the Homeless, solicits philanthropy on the pretense that none is needed. Even the ruins of the Ypres

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37 “The lower part of the front has been warmed to deep tints of umber and carmine, to a sulphur whitening to ivory; and the recesses of the portals and the hollows behind the statues are lined with black denser and more velvety than any effect of shadow to be obtained by sculptured relief. The interweaving of colour over the whole blunted bruised surface recalls the metallic tints, the peacock-and-pigeon iridescences, the incredible mingling of red, blue, umber and yellow of the rocks along the Gulf of Aegina. And the wonder of the impression is increased by the sense of its evanescence; the knowledge that this is the beauty of disease and death, that every one of the transfigured statues must crumble under the autumn rains, that every one of the pink or golden stones is already eaten away at the core, that the Cathedral of Rheims is glowing and dying before us like a sunset” (Wharton, Fighting France 185-6).
Cathedral and Cloth Market rise “with a majesty that seems to silence compassion. The sight of those façades, so proud in death, recalled a phrase used soon after the fall of Liège by Belgium’s Foreign Minister—“La Belgique ne regrette rien”—which ought some day to serve as the motto of the renovated city” (Fighting France 154).

My reading of “The Refugees” and Fighting France reveals the complexity of Wharton’s attitude to the benefactors and beneficiaries of philanthropy. On the one hand, there is the elitism at the heart of her philanthropy. Even in Fighting France, Wharton’s sympathies are with “the good breeding of the French” (193-4) who keep a stiff upper lip and chat sociably in Opera Houses in the face of destruction. She often chooses her characters from amongst the genteel and gentlemanly, the strong and the self-sufficient: the mayor at Gerbéviller whose house has been destroyed; the cure who cares for the soldiers’ graves with the passion of a butterfly collector (113); and nuns who embroider lace-cushions until the last moment of peace (Fighting France 157). Rather than affirming pity and compassion, her writing affirms reserve, self-possession, endurance in the face of death. On the other hand, in spite of the fact that she distances herself and her charitable activities from noblesse oblige, there remains the fact of her extensive charitable activities and her compassionate understanding of the philanthropist as Other as well as the inevitable failures of the philanthropist’s relationship to the Other. Even though she aims her critical vision at the hollowness at the center of the philanthropic institution and reveals the elusiveness of giving, Wharton affirms the idea that the philanthropist is a powerful public figure.
During the spring and summer of 1916, and while she was still involved in charitable activities, Edith Wharton worked on her next novel, *Summer*. She told Berenson that the novel was “taking every bit of grey matter that isn’t used for greasing the philanthropic machinery” (qtd. in Benstock 326). Critics have rarely focused on the relationship between Wharton’s charitable activities and the narrative of Charity Royall, adopted daughter of an elderly lawyer, who comes into his charge from the Mountain. Charity’s story of summer passion for the city architect Lucius Harney inspires Pasha Stevenson’s analysis of Ethan Frome and Charity Royall in the context of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s idea of the noble savage. For Stevenson, “Edith Wharton singles out Ethan Frome and Charity Royall to suffer the most unromantic of miseries, penning not a final tableau of suffering terrible in its beauty, but a vision of banal misery which is so repulsive it barely elicits our sympathy” (411). In these books, Stevenson asserts, Wharton takes on “the role of a literary anthropologist, viewing her characters much as a scientist views experiments” (413). Stevenson calls Ethan and Charity “the most quintessentially American of Wharton’s creations” (412) and their scientific examination by the novelist corresponds to Wharton’s growing alienation from her home country. Wharton’s experience at a New England hotel called Nichewaug in Petersham in the summer of 1904 appalled the author: “’Such dreariness,’ she lamented, “such whining, callow women, such utter absence of the amenities, such crass food, crass manners, crass landscape!!’” (Stevenson 415).

In spite of Wharton’s elitist stance, Stevenson maintains the essential nobility of Ethan and Charity: they are instinctive, animalistic, “uncouth and uncivilized”( 420); they are “relatively languageless” (417), like Rousseau’s “inarticulate native” (418); they have a natural
chastity combined with strong physical sexual impulse that commands their sexual lives apart from considerations of “economics, breeding, social position or connections” (421); and they both possess the “sole Natural virtue” to Rousseau’s thinking, “so Natural that even Beasts sometimes give perceptible signs of it”—pity. Stevenson argues that pity is “nowhere foregrounded in [Wharton’s characters] to the degree that it is in Ethan Frome and Charity Royal” and that for them, like for Rousseau’s savage, “pity becomes moral code, takes the place of law, and dictates behaviour” (Stevenson 423). Finally, Stevenson sees more than condemnation in the character’s dreary fate: they are not merely a reassurance to the elite that “fascinating primitives like Ethan and Charity” cannot “reap bountiful rewards such as comfort and happiness” (425); they are themselves an indictment to the social order whose “code of civilization has little to do with compassion, only with duty” (428).

In her understanding of philanthropy, Wharton is as modernist as Virginia Woolf. By criticizing the social order of the Victorian age (personified, as Stevenson aptly says, in lawyer Royall), she complicates the understanding of philanthropy and compassion in tune with the modernists’ simultaneous alienation from and fascination with such topics. Charity Royall is, like many modernist heroines, both a condemnation of philanthropy and a (tentative, deliberate, and yet enduring) affirmation of compassion.

Like Stevenson, earlier critics such as Kathleen Pfeiffer and Elizabeth Ammons note the “intense Americanness” of Summer and its heroine’s strong relationship to the land (qtd. in Pfeiffer 143). Kathleen Pfeiffer, in her article “Summer and Its Critics’ Discomfort” gives us a feminist interpretation of the novella in the context of the ravaged land and the American dream. She concludes that the success of Horatio Alger is denied to Charity because of her gender, that passion “must ultimately be paid for dearly,” and that “the American social structure has no
place for a woman who strives to break out of the boundaries of her birth and upbringing” (Pfeiffer 152).

Interestingly, Pfeiffer relates Charity’s failure to her most feminine quality: “her capacity for sympathetic compassion.” The protagonist’s “moments of compassion” are “landmarks for Charity’s evolving failure because they indicate her willing abdication of independence and autonomy” (147). Compassion binds Charity to lawyer Royall and lets Harney slip from her passionate embrace. It keeps Charity at home in North Dormer where she feels useful to her guardian. From this perspective, Charity’s instinctive compassion marks not so much her nobility but her inability to take initiative and her complicity in the patriarchal system. This may explain the lack of sympathy that many contemporary readers felt for the book and for its main female character. Perhaps it is a good point to state here that Charity’s compassion as well as her dreary fate differentiate her from the lack of interest in philanthropy and tragic end of Lily Bart in *The House of Mirth*. It remains to be determined which of the two works is a stronger indictment of the old Victorian order.

Unlike Pfeiffer, Veronica Makowsky and Lynn Z. Bloom see the virtue of charity in another character of the novel, lawyer Royall: “Like Wharton herself, Royall, but not Harney or Charity, can exhibit an imaginative empathy that results in charity” (221). However, they contend, “Charity is capable of learning charity through her sympathy with Royall” (228). Mr. Royall’s sensitivity to Charity’s unexpected pregnancy and her relationship with Harvey, his willingness to save his ward public shame and even the humiliation of a private confession; his very marriage to Charity and intention to bring up her illegitimate child can indeed be interpreted as manifestations of middle-class virtue. While I agree with Makowsky and Bloom on the latter point, I disagree that charity mitigates the novel’s bleak ending. What the authors call the
“socially deterministic vision” of the novel is not softened but enhanced by Wharton’s representation of Lawyer Royall’s “‘royal’ virtue” (Makowsky and Bloom 232).

The short novel *Summer* that Wharton produced during the years of her war activities in France details a love story very different from the concerns that occupied Wharton’s daily life at the time. It details the progress of a young woman, Charity Royall, and her search for love in the small-town, middle-class society of North Dormer. Charity is named for her guardian’s benefaction in raising her out of the depths of iniquity and misery of the Mountain and giving her a Christian upbringing; to remind her of the gratitude she owes Lawyer Royall, the girl receives the name of Christian love. However, it is a different kind of love that Charity desires, a love free from convention and closer to the imaginary and impossible ideal than North Dormer cannot offer; in search of this love she has her summer affair with a young architect from New York, a man engaged to be married to another woman. Failing to keep her lover in her grasp, Charity is once again adopted, brought back into the folds of family and to the middle-class society and North Dormer by her guardian Lawyer Royall, whose last gift to her is to offer her the protection of marriage without asking her questions regarding her unborn child.

The story of Charity vacillates between the Mountain, a place of free farmers who live outside the law of civilization, the uneventful but secure life at North Dormer, and Nettleton, the small “city” that represents to Charity and to her fellow New Englanders civilization. The Mountain is Charity’s place of origin: her roots are in freedom and passion and poverty. The portrayal of the Mountain people bespeaks stereotypes of class and savagery. Nevertheless, Wharton’s interest in primitivism emphasizes the independence and liberty that their life possesses. Charity’s character is like the character of the people in the Mountain; her free sexuality is inherited, her guardian bitterly remarks, from her mother and her people. On the
other hand, Lawyer Royall also has a dark streak in him: his heavy drinking gets him into bad company in Nettleton, and has cost him a noteworthy career in the bigger town. Perhaps the best evidence for the affinity between Charity and Lawyer Royall is Mr. Royall’s ability to understand and forgive Charity her impetuousness: had not he felt the same rebellious vein in himself, he would not have put up with Charity’s proud and overbearing ingratitude. Thus Lawyer Royall has a streak of the noble savage in him as well; and only the thin veneer of civilization that he can maintain as well as the power he has over the girl separate them. He, like Charity, is capable of loyalty: Charity’s very (original) ‘adoption’ takes place after he impulsively makes a promise to a man he has helped convict. It is partially the same loyalty that leads him to stand beside Charity in her time of need and to support her in his understanding that they, Charity and Mr. Royall, are different from all the other residents in North Dormer. If Charity rebels against the system that does not leave women a possibility to love in marriage, but makes them choose between disgrace and marriage without love, the narrative tells us that her guardian is also capable of rebellion.

The initial gift of being brought up in Lawyer Royall’s house is a gift Charity rebels against; even though she tries to be grateful, her obligation becomes an empty word. Charity does not remember her salvation from unspeakable fate and her shameful origin on the Mountain, but she languishes for “the vision of the glittering streets of Nettleton” and the glamour of Annabel Balch that are still withheld from her (Wharton, *Summer* 12). Charity’s youthful rebellion and her sense of boredom in the little town prove stronger than the deliberate ties of obligation that Mr. Royall’s charity has forged. Even though she feels a measure of loyalty, and thus refuses to go to boarding school in Starkfield to stay by her guardian’s side, Charity “[feels] no particular affection for him, and not the slightest gratitude” (Wharton,
Summer 25). Mr. Royall repays her sacrifice with a Crimson Rambler and fan for her garden (his first material gift for her); but is it the gift of the father or of the suitor for the woman in Charity he is starting to notice? Not long afterwards, one night, a drunken Mr. Royall tries to force his way into Charity’s bedroom, and then proposes marriage (for the first time) to make up for his lapse of judgment (32). Seeing Mr. Royall as “a hideous parody of the fatherly old man she had always known,” Charity indignantly refuses and repays him with her scorn (34). But even in her scornful disdain, she continues to regard Mr. Royall as “the unquestioned central fact of life, as inevitable but as uninteresting as North Dormer itself, or any of the other conditions fate had laid on her” (110). If Mr. Royall can give her a gift, it is the gift of being this “unquestioned central fact of life”; it is unfortunate for Charity that her guardian wishes to give (and to take) much more. But she welcomes more warmly the gifts of Lucius Harney, the young New York architect who comes to visit North Dormer.

Lucius Harney has bespectacled short-sighted eyes (Wharton, Summer 14), good looks, an “odd way of speaking,” hands “sunburnt and sinewy, yet with smooth nails like a woman’s” (22), and a faint air of coming from the glitter of big city life. He reminds Charity of “the gentleman who had “explained” the pictures at Nettleton, and the weight of her ignorance settle[s] down on her again like a pall” (17). He is, as Lawyer Royall also acknowledges, the best thing she could have picked; and she feels that “he knew lots of things she had never dreamed of” (23). With love in her veins, Charity feels that her Mountain origin does not matter (78), and she flowers under Harney’s attentions: “She had always thought of love as something confused and furtive, and he made it as bright and open as the summer air” (180). While Mr. Royall’s deliberate emphasis on his disinterestedness in adopting Charity annuls his gift, Harney’s casual encounter with Charity without any sense of obligation on either side is a
fortunate gift to both of them. This gift, however, is never truly attainable because it cannot sustain itself outside the economy of marriage, and is only possible in the fleeting summer moments in the midst of the North Dormer fields. And even then, it is only possible if the lovers strip themselves of their social obligations, of their respective backgrounds, of public opinion, of the worry about the future (what is she planning to do, asks Lawyer Royall?). The love tryst is the (impossible) gift; even Charity’s self-abnegation when she sets Harney free from any obligation to herself cannot rival the fortuitousness of the gift.

Charity’s abdication of any rights over Lucius is not only noble, but also fearful: she cannot imagine them together, and now that her lover is not with her, she is overcome with a sense of her social inferiority: “Annabel Balch was, if not the girl Harney ought to marry, at least the kind of girl it would be natural for him to marry. Charity had never been able to picture herself as his wife” (Wharton, Summer 220). In other words, Charity has nothing to offer Harney on the marriage market: marriage being based on exchange, Charity chooses the path that lets her save most of her pride—by putting Harney in her debt by virtue of her self-abnegation. Yet, having given Harney her all, she does not have anything further to exchange: “She had given him all she had—but what was it compared to the other gifts life held for him? She understood now the case of girls like herself to whom this kind of thing happened. They gave all they had, but their all was not enough: it could not buy more than a few moments…” (198). Even with her pride in the balance, Charity still does not have the right amount that might “buy” her Lucius on the marriage market.

Because Charity understands that marriage is an exchange, she feels differently about her power to barter the moment she finds out that she is going to have Harney’s baby. The baby is
the gift of their love materialized; it is something that has been given to her through their
love encounter; and it also appears to be something that she can give:

All these memories, and a thousand others, hummed through her brain till his
nearness grew so vivid that she felt his fingers in her hair, and his warm breath on
her cheek as he bent her head back like a flower. These things were hers; they
had passed into her blood, and become part of her, they were building the child in
her womb; it was impossible to tear asunder strands of life so interwoven.
(Wharton, *Summer* 231).

Now that she is a mother of his child, Charity no longer feels that Miss Balch has a better claim
on Harney: “compared to her sovereign right Annabel Balch’s claim seemed no more than a
girl’s sentimental fancy” (Wharton, *Summer* 228). Charity understands the possibility to force
Harney into marriage but she resolves not to use her baby as a barter coin, just as she refuses to
accept Mr. Royall’s offer to secure Harney for her: “She knew she had it in her power to do that;
she held his fate in her hands. All she had to do was to tell him the truth; but that was the very
fact that held her back…”(234). What holds her back is the knowledge of miserable marriages
started in the same way. Her vision of love is too lofty to be sullied by calculations.

Mr. Royall, on the other hand, observes the proprieties of North Dormer and is concerned
about public opinion. From the very first, he assiduously inscribes Charity in the middle-class
life of North Dormer and maintains in the end her dependence by marrying her. He performs
many philanthropic actions in his relationship to Charity: first, he brings her down from the
Mountain to raise her as a Christian; he follows her up the Mountain and brings her home when
she is in need; he gives her the protection of his name and influence in North Dormer (and stops
people’s talking); he secures the librarian’s job for her when she needs it; he treats her kindly and
spares her pride. And at the same time, Lawyer Royall’s gifts are tainted: he ‘adopts’ Charity
but sexually assaults her in her adolescence; he gives her the librarian’s job as repayment for his mistake; he protects her from the rumors of North Dormer and treats her with kindness, but his desire for Charity throws suspicion on his motives; and finally, he marries her to bring her back to the dreary environment of North Dormer she had been trying to flee.38

Between Harney’s fleeting gifts and Mr. Royall’s imprisoning ones, Charity finds that there is no place for women like her: “Only—was there no alternative but Julia’s? Her soul recoiled from the vision of the white-haired woman among the plush sofas and gilt frames. In the established order of things as she knew them she saw no place for her individual adventure…” (Wharton, Summer 253). But her impasse is not only her own: it also prevents the possibility of true giving for Mr. Royall and for Lucius Harney: perhaps Mr. Royall’s philanthropy would have been better but for the incestuous family relationships to which Victorian society had doomed him, and Harney’s marriage might have been happier had it been with Charity Royall.

_The House of Mirth_

The view of philanthropy expressed in Summer seems much more bleak than earlier ones. Wharton’s 1905 novel _The House of Mirth_ contrasted its refined, attractive, and pleasure-loving character Lily Bart to the abstemious, plain, and philanthropic Gerty Farish. Even though the two women represent two ends of the spectrum, they are both trapped by their femininity. To Lily, living in Gerty’s small, modest, but own apartment, devoting herself entirely to charitable

38 Alan Price notes that “the theme of incest … preoccupied Wharton before, during, and after the war. During the war, her limited fictional production dealt repeatedly with the taboo of incest” (173).
activities, and living vicariously through others is not a real choice. Yet the role of the marriageable woman and the role of the philanthropic spinster are equally limiting: “What choice had she? To be herself, or a Gerty Farish” (Wharton, *House* 23). Lily enjoys her bedroom “with its softly-shaded lights, her lace dressing-gown lying across the silken bedspread, her little embroidered slippers before the fire, a vase of carnation filling the air with perfume, and the last novels and magazines lying uncut on a table beside the reading-lamp” and cringes at the vision of Gerty’s “cheap inconveniences and shabby wallpaper” (23). To Lily, Miss Gertrude Farish “typifie[s] the mediocre and the ineffectual (70), yet she concedes that “being fatally dingy and poor, it was wise of Gerty to have taken up philanthropy and symphony concerts” (71).

The two women are united in their desire for independence and liberty; when she is sexually assaulted by Mr. Trenor, Lily goes to Gerty’s flat to find comfort in her friend’s arms. The “white ruin of Lily’s face” stands next to the plain and still teary face of a sad Gerty: “[Gerty] knelt down, and the flame leapt under her rapid hands. It flashed strangely through the tears which still blurred her eyes, and smote on the white ruin of Lily’s face. The girls looked at each other in silence; then Lily repeated: “I couldn’t go home” (Wharton, *House* 129). At Miss Van Osbrugh’s wedding, Gerty “extract[s] sentimental solace from the wedding presents” (75) and takes a “sentimental and unenvious interest in all the details of a wedding” (71). Even in their romantic interest in Lawrence Selden, Gerty acknowledges the superiority of Lily’s claim and lives in the shadow of her glamorous friend. Her compassion for Lily is also partly motivated by her training and patience with human suffering. In her anxious worry about Lily, Gerty sublimates her own loneliness “into a breaking down of the bounds of self, a deflecting of the wasted personal emotion into the general current of human understanding” (209).
If Gerty experiences glamour vicariously through her friend, Lily takes a desultory excursion in philanthropy. She impulsively donates the better portion of the money for a dressing-case to Gerty’s Girl’s Club fund. The Club is a philanthropic association that aims to “provide comfortable lodging, with a reading-room and other modest distractions, where young women of the class employed in downtown offices might find a home when out of work, or in need of rest” (Wharton, House 87). These working-class women capture Lily’s interest as being so different, yet not altogether different from Lily herself: “These were young girls, like herself; some perhaps pretty, some not without a trace of her finer sensibilities” (88). Gerty praises Lily’s gifts to Selden: Miss Bart has donated $300 to the Girls’ Club, she has helped solicit other donations, and her company has been inspiring and welcome to the working women: “One of them said it was as good as a day in the country just to look at her. And she sat there, and laughed and talked with them—not a bit as if she were being charitable, you know, but as if she liked it as much as they did”(105).

To Gerty, Lily’s philanthropy is “actuated by the same motive as herself—that sharpening of the moral vision which makes all human suffering so near and insistent that the other aspects of life fade into remoteness” (Wharton, House 119-120). But Miss Bart lacks the discipline and the dedication with which Miss Farish approaches her cases; she gives the way she shops, to acquire a new sensation, to justify previous and future extravagances, to earn Gerty’s gratitude and admiration, to indulge in a new “sense of self-esteem which she naturally mistook for the fruits of altruism.” Hers is “a prodigal philanthropy” (88). Lily has a good understanding of “the natural order of things”: “She had always accepted with philosophic calm the fact that such existences as hers were pedestalled on foundations of obscure humanity. The dreary limbo of dinginess lay all around and beneath that little illuminated circle in which life reached its
finest efflorescence, as the mud and sleet of a winter night enclose a hot-house filled with tropical flowers” (119). Her brief excursion in philanthropy reveals briefly to her the injustice and artificiality of the “natural order”:

But it is one thing to live comfortably with the abstract conception of poverty, another to be brought in contact with its human embodiments. Lily had never conceived of these victims of fate otherwise than in the mass. That the mass was composed of individual lives, innumerable separate centers of sensation, with her own eager reachings for pleasure, her own fierce revulsions from pain—that some of these bundles of feeling were clothed in shapes not so unlike her own, with eyes meant to look on gladness, and young lips shaped for love—this discovery gave Lily one of those sudden shocks of pity that sometimes decentralize a life. (Wharton, House 119)

Despite this momentary gift of compassion, of being “drawn out of herself,” the narrator concludes, “Lily’s nature was incapable of such renewal” (119).

In The House of Mirth, philanthropy is couched in more positive terms: it is moral “renewal” for self-centered, consumer-oriented persons like Lily, and it is wise for unmarriageable ones like Gerty. The portrait of philanthropy in the earlier novel is complex, and the selfish motivations for philanthropy are highlighted. In each case, philanthropy is not altogether selfless, and it is not sufficient to make the lives of women worthwhile. Nevertheless, it is associated with positive values like moral renewal and self-discipline, and it is through philanthropy that women such as Gerty and Lily encounter the women who are other to their class and yet same in their flesh. Through the discussion of philanthropy in The House of Mirth, Wharton extends her commentary on women’s conditions beyond a certain limited social stratum. Elizabeth Ammons notes that the centrality of the Girl’s Club in the novel is not an accident; on the contrary, the author deliberately enlarged her vision or femininity and humanity to encompass all social strata: “Wharton constructs The House of Mirth to show the existence of
these decks [of society] and the passageways between them.” Ammons points to the popularity of the Girls’ Clubs and to an article (“Women’s Opportunities in Town and Country”) by Wharton’s sister-in-law Mary Cadwalader Jones, published in Scribner’s *Woman’s Book* in 1894. According to Ammons, Cadwalader celebrates the group character of the “new philanthropy”: “She explains that, happily, the days of lady Bountiful-type philanthropy are past; in its stead is a new type of social work, free of condescension and done by women organized to act as part of a group. Typical would be settlement work, work with Girls’ Friendly Societies or YWCA’s, work with kindergartens and day nurseries, or work with Working Girls’ Clubs” (Ammons 355). Like Mary Jones Cadwalader, Wharton rendered the new philanthropy in a positive light; the presence of Nettie Struther in the final stages of the plot emphasize the unity of all classes and their common destiny.

With Lily’s downward plunge into poverty, she joins the working classes and becomes first a secretary to Mrs. Hatch, then a worker in a millinery shop. The further downward she plunges, the more she becomes an object rather than a subject of philanthropy. She shows less interest in the working classes because she is “on a level with them,” and her enlightened interest and “happy attitude of her grace and her beneficence” have diminished with her social station (Wharton, *House* 224). She becomes instead the recipient of the kindness of Miss Kilroy, a co-worker, who commiserates with her about the rebukes of the forewoman; of Mrs. Carry Fisher, who persuades Madame Regina to teach her the craft of her establishment; and finally, she even receives kindness from one of the former recipients of her own charity—Nettie Struther. Nettie Struther had “lung-trouble” and was sent with Lily’s (actually Gus Trevor’s) money to a sanatorium: “one of the discouraged victims of over-work to be swept prematurely into … [the] social refuse-heap.” But the intervention of a man has saved Nettie from physical destruction:
“Nettie Struther’s frail envelope was now alive with hope and energy: whatever fate the future reserved for her, she would not be cast into the refuse-heap without a struggle” (243). Marriage and motherhood have shored the fragments of this nearly lost life in a way that proves impossible for Lily. Without the financial support of men, women like Lily and Nettie and Gerty can neither receive or give.

Warmed in Nettie’s kitchen at the glow of maternal happiness, Lily hallucinates in her last hour that she is holding Nettie’s child to her breast, a vision that warms and comforts her to eternal sleep. Just like in Summer an infant appears here in the shape of the gift. Yet this gift is ambiguous in its consequences: it lulls Lily to sleep, and it weighs Charity until she is buoyed into an unwelcome marriage with Lawyer Royal. Just like in Charity’s case, philanthropy and marriage are inextricably mixed; if in The House of Mirth they are the only vocations open to woman (vocations that are equally limiting), in Summer Lawyer Royal’s initial philanthropy ultimately turns into marriage. Being both economic conditions based on exchange, charity and marriage are interchangeable. Wharton’s writing, after all, unlike her reticent letters, attempts to “disentangle the mixed threads” (Wharton, House 119) of which philanthropy and love are woven.

Yezierska and the Object of Philanthropy

As in Wharton’s novels, the question of the gift is also central to Yezierska’s works; it is as prominent in her novels Salome of the Tenements and Arrogant Beggar as it is in her stories and her autobiography, Red Ribbon on a White Horse. Yezierska had experiences on both sides of philanthropy, but she spoke about it with the voice of the poor and the underprivileged who
had felt its constricting influence in their lives. Living between two traditions, the Old World tradition and the New World one, the characters of Anzia Yezierska’s fiction are conscious of the elusive promise of the New World, of a Golden Land that they just cannot reach. We can read Yezierska’s fiction, then, as a claim on behalf of the disenfranchised new immigrant to the riches and opportunities of America. On the other hand, Yezierska’s fiction acknowledges and questions a different gift—the gift of her Polish Jewish tradition and of her origins. Just as it affirms the impossibility of gratitude and dependence, Yezierska’s writing celebrates the gift—not as charitable ladies or progressive reformers would see it, but as it could ideally be. And in celebrating and critiquing the gift, the “sweatshop Cinderella” is celebrating and critiquing America.

Anzia Yezierska arrived to America around 1890 about the age of eight or ten. Much of her later fiction deals with stories like her own, stories of immigrants from the Old World disenchanted with the tyranny of landlords in the land of freedom (“The Lost Beautifulness”); stories of factory hands and laundry workers who aspire to be “somebody” in the Promised Land (“Soap and Water”). The daughter of a rabbi, the young Anzia fought against traditions and opposed the wishes of her family in order to get a college education. At the age of seventeen or eighteen, she left her home to live on her own at a philanthropic institution, the Clara de Hirsch Home for Working Girls, an experience she would later address in her novel Arrogant Beggar. In the words of her biographer, the writer’s daughter Louise Levitas Henriksen, “[b]efore reaching bottom she had managed an effusive, overblown expression of appreciation to some of

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39 The nickname the popular press gave Anzia Yezierska after the Hollywood success of her collection Hungry Hearts.
the Clara de Hirsch Home’s wealthy patrons, and this so deeply impressed the ladies that they voted to pay her tuition to Columbia University.” At Columbia, much to her regret, Yezierska was limited to taking domestic science courses and learned how to be a cooking teacher (Henriksen 17). After a series of jobs as a substitute cooking teacher, she won a scholarship at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and tried to become an actress. Even though she despaired of finding a job in the theatre, she did not abandon her plans to rise in the world, and wrote her first story, “The Free Vacation House,” inspired by her married sister Annie’s experiences with charity (Henriksen 21). In 1917, and after a couple of failed marriages and the birth of Louise, Yezierska met John Dewey. Many of her subsequent works address the encounter of an immigrant girl with an intellectual Anglo-Saxon reformer.

Two of these works are her novels Salome of the Tenements (1923) and Arrogant Beggar (1927). In both the immigrant heroine seeks to improve her life through a relationship with a wealthy, upper class philanthropist (John Manning in Salome of the Tenements and Arthur Hellman in Arrogant Beggar). Charitable ladies, friendly visitors, social workers, and idealistic reformers from the settlements are equally implicated in Yezierska’s critique of patronage and tutelage of the poor. Her works levels a radical attack on the Progressive movement as well as on social science from the perspective of the recipients of their philanthropy. It is therefore of some interest to explore the relationships between these charitable and reform movements in America and in American fiction at the turn of the twentieth century.
An overview of the contents of *The Charities Review. A Journal of Practical Sociology*, published by the Charity Organization Society of New York at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, shows much overlap between charity and social reform. Even though many of the publications deal with such COS issues as the training of the friendly visitor and the nature of scientific investigation and scientific charity, the *Charities Review* also offers discussions of labor and industrial reform. The settlements, Arnold Toynbee, Hull-House, labor legislation, the reform of correctional institutions, the responsibility of capitalists, neighborhood guilds, as well the necessity to strengthen the moral character of the poor and other similar issues share the pages of this publication. Most of the articles do indeed support and popularize charity organization. They address frequently asked questions such as “Is charity organization the investigation and detection of frauds? Is it the compilation of statistics? Is it giving to a poor man a friend who is forbidden to give him the pecuniary assistance that he perhaps most needs?” The *Charities Review* editorials state over and over again the mission of the COS; they explain how “charity organization societies were formed to be ‘centers of intercommunication’ between other charitable agencies, to ‘foster harmonious co-operation

40 The Charity Organization Society in the US was founded by Josephine Shaw Lowell in 1882. In an article entitled “‘Give This Man Work!’ Josephine Shaw Lowell, the Charity Organization Society of the City of New York, and the Depression of 1893,” Joan Waugh argues that around 1893-4 there was a shift in charity organization philosophy from character to environment as a fundamental cause of poverty. This shift was influenced by the economic crisis in the last decade of the nineteenth century: “The specter of joblessness and despair raised by the economic disaster of 1893, however, prompted the leadership of the New York Society to acknowledge, for the first time in its short history, that relief under some circumstances might be a right for working people. Lowell’s East Side Relief Committee was designed to be a model of judicious work-relief that could be used, not only throughout New York City, but also throughout the country, in 1893-94 and for any future depressions. Thus, after 1893 there was a noticeable shift in COS ideology and practice” (Waugh 218-219). Towards the end of her career, Lowell became a labor activist and fought for unemployment legislation.
between them,’ and to ‘check the evils of the overlapping of relief’” (Forest 4). Charity organization could do so by applying to philanthropy the methods of science.

The language of charity organization, like the language or reform, is highly rhetorical, alive with the urgency of social change; at the time when America saw the largest immigrant wave, industrialization, urban poverty, and the economic crisis of the 1890s, charitable reformers pressed the urgency of change in the face of revolution and social unrest: “In a country like ours, unless we can find some wise solution to this great evil of poverty, some wise method of applying the proper remedies, our republic is doomed and our civilization is doomed” (Schurman 196).

Charity organization rhetoric in America finds much of its impetus in the rhetoric of science, industrial organization, and social organicism. If “the Social Question is the question of our day,” and if charity is in order to become scientific, they are to follow in the wake of our other discoveries and advances, a stage in the evolution of society. An inspired address

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43 “Think what knowledge or science has done for us in other spheres. Compare medicine to-day with the condition of medicine a hundred years ago, nay, fifty years ago, and what do you find? That our great discoveries in chemistry, and in physiology and anatomy have supplied a completely new basis for medical treatment, and we have such modern remedies as the antiseptical treatment of Lister or the still newer discoveries of Koch, the ultimate beneficent results of which upon hygiene no being can attempt to fix. Science has been applied to art in your hospitals. Your skilled surgeons, your marvelous recoveries of apparently hopeless cases, these will tell you what the result has been. Look at your great factories! You are used to them, perhaps sick of the smoke of them. These are modern things; a hundred years ago they were all unknown. Exact investigations have been made into the law of nature, more particularly the laws of motion, and the ultimate scientific principles have been applied so that the forces of nature can be controlled and made subservient to human uses, and all nature is thus becoming the servant and the minister of man. Science has done all that, science has made art possible. Let me venture, without further illustrations, on the generalization that what has been done in these two particular spheres which I have cited is the universal characteristic of our modern civilization…..As I am hopeful and think we shall see in the future a brighter
delivered to the Annual Meeting of the Charity Organization Society of New York City on February 9, 1892 compares charity organization to labor organization in “our large manufacturing establishments, our banks and jointstock companies” (Schruman 197-8). It constructs a narrative that locates the origin of social science in industrial modernity, a stage of history coincidental with the last stage of evolution of the social body. The metaphor of the body continues in the following quotation, which describes metaphorically the leading role of the COS:

This society came into existence to be the brain of the charitable organism in New York. Brains are the latest things to develop in the world—the lowest animals have no brains—and so your society was the late birth of time. It is the characteristic of man that he has a large brain and a highly convoluted brain, and it is the business of the brain to regulate and control the organs. An animal may lose its brain and still be able to make movements, but they are random, chaotic movements. Now, the charitable societies of the city of New York, before this organization came into existence, were like a living organization which had lost its brains; they needed some living point of connection which should be a controlling principle. This society gave it to them….This society must, in the long run, succeed, because it seeks to apply the principle which has made biological and political organizations effective. (Schurman 198)

44 “Division of work and cooperation in work,—these are the secret springs of our modern civilization. Think of our great material enterprises. Think of our large manufacturing establishments, our banks and jointstock companies, and you will find a forcible illustration of the point I am now making. Without division and cooperation of labor every one of these would have been an impossibility. Now, this division and co-operation of labor, I will, in a single phrase, call the organization of labor, the organization of industry on the basis of scientific knowledge. This is the secret of modern civilization. This society [the Charity Organization Society of the City of New York] has grasped that principle” (Schurman 197-8).
There are two implications in this argument. On the one hand, social science obtains a controlling function over more amateur charity work (this was one of the reasons why it was most disparaged and resisted). C.O.S. exercises control over philanthropic workers and private philanthropic organizations. On the other hand, social science exercises control over the social body itself, being like a brain for the helpless organism. The philanthropy of the C.O.S. is explicitly referred to as a machine driven by the motive power of “heart and soul and personality behind it” (Schurman 199). This view implies a further disenfranchisement of (mostly) the beneficiaries of scientific help, a stripping of the needy of agency that Yezierska will express uncompromisingly in her work and especially in the novel Arrogant Beggar.

Charity organization workers shared with progressive reformers both an agenda for social control and one for social reform. As the Charities Review voiced philanthropists’ belief in progress and science, the organ of the C.O.S. gave opportunity to contributors to articulate the “newest” charity of justice in workers’ compensation and labor legislation. If friendly visiting was the new charity, then the newest fought to provide “justice in work and wages, which would make other charity almost unnecessary” (Crafts 19). Proponents of this “newest” charity called upon employers to be charitable by providing work and a minimum wage on which the

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45 In her 1884 work, Public Relief and Private Charity, Josephine Shaw Lowell, the founder of the American COS, asserted that control was a major objective of charity organization: “The public should refuse to support any except whom it can control” (qtd. in Waught 223).

46 Another publication from February 1895 compares the charity organization society to a surgeon who would not give a patient an opiate “merely to stop his cries, or because he begged for it” (170). “The Problem of Charity, from Another Point of View.” IN The Charities Review. A Journal of Practical Sociology. Vol. IV, No. 4.
employed can survive.\textsuperscript{47} This praise for the stewardship of the wealthy for the good of society was in tune with the demand for progressive reform.

The language of reform becomes more evident in the C.O.S. periodical in the first decade of the twentieth century. Mina Carson’s study of the settlement movement in the United States, \textit{Settlement Folk. Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930}, also points out the close relationship between settlement workers and the C.O.S. (particularly the New York City C.O.S.). Even though settlement workers attempted to “keep the Settlements from being merely part of the drudging machinery of charity” (qtd. in Carson 122), they had interest to work closely with related organizations. In the early 1890s, they began attending and participating in meetings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections. In 1909 NCCC elected Jane Addams for their president (Carson 122).\textsuperscript{48} In 1905 the heir of \textit{The Charities Review, Charities}, merged with Lee Frankel’s \textit{Jewish Charity} and with Graham Taylor’s the \textit{Commons}. The latter Chicago journal “had served as the national organ of the settlement movement” since 1896 (Carson 124).\textsuperscript{49} With Edward T. Devine,\textsuperscript{50} as an editor, \textit{Charities and the Commons} conducted a

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\item \textsuperscript{47} “There is a ‘new charity’ and a newest. The ‘new charity’ is that of the charity organization movement which brings to the poor ‘not alms but a friend.’ The newest charity, as yet mostly an ideal, is justice in work and wages, which would make other charity mostly unnecessary. This newest charity is also the truest. Many an employer has caused by unjust wages or overwork the poverty he has afterwards patched up with charity. The ‘new charity’ is now the subject of much earnest and intelligent study, and is approaching the rank of a social science. Among its students are many of the wealthy. This is encouraging, for the rich have been mostly content to master the art of production, and let distribution take care of itself, after the fashion of the old political economy. But charity conferences should give larger place to the newest charity, the ideal charity of just wages. Prevention and cure should thus join hands.” (“The New Charity and the Newest.” IN \textit{The Charities Review. Vol. V, No. 1, November 1895})
\item \textsuperscript{48} Charity Organization workers were no less eager to cooperate with settlement activists. Joan Waugh notes that Josephine Shaw Lowell “made allies of the budding settlement house movement, declaring, ‘What we ought to have are settlements in every street, to help civilize and lift the people’” (230).
\item \textsuperscript{49} “Remarkably, their symbiotic philosophical relationship succeeded from the start, despite the reservations of the Boston philanthropist Joseph Lee, who argued to Paul Kellogg against taking on the Commons, ‘because that stands fro Trade Unions and Settlements (don’t it?) and because I do not think that they ‘are the
\end{itemize}
number of investigations into labor conditions including the famous Pittsburgh Survey of 1907-09. In the first decade of the twentieth century, American social workers and philanthropists started to realize the importance of environmental causes for poverty, and this motivated a move to social reform. According to Carson, “Between 1900 and 1910, the most forceful and articulate leaders in social work came to accept the idea that poor environment, not defective character, generated poverty, and therefore that a vital part of their own mission was to uncover and strike at the social, economic, and physical causes of poverty. Nowhere was this shift in emphasis more dramatic than in the New York Charity Organization Society” (123). In 1909 the periodical was renamed the Survey in honor of the Pittsburgh Survey, and in 1912 the monthly cut its last ties with the C.O.S. (Carson 126). Nevertheless, the common concerns and publications of scientific charity and of settlement workers for over a decade mark an important part in their history.

Yezierska and Philanthropy

Throughout her life Anzia Yezierska formed many ties to various philanthropic and reform organizations. In 1900, she became what was called an “inmate” of the Clara de Hirsch people.’ I think their idea or democracy is the European idea that it consists in putting the under dog on top; whereas of the 2 dogs, if one is to be on top, I imagine the one who is used to it will be the best” (qtd. in Carson 124).

Edward T. Devine had a Ph.D. in economics from Johns Hopkins University. In 1896, he was hired by Josephine Shaw Lowell, the founder of the American COS, to be general secretary of the Charity Organization Society of the City of New York. He “brought a much different sensibility to COS” and “prodded and pushed the COS to explore the social, rather than just the individual, causes of poverty and, most importantly, helped to research, define, and publicize a normal ‘standard of living’ for American workers” (Waught 241).
Home for Working Girls. She also visited and taught a cooking class at the Educational Alliance, “the most visible and typical of the night schools and settlements she frequented” (Dearborn 39). The settlement had been started in 1889 by the Hebrew Free School Association, the Young Men’s Hebrew Association, and the Aguilar Free Library Society, and represented a “curious mixture of school, settlement house, day care center, gymnasium and public forum” (qtd. in Dearborn 39). With the help of Sarah Ollesheimer, one of the trustees of the Clara de Hirsch Home, she received a scholarship of the Domestic Science Department of the Teachers’ College of Columbia University in 1901. In 1916, she worked for the Hebrew Charities in San Francisco, and later described this job as “the dirtiest most dehumanizing work a human being can do” (qtd. in Dearborn 43). In 1918, she helped conduct a study of the Polish-American community in Philadelphia initiated by John Dewey, and during the Depression Years, she went on relief in order to qualify for a job with the Works Progress Administration (WPA), an experience she described in her autobiographical work *Red Ribbon on a White Horse*. Her personal involvement on both sides of philanthropy doubtless influenced her radical critique of charitable patronage amongst the immigrant community.

Yezierska’s 1927 novel *Arrogant Beggar* deals extensively with the subject of upper-class philanthropy and the immigrant. The plot of the novel is simple: Adele Lindner, an orphan

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51 The certificate of incorporation of the Clara de Hirsch Home for Working Girls states the following objectives: “The particular objects for which the corporation is to be formed are: to benefit working girls and other unmarried women who are dependent on their own exertions for a livelihood, those who are resident, as well as those arriving from other countries; to improve their mental, moral and physical condition, and train them for self support; to instruct them to become domestic servants; to provide industrial training or fit them for such occupations for which they may be best qualified; to erect building or buildings, to afford them a temporary comfortable home; to aid them in obtaining suitable employment, and to assist them by advice and instruction; and generally to provide them with opportunities for industrial, social and moral improvement; and to do all other things to carry out the general objects and purposes here before specified…. “ (“Certificate of Incorporation of the Clara de Hirsch Home for Working Girls,” *Report of Officers, Certificate of Incorporation, By Law*. New York: Press of Philip Cowen, 1901: 7-8).
immigrant girl, discovers hope for personal improvement in Mrs. Hellman’s charitable institution, the Home for Working Girls. As she encounters the loss of her job and turns for help to her friends in the Home, her hopes fade because the classist, impersonal regime of the establishment guides her into the profession of a domestic servant. Adele tries to make the best of her situation (“If housework can’t lift me, I’ll lift housework. I’ll fight for the right of servant girls to receive their boyfriends in the parlour. I’ll do for servants what Florence Nightingale did for nurses” (Yezierska, Beggar 39)), but she can hardly contain her resentment at her social decline. When Mrs. Hellman rejects Adele’s impulsive gratitude, Adele understands that she is only an object of sham charity: “I began to laugh at myself, at Mrs. Hellman, but it was hard, mirthless laughter…. The saviour of humanity off her guard! And you—object of charity! Because she was kind enough to throw down on you her old clothes and send you to the Training School for Servants—how dare you forget yourself? How dare you voice even your gratitude out of turn?…”(54). From an innocent, trusting girl, an object of philanthropy, Adele turns into a disillusioned and embittered subject.

Her emergence as a rebellious subject happens during her speech at the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Home. Instead of the letter of profuse gratitude that she had written the previous year (“I have no words deep enough to thank you with, I can only say dumbly over and over again, Benefactors of Humanity! Saviours of my Soul! May you go on saving other girls as you have saved me. May the Home be a lighthouse of love to all the homeless ones of the world” (Yezierska, Beggar 43)), Adele denounces the institution and its “care” for the girls as a sham: “I’m not grateful. I hate this Home. I hate myself for living here. I hate the hand-me-down rags I wear on my back. I hate every damned bit of kindness you’ve ever done me. I’m poisoned—poisoned with the hurts, the insults I suffered in this beastly place.” Adele
accuses her benefactors of exploiting her weakness for their own aims, for their vanity, their desire for power: “Hypocrites! Shaming me before strangers—boasting of your kindness—because I had no home—I had no friends—I had no work. Feeding your vanity on my helplessness—my misfortune…” The self-interest of charitable givers has silenced Adele and has pushed her into a dead-end low-class occupation: “Shylocks! A pound of flesh you want for every ounce of help—worse than Shylocks! Shylock only wanted the man’s flesh. You want his soul. You robbed me of my soul, my spirit. You robbed me of myself. When I hated you, I had to smile up to you, and flatter you“(86). It is in this speech that Adele returns the tainted gift, the poisoned gift to her benefactors. They can no longer pretend with the same ease that they are “Big Sisters of the Working Girl” (87); instead, Mrs. Hellman is “wounded,” frightened (Yezierska, *Beggar* 88). Even for a brief moment, the orphan at the Working Girls’ Home regains her voice and speaks.

Just as in her short stories, in *Arrogant Beggar* Yezierska criticizes the abuses of ‘scientific’ philanthropy: the opportunity that it gave fashionable ladies to dictate a way of life and occupational choices to their charges; the thinly veiled pretense of domestic science to uplift servitude; the insensitive and institutional friendliness of charity workers who did not feel the hurts of the underprivileged but blamed them for their misfortune; the emphasis on efficiency that justified further exploitation of the working girls. Helping as a waitress at one of Mrs. Hellman’s private gatherings, Adele accidentally hears that she is underpaid by her benefactress. Mrs. Hellman is saving ten cents an hour from her wages:

Ten cents! So she was saving on me—my benefactress—saving ten cents on me every hour! With one hand trying to help me—with the other taking advantage of my helplessness—profiting by my need. Even boasting to her friends of her triumphant economy.
On top of this I learned that the last Training School girl who assisted Miss Perkins in the Saturday morning class for the daughters of the Board of Directors had been getting a dollar an hour. Mrs. Hellman had done me a favour to give me the other girl’s job. Again at forty cents an hour. This time saving on me for the good of the Home—the glory of the institution. (Yezierska, Beggar 70)

The calculation as well as the dependence inherent in philanthropy represent a message Yezierska does not tire to reiterate in her writing. She speaks for the silenced objects of charity and reform and voices a radical position of nonconformity. She is the voice of the immigrant claiming equal participation in American democracy.

Yeziarska places this message firmly in the American tradition of Emersonian self-reliance. Arrogant Beggar, for instance, starts with an epigraph from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essay “Gifts, in which the American philosopher declares the impossibility, the inadequacy, and the treacherous character of philanthropy:

We do not quite forgive a giver. The hand that feeds us is in some danger of being bitten. We can receive anything from love, for that is a way of receiving it from ourselves; but not from any one who assumes to bestow….We ask the whole. Nothing less will content us. We arraign society, if it do not give us besides earth, and fire, and water, opportunity, love, reverence, and objects of veneration. (Yezierska, Beggar 5)

And like Emerson, Yezierska asserts the importance of the gift, not the gift that “assumes to bestow” but the gift of the “whole:” the gift that issues from love. In Arrogant Beggar, Adele manages to stand on her own feet and start a small business amongst her own people in the East Side; she meets and marries the talented pianist, Jean Rachmansky, formerly patronized by Arthur Hellman; and she helps others like herself without expecting a reward. Adele rejects the world of the Hellmans, their philanthropy, and Arthur’s proposal because she knows that to Arthur she is only “a slumming tour. [a] sensation” (Yezierska, Beggar 113). She embraces
instead the traditions of Muhmenkeh, the maternal old Jewish woman who saves her after she leaves the Working Girls Home.

Muhmenkeh is praised as Adele’s new ideal of giving, love, self-reliance, and human dignity. When a homeless and hungry Adele is reduced to washing dishes in a Dairy Restaurant for a small wage, she meets a frail woman with a “worn-out old face,” “shrunken, toothless mouth,” “wrinkles knotting into wrinkles,” a woman “old enough for the grave” (Yezierska, *Beggar* 93). Muhmenkeh, whose maternal name mirrors her maternal nature, personifies everything that Adele associates with home: her “gentle, unworldly gaze” presides over a humble but reassuringly familiar household: “There flowed over me a sense of peace, of homecoming. Here was the real world I knew. The familiar things that made me feel secure, the washtub, the boiler of clothes on the cook stove, the newspaper for tablecloth. And over it all—Muhmenkeh” (97). During Adele’s subsequent influenza, Muhmenkeh spends all her savings in her savings bank (a tomato tin) to nurse the girl back into health. Unlike the Hellmans, Muhmenkeh gives out of love; in the face of the homeless Adele she sees her own granddaughter Shenah Gittel for whose overseas passage she has been saving pennies for years. Is Muhmenkeh’s gift, then, the pure gift, and are we as readers to believe that it is authentic?

Muhmenkeh’s giving and generous nature is placed firmly in the communal tradition of the Jewish East Side.52 Her generosity may be motivated by love, but it also obligates: in the end of the novel, Adele sends the passage money to Muhmenkeh’s granddaughter, Shenah Gittel, in

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52 Susan Eckstein explores the “[u]ndocumented and unexplored […] collectivist roots of giving” in American philanthropy and volunteerism in her article, “Community as Gift-Giving: Collectivist Roots of Volunteerism.” In a detailed study of a predominantly Italian American community in Greater Boston, she notes that collectivist and reciprocal generosity in working-class and immigrant communities (Italian, Jewish and Latino) is an underdeveloped field of study obscured by the emphasis on middle-class American philanthropy and “individualistic-grounded volunteerism” (829).
memory of her real benefactress. The gift that comes into the hands of Adele is passed along; it symbolizes a relationship of mutuality that connects the poor in need. If Muhmenkeh is self-reliant and if she helps others in the community as “the best nurse to be had on the East Side” (Yezierska, *Beggar* 107), she also gains her place in the neighborhood because of it: she is the mother of the East Side, bound to others in a familial bond (“a godmother, a grandmother of lost ones” (105)). If women leave their children in Muhmenkeh’s care and rely on her generosity, they also come carrying the best of their food in exchange: “[a] thick slice of hot fried herring and onion, sizzling in its own fat” (98). Muhmenkeh’s Purim gift of *mohn kuchen* and “wine” for the children playing in the street are not the condescending charity of the rich for poor but a reciprocal gift between equals.

Reciprocal charity was not a new concept when the novel was published in 1927. In the April 1895 issue of the *Charities Review*, in an article entitled “Democracy and Charity,” J.K. Paulding criticized upper-class philanthropy and praised the reciprocal philanthropy of the poor. Paulding deprecates upper-class philanthropy, but at the same time he idealized the genuine charity of antiquity and sometimes even of feudal times when the giver had a direct relationship with the receiver. His argument, ostensibly a defense of charity, is a fundamental critique of its role in industrial society as cheap insurance for the rich against revolution and an inexpensive way to “salve their consciences.” This kind of philanthropy is a “misnomer.” It is merely in the service of those “who have amassed enormous fortunes for themselves in some licensed and unlicensed form of preying upon their fellow mortals.” Instead of such “insurance, terrestrial and celestial,” Paulding sets the ideal of justice, democracy, and reciprocal charity (287). This new charity is the very spirit of democracy and of love. Democracy, which objected to a feudal system of patronage, “rests upon the principle of cooperation, and charity, of the kind that helps,
takes for its motto, ‘help others to help themselves,’ thus defining its mission as one of cooperation” (284). Reciprocal charity is democratic because it takes the privilege of giving charity away from any one class:

Against a conception of charity, as then understood, [democracy] set the conception of justice. We can have no doubt of the value of the service it thereby rendered. It is true that the power to do good is not so exclusively a monopoly of the rich as it is at first sight appears to be. The poor have a capital of unselfishness and forbearance which not unfrequently enables them to turn the tables and make the beneficiaries of their would-be benefactors. Their gifts are the more precious, in that they are good for the spirit and raiment for the soul, instead of clothing and sustenance for the body, and they do not lose, rather gain, in value, in that they are unconsciously bestowed. (Paulding 285)

Paulding’s view was popular at the time of the Progressive movement and animated charitable workers and reformers alike. An epigraph to the 1914 Report of the Clara de Hirsch Home for Immigrant Girls, makes a similar appeal to brotherly love: “The cry of the age is more for fraternity than charity. If one exists, the other will follow, or, better still, not be needed” (cover page). The way Paulding praises reciprocal charity and cooperation reminds one of Marcel Mauss’s praise of “the solicitude arising from reciprocity and cooperation” (Mauss 69). If Paulding in 1895 called for a return to the “more ancient, nobler meaning” of charity (Paulding 284), Mauss found in 1925 a truer form of giving among ancient societies. Both saw in


55 Marcel Mauss, The Gift, was first published in 1925. In his conclusion, Mauss states the benefits that the knowledge of anthropology can bring to modern societies: “Thus we can and must return to archaic society and to elements in it. We shall find it this reasons for life and action that are still prevalent in certain societies and numerous social classes: the joy of public giving; the pleasure in generous expenditure on the arts, in hospitality, and in the private and pubic festival. Social security, the solicitude arising from reciprocity and co-operation, and that of the occupational grouping, of all those legal entities upon which English law bestows the name of ‘Friendly
cooperation the way to a better society. Some of Yezierska’s passionate endorsement of the reciprocal charity of the East End poor seems to lead in a similar direction. Inspired by the old traditions of cooperation in patriarchal (or matriarchal, in the case of Muhmenkeh) society, Yezierska’s heroine finds a way to be independent, self-reliant, and giving to others.

As Muhmenkeh’s soul seems to pass into Adele after her death (“I felt her heart beat in my heart. I felt her spirit all around me” [Yezierska, *Beggar* 122]), Adele decides to redecorate Muhmenkeh’s place and open a coffee shop. In this coffee shop, she introduces an “informal way of paying” (128): a brass bowl into which the customers leave as much as they believe the food and drink are worth. Adele joyfully works and bargains for the best price on groceries for her cooking: “Giving my people the most for the least money was my way of working out the hungers I had suffered” (129). The coffee shop is an interesting establishment where customers voluntarily police themselves and where those who violate the rules are shamed into leaving. It becomes a community center that allows East End poets, musicians and intellectuals to brush sleeves with the common people from whom they have sprung: a business with a charitable aim which does not pretend to be charitable; a place with a family atmosphere. Adele’s coffee shop attracts the composer Jean Rachmansky, whose music even in the Hellmans’ parlor vividly evokes to her “the spirit of lost ones, seeking and groping and unable to find any goal. The whole drowning sea of poverty. The jobless. The hungry. The weak in their want knocking on the doors of the charities. The girl defenseless in that Working Girls’ Home, under the kind rich ladies (Yezierska, *Beggar* 74-5). Like Adele, who finds her success in the East End,

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Societies’—all are of greater value than the mere personal security that the lord afforded his tenant, better than the skimpy life that the is given through the daily wages doled out by employers, and even better than capitalist saving—which is only based on a changing form of credit” (69).
Rachmansky finds inspiration for his music only among the people about whom he composes it; the proper beneficiaries of his musical genius are those to whom he is bound by a common destiny. Yezierska’s narrative seems to privilege gifts between the members of one class and one community, and to highlight the relationship between classes as much more problematic.

Even though charity is the failed gift from the rich to the poor in Yezierska’s fiction, the gift poisoned by the unequal power relationship that inheres in the concept of charity, her writing also seems to affirm the possibility of giving even in its absence. However ruinous, the charity of the privileged has helped Adele and Rachmansky muster up the determination to succeed on their own:

‘Some day I hope to have the courage to speak up at another public meeting at the Home. Tell them out of a full heart how I’m really indebted to them for the richest, deepest stimulus of my life. The very inferiority which their kindness burned into me drove me to get on my feet in the quickest possible way.’ (Yezierska, Beggar 140)

In this passage, charity possessed the negative capability to show a different way from its own: the way of mutuality and community, of self-awareness and self-reliance, of cooperation and commercial success.

But the obnoxious philanthropy of Mrs. Hellman has not only brought Rachmansky and Adele Lindner together; it has helped them realize that their vocation in life lies beyond the horizons prescribed for them by their benefactors. Adele in particular is able to subvert charity by using the domestic skills taught to her in her servant career in order to make the coffee shop a place with a European atmosphere, an immediate success among the East End intellectual community. In stripping the walls and painting them golden brown, in hanging old cheesecloths died yellow for curtains, in cooking and cleaning for her coffee shop, Adele uses the knowledge
from the domestic science Training School (Yezierska, *Beggar* 125). Her coffee shop is a communal alternative to the institutions of philanthropy that have indirectly motivated and helped its creation.

Adele’s complicated relationship with giving concludes the book with her anxiety about her own gift to Muhmenkeh’s granddaughter. Adele has realized that the gift in its limited manifestations is inadequate to satisfy the desire for it; it is not “humanly possible” to meet the beneficiary’s demand: “[The Hellmans] gave us what they thought we ought to have. But we wanted something that no individual could give. Something that we ourselves must wrest from life.... Just because they were kind to us, we demanded friendship, love, understanding, the very things they, with all their wealth, lacked” (Yezierska, *Beggar* 140). Adele worries that Shenah Gittel expects from her the same boundless generosity, the same intangible bounty. She wonders whether she has become a second Mrs. Hellman (“How can we, being what we are, live up to the demands Shenah Gittel will make on us?” (152)). She is reassured by Jean Rachmansky that “Of course we cannot live up to all Shenah Gittel will expect. We can only give her the chance to get it for herself” (153). Taken out of context, this ending might suggest that the new immigrant should find out the Golden Land for herself; however, in the context of the novel, self-reliance emerges in the context of a powerful imaginary immigrant community that makes it possible.

The epigraph to the novel *Arrogant Beggar* (borrowed from Emerson’s essay on gifts) claims that gifts are only possible when they are bound by love. Emerson further tells us in his text that “[n]o services are of any value, but only likeness. When I have attempted to join myself to others by services, it proved an intellectual trick,—no more. They eat your service like apples, and leave you out. But love them, and they feel you and delight in you all the time” (lines
Yezierska’s novel both corroborates and contradicts this statement. The gifts, even when gifts of love, are peculiarly enmeshed in familial and communal bonds; they implicate the giver and receiver in relationships of reciprocity and exchange. Therefore, at the end of *Arrogant Beggar*, the characters question their own ability to give: even the gift bound by Muhmenkeh’s love for Adele and Shenah may not always triumph. Fully aware of the gift’s ambiguity, *Arrogant Beggar* finally embraces the gift as a possibility: it is part of the discourse of American opportunity and of America’s promise for immigrants like Adele, Shenah, and even Anzia Yezierska.

**Yezierska and the Settlement Movement**

Yezierska’s works indicate that she viewed settlement workers and charitable reformers with the same antagonism as she viewed upper-class philanthropists. Like Edith Wharton, most settlement workers came from privileged backgrounds. Most progressive reformers (many of whom became welfare reform leaders) were university educated, had “wealthy or professional parents,” and most had Protestant and North European backgrounds (Gordon 23). The

56 In his article in the *Charities Review*, Paulding makes the following statement on charity and love: “‘Is there then, in the parlance of the day, ‘no future’ for charity? In the sense in which it is commonly understood, let us hope, none at all. In its most ancient, nobler meaning, charity will survive as love, whose gifts cannot corrupt or degrade, because they will be reciprocal, and will spring from the holiest of human feelings.” “Charity and Democracy.” IN *Charities Review*, Vol. IV, No. 6, April 1895.

57 Linda Gordon discusses a study of seventy-six white women and seventy-six white men who were welfare reform leaders between 1890 and 1935. She notes: “Some evidence suggests that the women were, on average, from more elite backgrounds than the men—no doubt in part because a lack of access to most vocations sent a large proportion of all educated women into reform activities. The men were slightly more highly educated than the women (of men, 96 percent had a college education and 84 percent had been to graduate school; among women, the figures are 86 and 66 percent), but the women were more exceptional in their educational achievements than the men because fewer women in society at large had higher education. Two-thirds of the women had elite parents, one-third of the men. The women’s network also included fewer immigrants or non-Protestants than men’s. One-fifth of the men were Jewish, and in the later part of the period, including men born after 1880, the proportion
settlements in the United States were modeled on the English settlement movement and, like Samuel Barnett’s Toynbee Hall, they aimed to “break down class barriers and establish genuine, uplifting interaction between rich and poor” (Carson 1). Jane Addams, who founded Hull House in 1889 together with Ellen Gates Starr, intended it as much for the rich as for the uplift of the poor, “an antidote to the sterility and uselessness of the lives of her upper-class female contemporaries” (Whipps 120). But many settlement workers in the United States pursued assimilationist agendas and sought to exercise social control. The settlement movement, though more idealistic than charity work, was “Janus faced” (Carson 8). It is to this duplicity that Salome of the Tenements opposes the ingenuity and drive for success of its East Side heroine.

After its first publication in 1923, Yezierska’s novel received mixed reviews. Salome was criticized by Jewish reviewers for perpetuating ethnic stereotypes; The Nation called the main character, Sonya Vrunsky, a “devouring monster” (qtd. in Wilenz xviii). The plot shocked readers with what they saw as praise of Sonya’s amoral schemes for upward mobility. The main character of the novel, Sonya Vrunsky, has an editorial job at The Ghetto News, youth, beauty and vitality, but she dreams of having all America can offer. She manages to marry the wealthy philanthropist and social reformer, John Manning, on false pretenses, by making herself over into what he would like her to be—a Ghetto Princess, a lily out of an ash can. Her attitude to Manning’s settlement reform is ambiguous: it starts with adoration (he is a saintly figure: “The premature greyness of his hair was to her a nimbus—a cloud of white light, adding the final
touch of divinity to the luminous features” (Yezierska, *Salome* 3)). Having stopped Manning, she feels “like Joshua who stopped the sun!” (6), but what she most admires about him is “his culture, his fineness—the beauty that grows amid beauty” (6). By possessing him she possesses America itself: “To possess him is to possess all—the deepest, the finest of all America. He is my bridge to civilization” (99). Ironically, however, her claim to the gifts of America is a claim for what she already has: her desire, her vitality, her will to capture beauty, life itself: “Life is to them that have life. Love is to them that have love. Life and love shall be mine even if all the New York millionaires got to pay for it” (47). Gittel Stein, a co-worker of Sonya, criticizes the morality of her methods:

“You stop a man in the middle of the street, and begin to call him ‘Benefactor of humanity,’ ‘Savior of your soul,’ so he had to invite you to lunch.” Gittel’s voice rose harshly. “Then you storm a Fifth Avenue Store and get another strange man to dress you from head to foot like a Delilah; then you vamp a landlord; hypnotize a helpless Honest Abe; turn the whole world upside down to get the setting for your man. And if you did catch on to him,” she flung over her shoulder as she swept out of the room, “it’s only because you’re a heartless Salome and you don’t care if you get your man dead or alive, as long as you get him.” (Yezierska, *Salome* 95)

Sonya believes in the gift that Manning can offer her (and in her, to all the poor and hungry), but she does not believe in charitable work and even in Manning’s welfare activities. Her previous experience of childhood poverty, friendly visitors, and social workers have made her mistrust the goodwill of reformers, and to regard their benefactions as poisoned gifts. To her, this gift is very tangibly poisoned; she has a very clear understanding of the class implications of charity and the limitations that philanthropy imposes on the needy: “If she could only tell him of the wrongs and injustices she had suffered since she was a child! The dark days when the friendly visitor of the charity office called. The gifts of cast-off clothes from kind rich ladies. The free
dispensaries, the working-girl homes. All the institutions erected to help the poor. She had
gone through them. She had known the bitter, galling shame of them” (Yezierska, *Salome* 43).

In *Salome of the Tenements*, the progressive reformer is at the same time a wealthy
philanthropist, and the settlement workers are not different from those at Mrs. Hellman’s Home
in *Arrogant Beggar*. They possess the same “institutional kindness” and “professional
welcome,” and they are equally cold. The air at the settlement itself is “poisoned with the busy-
business of philanthropists and their hired band of charity workers” (Yezierska, *Salome* 144).
When Sonya asks to see Mr. Manning, the settlement worker glares at her with hatred: “The
woman stiffened. The mask of the social worker’s kindness dropped from her face. She glared
at Sonya with the resentment of a teacher who hates the children she teaches, the charity agent
who nurses her enmity against the thankless poor.” The hatred is mutual: “That old maid! I
couldn’t open my heart to him in that poisoned air of make-believe kindness. If that white-
livered, starched-up thing smiles at me again, ‘What can I do for you, dear?’ I’ll throw an
inkwell into her face” (44).

Sonya is aware that “this philanthropy is no different from others she has known,” but her
“incorrigible gift of illusion had made it the very shrine of romance” (Yezierska, *Salome* 82).
She remembers examples of successful Jewish women who were beneficiaries of philanthropy
and married wealthy men: Rose Pastor and Graham Stokes, Mary Antin, Sonya Levien.58

Romance is a more believable program for social amelioration than education of the poor and

58 Louise Levitas Henriksen writes the following: “In the first decade of the new twentieth century, even in
the black poverty of the East Side there were dreamers who saw their dreams come true: peddlers became
merchants, paupers married millionaires. One of Hattie’s older sisters married a cousin in New York who became a
prosperous cloak and suit salesman in Los Angeles; they lived in comparative luxury. Another East Side girl,
Hattie’s [Anzia’s anglicized name] friend Rose Pastor, captured James Graham Phelps Stokes, a young
philanthropist and social worker who was also a millionaire” (19).
welfare programs in settlement homes: “Why, there would be no fake settlements if they were only openly what they should be; marriage centers—clearing houses for ambitious youth, where live East Side girls like me can catch on to men higher up” (83). Initially, Sonya’s idea of philanthropy and progress is indistinguishable from marriage.

Sonya Vrunsky’s marriage to millionaire John Manning highlights the role of the settlement worker as an educator, a tutor for the poor. Manning’s romantic relationship places him in the role of the teacher, and his beloved—in the role of the pupil. This, in part, follows from his understanding of their two races, an understanding with which Sonya is often complicit. If Manning has self-control and rationality, Sonya possesses “naturalness,” passion, an “unfettered spirit,” “the primitive fascination of the oriental—he called it—the intensity of spirit of the oppressed races” (Yezierska, *Salome* 101). He teaches her how to behave in his society and tells her that “to accomplish anything, you have to work on a plane of reason” (Yezierska, *Salome* 133). She calls him her “bridge to civilization” (99), her “Mr. Preacher” (104). The relationship leaves Sonya in an inferior position: in the settlement, she works as Manning’s secretary; in the home, she must learn to be his hostess. The party that they give after their marriage is intended as a justification for Manning’s, not Sonya’s, social beliefs: “This is our reception, my dear—our opportunity to show the world that all social chasms can be bridged with human love and democratic understanding” (119-20). From the position of the socially underprivileged, Sonya knows that the social chasm is only breached for him.

In the long run, the novel reveals the futility of Manning’s work as an educator and a leader of the lower classes: his democratic understanding of the East End stops at his own door. It is Sonya who must conform to the rigid social rules of his world. He is disappointed when he finds out that his most successful pupil, his wife, is far from the personification of naturalness,
simplicity and primitive passion that he has envisioned. In the end, overcome with his own loneliness and passion, Manning recognizes his need for Sonya. He comes to ask her to give him a second chance; he comes as a “primitive man starved into madness for the woman” (Yezierska, *Salome* 181) and “a child that needed comforting” (182). Contrary to critics’ allegations, Yezierska seems to reverse the ethnic stereotypes here: “His hungry hands wound themselves in her hair, clutched at her neck, her bosom, fluttered ravenously over her whole body. His eyes bore into hers. His hot lips drew closer and closer—‘So this is Manning, the Anglo-Saxon gentleman, the saint, the philanthropist—the saviour of humanity” (181). Sonya, to the contrary, has reinvented herself from a seeker and a beggar for love and wisdom to a giver.

The romantic encounter of Yezierska’s Jewish-Russian heroine with the progressive (Anglo-Saxon) reformer parallels one of the central events of her life, the author’s own relationship with the educator, philosopher and progressive reformer John Dewey. According to Mary V. Dearborn, their romantic and friendly encounter was a defining experience for both parties. A founder of pragmatism and a believer in practical education, Dewey was interested in social reform and the immigrant. For his involvement in the Progressive and the settlement movement, he has been called “the father of the Progressive movement” and thought to be “responsible for the sweeping social reforms that characterized the early years of this century” (qtd. in Dearborn 3). Just like John Manning in his relationship with Sonya Vrunsky, the educator saw in Yezierska an opportunity to learn first-hand about the East Side.

Dewey’s role in Yezierska’s life, a role that she passionately welcomed, was philanthropic and charitable as well romantic: to the frustrated teacher of cooking and domestic science, he was a mentor and a guide; he visited her cooking class; he encouraged her to become a professional writer; he gave her her first typewriter; he invited her to attend his graduate
seminar in social and political philosophy in the spring of 1918; he gave her advice; he found her a job as a translator and investigator at the Philadelphia Polish study he was conducting; he listened to her criticisms and opinions on matters of social reform and democracy; finally, he even offered her financial assistance:

Sometime before Anzia began [the Philadelphia study], Dewey, in a gesture typical of his generosity to the protégés he aided throughout his career, brought her a typewriter, supposedly for her Philadelphia assignment, then reached into his pocket and pulled out all the money he had with him. He had just been paid for an article, he explained, and until she earned her first paycheck from Barnes, he wanted to make it possible for her to do her “real work.” The gift—his belief in her—was overwhelming. “I have learned to abase myself. Now I must learn to abound,” she wrote to him soon afterward, a letter she also recalled in All I Could Never Be. (Henriksen 95)

Before meeting Dewey, Yezierska had published a couple of short stories on her own, but “it was not until he brought her “Soap and Water and the Immigrant” to Herbert Croly at the New Republic that her stories began appearing regularly” (Dearborn 141). Dewey’s friendship and encouragement played an important role in the making of the immigrant writer.

In spite of the fact that their romantic involvement did not last, Yezierska recreated her encounter with Dewey in her stories (“Wings,” “The Miracle,” “To the Stars,” “Love Hunger!”); her novels Salome of the Tenements, Arrogant Beggar, All I Could Never Be; and her autobiography Red Ribbon of a White Horse. She literally “put her emotional life—in particular, her love for Dewey—at the center of her work” (Dearborn 3). Like the heroine in Salome, Yezierska portrayed Dewey in her correspondence as a saint, a god, and a mentor. He, in turn, addressed her as “Dear Love of God” (qtd. in Henriksen 96). In one letter that criticized Dewey’s obscure writing style, Yezierska praised the warmth and compassion in his personal correspondence: “In your books you are an intellect talking to scholars. In your letters [to
me]…you are St. Francis, loving the poor” (qtd. in Henriksen 92). Even though Manning (or any other character) should not be interpreted as a mere reflection of John Dewey, the Yezierska-Dewey relationship established a pattern that Yezierska explored in her later fiction.

*Salome of the Tenements*, though, reveals the theories of the charitable reformer to be flawed because his conception of democracy and brotherhood ignores the unequal social position of reformer and reformed. Sonya disbelieves reform and charity because she knows that there can be no equal dialogue between what she calls passengers on the upper deck and in steerage; idealism can mask but not erase “the solid difference between those on top and those on the bottom…It’s easy to stoop down when you’re on top. Just like on a ship the first class passengers on top are free to walk into steerage. But will they let steerage passengers walk free upstairs?” (Yezierska, *Salome* 119). Sonya opposes and exposes the dreamy philanthropies of the progressive reformer; where Manning believes “there’s no coming up and going down. We all belong to the people. I see no differences” (126), Sonya sees “a hideous mockery she could no longer endure” (145). The very air at the settlement is poisoned by lies: “all settlements are lies” (147). Their friendly visits are “insults added to the injuries of the poor” (148). This is consistent with Yezierska’s position on philanthropy, progressivism, and even welfare in *Arrogant Beggar, Hungry Hearts, Salome of the Tenements*, and even *Red Ribbon on a White Horse.*

Yezierska’s position on the gift is as contradictory in *Salome of the Tenements* as in *Arrogant Beggar.* Even though her heroines become embittered with the giver, they persistently

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59 Yezierska opposed the absurdity of the Federal Writer’s Project of WPA on the same grounds as she criticized charity and settlement work. In *Red Ribbon on a White Horse* (1950), she paints a complex picture of what W. H. Auden called “perhaps, one of the noblest and most absurd undertakings ever attempted by any state” (Auden, Introduction to *Red Ribbon*, 17).
seek for and valorize the gift. Like Adele in *Arrogant Beggar*, Sonya Vrunsky finds happiness and mutual understanding with another man—the Fifth Avenue Jewish designer Jacques Hollins. To Hollins, Sonya makes her first appeal to charity: “You from the East Side, you know how the greatest doctors come to the clinics to heal the poor free of charge. I am sick—dying from the blood poison of ugliness!” (Yezierska, *Salome* 23). Without Hollins’ present, Sonya’s journey to happiness and fulfillment could not have begun. Charmed by her impetuous desire for beautiful clothes and happiness, Hollins makes her a present of one of his best gowns. His gift gratifies the artist in him, and he imposes no obligation to go with it: “I’ve taken so much from you and yet I don’t feel as if I’ve taken anything….What you’ve given me is like air in the lungs, light for my eyes, wings for my soul!”(29). This very example of a gift between people who can experience solidarity and identify with each other’s wants is made problematic by Hollins’ understanding of her as a “model,” the “living expression of his ideas and ideals” (25). It is hard to accept “their relationship of mutuality, he the artist and she the subject—he, the giver, she, the receiver” (30) as a relationship of perfect equality.

The end of the novel that deprecates progressivism and social patronage nevertheless valorizes the gift. Sonya rediscovers her truest gift—her own talent—and joins Jacques Hollins as a designer in his studio. Much as the educator in Manning had advised her, she finds gratification in her work and exults in the beauty of the clothes she can make. A successful and democratic Sonya decides to open her own settlement on the East Side: “In the midst of the ready-mades of Grand Street, a shop of the beautiful—that’s to be my settlement” (Yezierska, *Salome* 178). Even the past relationship with Manning is revealed to have been a gift: “Always she would be finer because she had known his fineness. Always she would be more human because she had touched the heart of his humanness” (183-4). Without the failure of her
marriage Sonya would not have found the determination to become a self-sufficient person and a successful designer. Once again it is only through the economy of charitable exchange that the character can conceive of, discover, and learn to use her gifts.

**John Dewey and the Progressive Movement**

Dewey’s involvement with philanthropy was not limited to his involvement with Yezierska and his other protégés. At his own initiative, the famous American philosopher served on the first board of trustees of Hull House, the Chicago social settlement founded by Jane Adams. He was close with Adams (after whom he named his daughter) and often lectured or just dropped by at her settlement. He praised the educational courses and programs offered at Hull House in his 1902 essay, “The School as Social Center” (Bryan and Davies 104). In his other writing, Dewey often refers to the generosity and altruism of Americans as a given fact. In his essay on Conduct and Character in *Theory of the Moral Life*, he traces the philanthropic connections of lassles-faire, Adam Smith, and the Utilitarians. Even though “[t]he significant thing in the whole medieval attitude was that society attempted to control business and industry by a moral standard,” bourgeois individualism marked an “[a]dvance in sympathy…in the abolition of judicial torture, in prison reform, in the improved care of the insane and defective; in the increased provision for hospitals, and asylums, and in an innumerable multitude of organizations for relief of all sorts and conditions of men” (Dewey, *Collected Works*). Where Michel Foucault later saw a network for increased social control, Dewey admired the advances of prison reform, hospital and mental institution reform, and relief work.
While Anzia Yezierska’s immigrant characters voice both their faith in self-reliance and their bitter disappointment with the self-seeking character of capitalist society, Dewey’s work emphasizes the enormous potential for giving in modern Western civilization. In spite of the individualist ethics of the British tradition, Dewey points out that “the growth of individuality has demanded and evoked a higher kind of benevolence” (Dewey, *Collected Works* mw.5.148). He supports his arguments with the economic theory of Adam Smith and the moral calculus of utilitarianism.  

From their very different positions in American culture, both Anzia Yezierska and John Dewey accepted the American promise and the American dream as gift. Dewey argues, for instance, that giving has a special significance in the American tradition. Even though America had smaller contributions to the “music, painting, literature and science than Europe, it is “when we come to devotion to public welfare in philanthropy and to popular education, including the endowment of universities, museums, libraries, that the United States make any superior showing.” Without denying that American civilization is materialistic, Dewey maintains that in

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60 "Adam Smith made sympathy the basis of ethics and intelligent self-interest the basis of economics, and bent his energies to proving that if intelligent self-love, or the reasonable desire for personal comfort and profit were left free from arbitrary political regulations, it naturally brought men together in natural agreement (contracts) so that each man, in serving himself, served his fellow. In this way, under the guidance of the “invisible hand” of Providence, men in seeking their own interests promoted unconsciously the welfare of society as a whole even more efficaciously than if they had sought to do so from motives of conscious philanthropy.

Jeremy Bentham furnished the natural pendant to this doctrine. Without committing himself upon the psychological question of whether sympathy is as innate as self-love, he held that the sole moral criterion is the tendency of acts to promote universal happiness, so that benevolence is the ultimate virtue. He also held that men’s need for approval, esteem, and aid of others is so great that ultimately the dictates of universal benevolence is the ultimate virtue. He also held that men’s need for the approval, esteem, and aid of others is so great that ultimately the dictates of universal benevolence and of intelligent self-love coincide. In promoting the happiness of all, the individual is taking the best means to secure his own greatest happiness, and vice versa. Thus Bentham’s moral doctrine effectively supplemented the economic theory of Smith” (Dewey, *Collected Works* mw.6:367-8).
the very spirit of individualism, in the very spirit of science applied for the common good is
evidence of the philanthropic nature of western society. In volume five of his essays, he
reiterates that “generosity, good will and altruism” are “probably more marked features of
American life than that of any other civilization at any time” (Dewey, *Collected Works*
lw.5.84).\(^6\)

And in “A Critique of American Civilization,” he points out that “no other people of
any other age has been so permeated with the spirit of sharing as our own”:

> If this new spirit, so unlike that of old-world charity and benevolence, does not
already mark an attainment of a distinctive culture on the part of American
civilization, and give the promise and potency of a new civilization, Columbus
merely extended and diluted the Old World. But I still believe that he discovered
a New World.\(^6\)

He finds a rational explanation of American generosity in the “excessive sociability” of
Americans, which “makes us uneasy till advantages are shared with the less fortunate.” Thus
Dewey’s conception of philanthropy has particular affinity with the American idea and the
promise that America holds for the oppressed and the disadvantaged masses.

Unlike Yezierska, Dewey is more likely to place the incipient science of social work and
the casework of the COS movement in the paradigm of American social progress. Dewey’s
writings lend support to social science and to the COS idea of charity organization. He points to
the “scientific spirit” and “the social phase of industry and commerce, its use in cultivating
public spirit and rendering genuine social services” as proof that in a sense, Western civilization


has a public-minded side. In *The Moral Life of the Individual*, “The Formation and Growth of Ideals,” Dewey celebrates the emergence of scientific social work together with psychology and political economy as a new branch of knowledge: “While once, the mere supplying of food or money by one to another may have been right as meeting the recognized relations, charity now comes to mean large responsibility in knowledge of antecedents and circumstances, need of organization, careful tracing of consequences, and, above all, effort to remove the conditions which made the want possible” (Dewey, *Collected Works* ew.3.309).

Yet it is not charity organization and science, but the devotion and sacrifice of missionaries in China and Y.M.C.A. workers, “the unpaid devotion of physicians, teachers and missionaries” during the flood-relief in China that creates a perception of Western civilization as unselfish and worthy of admiration (mw.13.271, mw.12.57). Yet it is not charity organization and science, but the devotion and sacrifice of missionaries in China and Y.M.C.A. workers, “the unpaid devotion of physicians, teachers and missionaries” during the flood-relief in China that creates a perception of Western civilization as unselfish and worthy of admiration (mw.13.271, mw.12.57). Nevertheless, Dewey’s vision of social work is much less critical than Yezierska’s.

Philanthropy, according to Dewey, has an important role to play in the American schools system as a discipline that raises social awareness, develops reason, and educates responsible citizens. In his early essay “Teaching Ethics in the High School,” Dewey discusses how cases of organized charity should be presented to schoolchildren: with a lot of data and details for each case study and with an emphasis on the particular and on personal involvement:

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63 Dewey, John. “What Holds China Back.” *Essays: Reconstruction in Philosophy.* Vol. 12, 1920: “Missionaries and Y.M.C.A. workers took a large part of the burden of recent flood-relief work. The Chinese in the devastated region who had remained calmly impervious to prior preaching, were so impressed with the exhibition of kindness that was gratuitous that they flocked into the churches. The latter had to sift and choose very carefully to keep from being themselves flooded. And this result was not a “lively expectation of favors to come.” The population had been deeply touched by the unprecedented display of sympathy and help. I was told on good authority that the Governor of Shansi, the most respected provincial governor in China, said that up to the time of the outbreak of bubonic plague, he had thought that western civilization was good only for battleships and machinery. But the unpaid devotion of physicians, teachers and missionaries, at the risk of their own lives, had convinced him that there was another side to western civilization” (mw.12.57).
“The whole point is, in a word, to keep the mental eye constantly upon some actual situation or interaction; to realize in the imagination this or that particular needy person making his demand upon some other particular person.” What is valuable in such a lesson is not so much the instruction of charity but to “get the child to fix his mind carefully upon the typical aspects of human interaction.” And the final goal of such teaching is “the formation of a sympathetic imagination for human relations in action; this is the ideal which is substituted for training in moral rules, or for analysis of one’s sentiments and attitude in conduct.” (Dewey, Collected Works ew.4.57). Philanthropy, then, for Dewey, is valuable as a practical method of cultivating moral individuals and teaching them rational conduct, “the relative place and bearing of both impulse and reason in conduct”(ew.4.59). His use of charity organization and social work seem interchangeable, thereby emphasizing once again the nexus of social casework, charity, and reform in the Progressive Era.

Like many progressives, Dewey praises philanthropy and often uses it in the same context with reform, but he leans more in the direction of “impersonal justice” and social

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64 “In these days, the attacks upon ‘indiscriminate giving’ have permeated a good way, and it is safe to say that some pupil will urge the need of not giving from the mere impulse of the moment. This will open the way for a discussion of the part to be played by sympathy, benevolent impulses, etc. Any teacher who is even moderately acquainted with the literature of charity organizations will have no difficulty in showing the necessity of not giving way to the feelings of the moment. He can show that to do so is not to act for any moral or practical reason, but simply to gratify one’s own feelings—and that this is the definition of all selfishness; he can show that, by encouraging idleness and beggary, it does an injustice to society as a whole, while it wrongs the person supposedly helped, by robbing him of his independence and freedom. Now all this, I submit, is valuable in itself; treated by a teacher who knows his business (or who is even interested in it, if he does not know it), it can hardly fail to rank in importance with any subject taught in the high school. But it is more than valuable in itself. Any pupil who has worked out these facts day by day for weeks, for a year, who has learned what careful study of conditions and weighing of expedients is necessary to treat many a case of relief, is prepared to understand the true meaning of the term “motive” in ethical discussion better, far better, I submit, than nineteen-twentieths of our college students who have analyzed it at large. The pupil is in position to understand what the relative place and bearing of both impulse and reason in conduct are, and to understand the meaning of those theories which attach such importance to her reasonableness of action.” Dewey, John. “Teaching Essays in the High School.” IN Essays The Study of Ethics. Vol. 4, 1893-1894: ew.4.59.
regulation than private action (Dewey, *Collected Works* lw.7.252). In *The Great Experiment and the Future*, Dewey shares his impressions of reforms in Soviet Russia as “a kind of public improvement] as distinct from private philanthropy in raising wages bettering housing condition, reducing hours of labor, etc.” (lw.3.245). Yet his definition of effective philanthropy remains rooted in “neighborly friendliness” when he says that “the profession of cosmopolitan philanthropy which is not rooted in neighborly friendliness is suspect” (6.21).65 A large part of philanthropy is also “a makeshift to compensate for lack of just social conditions;” yet philanthropy and reform are similar insofar as they open themselves for charges of “the offensiveness of snobbery and personal interference” and “officious meddling” (lw.7.252).

A firm believer in social progress, Dewey nevertheless questioned the gifts of philanthropy. In *Theory of the Moral Self*, Dewey all but discards charity and benevolence as “incidental phases of morals, demanded under certain emergencies rather than its essential principle;” charity is, in his view, a social arrangement rooted in medieval customs “wherein a superior class achieved merit by doing things gratuitously for an inferior class.” In this view, charity “too readily becomes an excuse for maintaining laws and social arrangements which ought themselves to be changed in the interest of fair play and justice” and “a sop to one’s social conscience while at the same time it buys off the resentment which might otherwise grow up in those who suffer from social injustice. Magnificent philanthropy may be employed to cover up brutal economic exploitation. Gifts to libraries, hospitals, missions, schools may be employed as a means of rendering existing institutions more tolerable, and of inducing immunity against social change” (Dewey, *Collected Works* lw.7.301, 7.302). In conjunction with his claims,

Dewey opposed Hoover’s election on the grounds that his philanthropy was good only for emergency times and lacked social vision: Hoover is “an efficient administrator of charity and semi-philanthropy in times of emergencies,” but doesn’t have “any human insight, dictated by consciousness of social needs, into the policies called for by the day-to-day life of his fellow human beings” (3.186). Dewey aims to change the understanding of a “private individual” and to establish a sphere of the social that will not exclude, but enhance the understanding of the private: “One can even go as far as to say that the significance of the recognition that enjoyments and suffering are privately had, is a matter of social morals” (lw.15.31). He argued that the sphere of the social does not necessarily correspond to the public sphere, and vice versa, that the nonsocial does not always stay in the private sphere.

There are many contradictions in Dewey’s understanding of charity and reform. On the one hand, he admired modern charity for being scientific and responsible: “Instead of fostering dependence and relieving wants, the best modern agencies aim to promote independence, to set the man upon his own feet and enable him to achieve self-respect” (Dewey, Collected Works


68 Rivka Shpak Lissak questions the pluralism of progressives like John Dewey and Jane Addams in Pluralism and Progressives. Hull House and the New Immigrants. She points to an ongoing controversy among scholars of progressivism: “The so-called revisionists interpreted Dewey as attempting to homogenize ethnic differences and destroy ethnic cultures, while the opposing group proclaimed him a cultural pluralist.” Scholars have similarly questioned Jane Addams’s affirmation of immigrant cultures: “Addams, like John Dewey and others, actually expressed two seemingly contradictory views simultaneously: she spoke of mutual esteem and respect of variety and in favor of cross-fertilization. Did this mean the perpetuation of ethnic-cultural uniqueness and the cultivation of distinct immigrant cultures through cultural institutions, or the gradual elimination of ethnic-cultural segregation after the absorption of immigrants into a common fund through cross-fertilization? And, above all, did the immigrant ethnic cultures have a permanent place in American life?” (8-9). The author concludes that the “contribution idea” was “more an expression of tactics than a conception of culture…the contribution idea merely created the illusion of assimilation upon equal terms, whereas newcomers were actually going through a unilateral process of transition from one culture to another” (157).
On the other hand, however, he argued that individuals should be elevated through empiricist education and reliance on each one’s personal experience. Moreover, the idea of charity and sympathy is somewhat lost in the insistence on the careful and unemotional deliberation over the beneficiary of help: human interaction with poverty and want is supposed to foster empathy, yet the only correct way to interact with the poor is by distancing oneself from one’s emotions. An unresolved tension between privilege and the underprivileged underlies Dewey’s writing on social reform.

Even though Dewey and other progressives came from privileged backgrounds, they were willing to get to know the problems of the immigrant personally. One of the major advantages of the settlement movement remains their pragmatic orientation, their emphasis on process, and their interest in the Other. Dewey’s analysis of altruism and individualism emphasizes the false antithesis between self and other, as well as the need to gear the educational system towards the overcoming of this false antithesis: “The fallacy underlying the older controversy was the false antithesis of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’; this antithesis is overcome by recognition of the objective social relations and activities which concern alike the ‘self’ and the ‘other.’ To bring about this appreciation of social relations as a common good is the chief function of the school as a social institution” (Dewey, Collected Works mw.6.369). Dewey considered the primary human impulses to be neither altruistic nor egoistical, but subject to cultivation. Therefore, his interest in the educational experiments of Hull House and in the social settlement movement and his interest in altruism and philanthropy are inseparable. In

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philanthropy as well as in poetry, literature, railroads and new business methods, he saw the practical application of philosophic principles:

When philosophic ideas are not inculcated by themselves but used as tools to point out the meaning of phases of social life they begin to have some life and value…When it can be seen, for example, that Walt Whitman’s poetry, the great development of short stories at present the centralizing tendency in the railroads and the introduction of business methods into charity organizations are all parts of one organic social movement, then the philosophic ideas about organism begin to look like something definite. (Dewey, *Collected Works ew.3.lxii*).

This kind of social organicism is characteristic of the progressive reformer and it also underlies Dewey’s understanding of philanthropy, education, science, and reform. It leads him to support unemployment insurance and insurance for old age in his later writings. In “The Jobless—A Job for All of Us,” he compares the current economic system that cannot protect workers from unemployment risks to an ill-functioning railway system: “If a railway system had a continuous succession of derailments in which many persons were injured, every one would recognize the absence of competence and of foresight in the system itself” (Dewey, *Collected

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70 Qtd. in John Dewey, *A Note on the Texts. I. Early Essays* as “a written statement from Dewey” about his approach towards the publication of his projected newspaper, “Thought News.” The statement was originally published in the *Detroit Tribune* of 13 April 1892.

71 “We all know how demoralizing charity is. Every society of organized charity is teaching and constantly preaching the evils of indiscriminate charity, how it destroys the character of those who become its recipients. Cannot we generalize this lesson and apply it to the whole industrial situation? What is the effect upon the self-respect of the large classes of men and women who periodically, once in so often, find themselves in large numbers thrown out of employment, and find that they have to beg, not for charity, but for even a chance to do work in turning out commodities or in rendering services which society actually needs?” Quoted from “Internal Social Reorganization After the War.” *Essays, Volume II, 1918-1919: mw.11.76*
He appeals that individuals assume responsibility for and the Government take control of the unemployment crisis during the Depression years.

Dewey claimed that his relationship with Yezierska helped him to better understand the immigrant and her needs. While it is not certain to what extent Yezierska influenced Dewey’s ideas, his educational philosophy is inclusive of the immigrants’ desire for better education (and not only vocational training). Even though Dewey’s belief in social management may portray an elitist side to his philosophy, his emphasis on process and empiricism, and his opposition to vocational training for working-class American children speak to the contrary. The eminent educator proposed that schools contribute to the moral development of the individual not by “balancing and compromising two sets of motives” but by “developing that type of ego or self which finds happiness in the kind of acts that are of social value” (Dewey, *Collected Works* mw.6.369). Warning that ‘[i]t is fatal for a democracy to permit the formation of fixed classes,” he recommended an education system for all Americans, not “one system for the children of parents who have more leisure and another for the children of those who are wage-earners” or a system of exclusively “bookish” or of exclusively “‘practical’” education. In Dewey’s scheme, the educational system becomes the fundamental agency for reform: “Statesmen and legislators can do something to combat these evil forces. Wise philanthropy can do something. But the only fundamental agency for good is the pubic-school system” (mw.8.404).

Dewey’s personal involvement with Anzia Yezierska was fraught with other tensions. According to Dearborn, Dewey was simultaneously attracted and repulsed by the emotionalism that was such a great part of Yezierska’s character and of the character of her heroines.

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Dearborn argues that this relationship throws a somewhat unflattering light on Dewey, who treated his female friend as “the archetypal ‘other,’ the immigrant he sought so desperately to understand” (Dearborn 5). Dearborn points out that after their separation, Dewey asked Yezierska to return his letters and refused to discuss any part of their relationship: “in fact, [he] treated [her] very shabbily” (121). Yezierska, who constructed her image as well as that of many of her protagonists as a “hungry heart,” never ceased to address this unfulfilled relationship in her later fiction:

“Why do I need them so terribly, when they don’t need me?” she demanded. “I’m so drawn to you cold Anglo-Saxons, but you always thrust me out, at arm’s length!” He said she was in too much of a hurry. “If you want to understand people, you must stop blaming them for being what they are. …our attitude should be that of an explorer [in] a strange country….No one’s ways are better than anyone else’s, but if you happen to migrate into a foreign country, you must learn the ways of its people. Learn to give what you want to give them in their terms. (Henriksen 91)

Yezierska’s representation of the social reformer in her fiction is important in understanding the relationship between giver and recipient, progressives and immigrants, and philanthropy and giving. Her works highlight the inequality that inheres in relations of charity and paternalistic reform; they reiterate the problematic character of progressive reform and welfare; but they also assert the importance and centrality of the giving, the gift, and the desire for the gift as a story central to American character, American success, and American destiny.
Conclusion

Many of the women reformers of the progressive movement influenced government policies from the end of the nineteenth century until the New Deal in the 1930s. Theodore Roosevelt’s 1912 presidential campaign “received essential support from Jane Addams and other women reformers” (Sklar 183). Clara Mortensen Beyer, a younger Progressive, “wrote most of the regulations for the labor legislation passed by the New Deal” (Sklar180). Florence Kelly, General Secretary of the National Consumers League between 1898 and 1932, was a settlement worker. Women progressives founded and administered the Women’s Bureau and the Children’s Bureau. Their contribution to developing quantitative studies and the social survey is acknowledged by researchers of welfare and social work history: “By the 1920s, the woman-led Children’s Bureau in the Department of Labor was recognized as the federal government’s

73 Linda Gordon notes the extent of women’s involvement as she explores the role of women reformers in creating social work and their diminishing prominence in the welfare state: “As charity became “social work” during the Progressive Era, it remained one of the quintessential female professions. Women such as Josephine Shaw Lowell, Mary Richmond, Sophonisba Breckinridge, and Edith and Grace Abbott powerfully influenced, possibly dominated, the field, from the 1880s through the Great Depression. In 1901, University of Chicago sociology professor Charles Henderson’s textbook on social work and social reform assumed a female readership. Men as well as women conceived of the welfare state as female. Alexander Johnson, in his presidential address to the National Conference of Charities and Correction, referred to “The Mother State and Her Weaker Children.” Men were active in social work and disproportionately represented in its leadership, but the field nevertheless carried a distinctly feminine identity” (Gordon, 26-27). Researchers have argued that there is a gender divide in American welfare: even though social casework remains women’s domain, social insurance has been largely created by and for men. Gordon examines the history of the current two-tier welfare system that privileges social and unemployment insurance over programs specifically targeting women, such as Aid to Dependent Children, and concludes that gender differences with regard to welfare have been oversimplified: “male and female were hardly discrete and opposite categories. Welfare reformers, whether men or women, shared many values, and these shared values were often themselves part of the gender order, such as their joint support of the family-wage system” (50).

74 “[The National Consumer League] began under the direction of Josephine Shaw Lowell in 1890. Later, under Kelley’s leadership, as General Secretary from its founding in 1898 till her death in 1932, the National Consumer’s League and its local affiliates grew dramatically in numbers and strength. By 1908 they had become the single most important political force behind the passage and enforcement of labor legislation for women and children at both the state and Federal levels” (Sklar, Kathryn Kish. The Autobiography of Florence Kelley. Introduction 11).
leader in statistical studies” (Gordon 39). Grace Abbott, Katherine Lenroot, and Martha Eliot wrote the Aid to Dependent Children section of the Social Security Act of 1935 (Gordon 48). The progressive women developed the social survey and engaged in experimental field work at a time in the dawn of sociology when academic sociologist considered this type of work inferior.75 During the New Deal, women social workers lost their standing on the cutting edge of welfare reform to the male professionals who drafted the Social Insurance and Unemployment Insurance Acts.

Part of the reason for women’s eclipse at the forefront of sociology as a new science was due to the fact that they continued to emphasize primarily individualist casework (to which they were particularly well suited) and insisted on the importance of the private. At the same time, academic sociology and the movement for social insurance legislation moved in the direction of “objective,” not means-tested, actuarial studies. Best-selling fiction written by women during the first two decades of the twentieth century has become similarly undervalued (for example for their sentimentality) with the emergence of the modernist canon.

Yezierska’s work was among that number. The sentimentality, emotionalism, realistic narrative mode all disqualify her from the company of authors such as Gertrude Stein, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and William Faulkner. However, recent scholarship has attempted to reclaim Yezierska’s place in modernism and modernity. In a book entitled Ethnic Modernisms, Delia Caparoso Konzett argues that Yezierska engages a number of modernist themes in her fiction such as identity, displacement, alienation, mass culture, and language (particularly in her

75 “Until World War I, social science quantitative work was mainly developed outside universities, by reformers, and women were prominent among them” (Gordon 38).
use of immigrant English). Together with Zora Neale Hurston, and Jean Rhys, she offers “a critical ethnic perspective and avant-garde attitude toward standardized notions of cultural identity such as nationality, race, and majority consensus” (Konzett 9). Yezierska’s progressive critique of modernity, her “radical revisionism” (Konzett 18), give Konzett reason to argue for her inclusion in the modernist tradition.

Even though Edith Wharton and Anzia Yezierska are not an established part of the modernist canon, their perspective on gender, class, and philanthropy is valuable because of their extensive personal involvement in philanthropic ventures during the Progressive era.
Wyndham Lewis and the Gift of Egoism

Altruism and *The Egoist*

In a review of the Vorticist movement published in Dora Marsden’s magazine *The Egoist* on August 15, 1914, Ezra Pound commented on the controversial Vorticist Wyndham Lewis and the spirit of confrontation which imbued his work:

Mr. Lewis is a restless, turbulent intelligence bound to make himself felt. If he had not been a vorticist, painter he would have been a vorticist something else. He is a man of sudden illuminating antipathies…a mind always full of thought, subtle, swift moving. A man with his kind of intelligence is bound to be always crashing and opposing and breaking. You cannot be as intelligent, in that sort of way, without being prey to the furies. (Pound 36)

Lewis’ “scathing criticism” (306) was, even in his day, the hallmark of his radical aesthetics. The major figure of the Vorticist movement in Britain and editor of the modernist magazines *Blast* and *The Enemy*, Lewis became famous for his passionate defense of modernist individualism against the incursions of mass society, the rise of the welfare state, and the ideologies of benevolence popular at the turn of the twentieth century. His first novel, and one of the landmarks of modernist literature, *Tarr*, was initially serialized in *The Egoist*. *An Individualist Review*, from April 1916 to November 1917; the same little magazine also published Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist* and *Ulysses* as well as works by Ezra Pound, H.D., William Carlos Williams, and Amy Lowell. The editors of *The Egoist*, like Lewis, defined their project in opposition to what they saw as the triumphant forces of false altruism and proclaimed that the only true motive power was Self-will. In her editorials, Dora Marsden (again like the
avant-gardist Lewis) distanced herself from Victorian values\textsuperscript{76}, and particularly from Victorian public duty, benevolence, and compassion, which she ridicules in her portrayal of Queen Victorian from July 1, 1914:

It was the late lamented Queen Victoria who immortalized in a phrase a little gust of emotion which is familiar to us all, but to which most of us are too shy, or too cautious to give utterance. The incident which was able to knock this august maiden off her perch, and betray her into a very human indiscretion was the sudden announcement of her accession to the throne, whereupon she ejaculated, ‘I will be good,’’ ‘I will be good.’ Who is there who has not felt such a spasm, and luckily bitten his tongue just as he was on the point of giving expression to it? … Because, be it noted, she did not say she \textit{was} good, which would have been at least impudent, if not exciting: she said she \textit{would} be, obviously with her mind’s eye on a manner of conduct not altogether native to herself. So she was—good and dull—and when ultimately she died, she unfortunately omitted to take her spiritual progeny with her. We have them yet, and they multiply and prosper, expecting all of us to step out to the rhythm of “we will be good”—“we will be good.” (‘Views’ [1 July 1914] 244)

Like Marsden, Lewis directs his satire at the purported kindness and humanitarianism of the enlightened elites; he deeply mistrusts philanthropic motives, whether they come from the political left, British liberalism, or Christianity. His fiction (the short stories “The Death of the Ankou,” “The Bishop’s Fool,” and the novels \textit{Tarr} and \textit{Childermass}) and his political writings (\textit{Left Wing Over Europe}, \textit{The Art of Being Ruled}) betray his pleasure at physically and verbally assaulting the modern clowns of compassionate paternalism. In \textit{Left Wing Over Europe} in particular, his right-wing political leanings seem to spring largely from this mistrust of

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\textsuperscript{76} See Les Garner’s biography, \textit{A Brave and Beautiful Spirit: Dora Marsden 1882-1960}, for more on Marsden’s involvement with individualism, anarchism, and feminism. Garner notes that in the second decade of the twentieth century “Dora regarded herself…more as a rugged individualist, a follower of Max Stirner, than a feminist…To Dora’s belated credit, and to the credit of \textit{The Egoist} as a whole, it was she, for example, who accepted James Joyce’s \textit{A Portrait of the Artist} for serialization. As Rebecca West later claimed, \textit{The Egoist} ‘did a magnificent thing for literature’ in publishing Joyce; it was also open to the works of Pound, Aldington, H.D., Margaret Storm Jameson and T.S. Eliot’ (Garner 2).
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philanthropic paternalism. Lewis’s passionate defense of individualism against the tyranny of benevolence culminates in his carefully fostered public image as the Enemy, the editor of little magazines such as *The Enemy* and *Blast*, and the Vorticist painter who sought to revolutionize modernist aesthetics; it explains those “illuminating antipathies” that Pound immortalized as inseparable from Lewis’s public persona.

Even though Lewis is an Enemy of philanthropy, his writing vacillates between a rationalist rejection of alms-giving, welfare, and *noblesse oblige* and an irresistible fascination (and even obsession) with what for Lewis becomes their primordial, invincible, and occult power. While Marsden believes that benevolence is best served by the Anarchist’s defense of freedom and individualism, Lewis moves beyond the individualist position and in *Tarr* and *Childermass* sees philanthropy as an unavoidable element of the chaos of human life, and as one of the poles of the agon pair. In his political writings, Lewis employs the rhetoric of philanthropy to justify his aggressive assault on contemporary public figures and institutions; in the epigraph to *The Enemy* his Enemy persona claims a benevolent cause. However, Lewis’s reversal of the meanings of philanthropy and aggression does not make him a philanthropist; nevertheless, it serves well his purpose of launching a radical modernist politics and aesthetics.

**Liberals, Individualists, and State Philanthropy**

Lewis’s discussion of welfare and its class, elitist, and authoritarian aspects is on a par with the criticism that anarchists and individualists like Dora Marsden leveled against benevolence and patronage. The turn of the twentieth century was marked by increasing professionalization of social services and the emergence of the British welfare state. Early
precursors of this were the measures adopted by the liberal administration of Campbell-Bannerman (1906-8) and Asquith (1908-15), such as the Education (Provision of Meals) Acts (1906 and 1914), Education (Administrative Provisions) Act (1907), Notification of Births Acts (1907 and 1915), Probation Act (1907), Children Act (1908), Old Age Pensions Act (1908), Housing and Town Planning Act (1909), National Insurance Act (1911), Trade Board Act (1909). Behind these reforms was the ideology of “New Liberalism” introduced in the late nineteenth century by J. A. Hobson, L. T. Hobhouse, and D. G. Ritchie.

Wyndham Lewis and other radical individualists were troubled by the statist tendencies of contemporary liberalism. They worried about the growing obscurity of power in bureaucratic welfare regimes and modern consumer societies. Regrettably, Lewis even allied himself with the rising fascist wing: “I am not a communist; if anything, I favor some sort of fascism rather than communism. Nevertheless, when two principles are opposed, and one of these is that of English liberalism, in most cases I should find myself on the other side, I expect” (Lewis, Art 35).

Lewis’s fascination with the fascist charismatic leader, however, did not exclude a strong anarcho-libertarian dislike of totalitarianism, thereby contributing to what Paul Peppis calls “the myriad contradictions of modernism’s early politics” (Peppis 19).77

The “New Liberals” questioned the status of the individual as “a ‘free-standing’ individual, independent of, and divorced from, his social environment.” (Finlayson 156). Their

77 In his book Literature, Politics, and the English avant-garde, Paul Peppis argues that “modernism’s early politics were not simply ‘protofascist,’ displaying certain anticipations of later ‘reactionary’ or ‘fascist’ tendencies (an elitist distance from the masses, a fascination with the charismatic individual, a distrust of parliamentary democracy), but were also, in a sense, anti-fascist, committed to the radical anti-statist politics of anarcho-libertarianism, which opposed in principle the sort of centralized, authoritarian state that would later develop in Hitler’s Germany and—to a lesser extent—in Mussolini’s Italy. The coexistence of these competing, at times contradictory, political commitments helps explain Raymond Williams’s productive observation that “the politics of the avant-garde, from the beginning, could go either way”” (11-12).
philosophy disapproved of traditional forms of philanthropy but advocated a strong public
spirit and concern for the well-being of the community. T. H. Greene, in his *Lectures on the
Principles of Political Obligation* delivered in 1879-80, had already started to alter Mill’s views
of the “negative freedom” of the individual—“freedom from”—to allow the state more authority
in creating the conditions for greater “positive freedom.” D. G. Ritchie took the view of
“positive freedom” further in his *Principles of State Intervention* published in 1891, where he
laid an emphasis on the individual in the community. As Finlayson comments, “to ‘New
Liberals’, philanthropy failed to grasp the element of mutuality which held the community
together. At worst it could be harmful; at best it offered only palliatives, and lacked any wider
consideration of social justice” (156, 161). “New Liberals” argued that the possession of
political rights guaranteed by the state lead naturally to social rights; they created a new notion of
citizenship, one “provided as an entitlement by an active state rater than aspired to by active
citizens outside the state” (Finlayson 162). The “citizenship of contribution” which the volunteer
philanthropist embodied, came into rivalry with the “New Liberal” ideal of a “citizenship of
entitlement.”

Individualists such as Dora Marsden and Wyndham Lewis, on the other hand, were
sharply critical of both the “citizenship of entitlement” and traditional altruism rooted in self-
denial. They opposed all forms of collectivism including socialist guilds (National Industrial
 Guilds). To individualists such as Dora Marsden and Wyndham Lewis, the rhetoric of
collectivism was “already tawdry and of the vulgar” (Marsden, “Views” [1 July 1914] 246).
They defined their project in opposition to what they saw as the triumphant forces of false
altruism and proclaimed that the only true motive power was Self-will: “The poor expect
‘goodwill’ to give them liberty; the rich look to it to secure a docile serving community. In a few
thousand years, after experimenting with every constructive scheme of government, ‘divine’
and human, men will begin to understand that the only will existent is Self-will” (Marsden,
“Views” [15 January 1914] 24). Collectivism seemed a veiled attempt to further disenfranchise
the working poor, and the cooperation between the state and industry to provide better working
conditions seemed a conspiracy to further disempower the already powerless, propertyless
masses (“Views” [1 January 1914] 246).  

The anarchists’ opposition to state welfare programs and philanthropic jargon is rooted in
their rejection of social organicism. Speaking of the National Guilds, Marsden continues to
castigate “the initial error of imagining that ‘all’ are responsible for each, which is a corollary
following from that blatantly grotesque parody of a generalization known pseudo-scientifically
as ‘Society an Organism,’ of which ‘Members of One Body’ is the theological variety.” She
suggests that the essential hierarchy of the body parts (brain versus hair or finger nail, for
example) makes the kind of syndicalism popular among her contemporaries untenable: “It is as
though the rebelling hair should swiftly convert itself into whip-cord or lightning to smite the
barber or his client; or as if the sacrificial finger nail from which its owner seeks to sever himself
should turn into a sword with will and intention in it, and smite the hand which manipulates the

78 “Now, National Guilds is the effort of certain collectivists—honest enough—to cover the badges of their
collectivism. They are wholly unsuccessful: everything which has of late years been said to discredit State-
collectivism could be said with four-fold emphasis to discredit this double-handed, engine of State-recognized,
State-recognizing, National Industrial Guilds. This effort to escape the reproach of State-collectivism has resulted in
the conception of a State-fortified guild collectivism. If the Servile State means anything more than a condition
where in addition to the mass of the people being so propertyless that they must of necessity work for wages on the
property of governors—the owners--it means the establishment of a police with powers to invade one’s most
intimate concerns and interfere with one’s means of securing vital necessities; and the enormous industrial guild
system possessing “the instruments of production,” with the politicians holding the estate, is in a hundredfold
stronger position to bring this latter about” (“Views” [1 January 1914] 246).
Marsden’s quarrels with inauthentic philanthropy that claims society is one fabric and individuals need to practice self-denial in the name of the greater good. At the same time, she affirms, a genuine philanthropy would also be self-interested. The “self-denying,” Servile State, she argues, is the spiritual progeny of the Victorians, and already “tawdry and of the vulgar” (“Views” [15 January 1914] 245). It partakes in an “elaborate altruistic make-believe” and hides truth behind Sacred Words, behind “the Mysterious, the Occult, the Supernatural, the Divine” (Marsden, “Why We Are Moral” 433).

Unlike the Victorians and the New Liberals, militant anarchists for Marsden harbor a truly benevolent respect for human dignity beneath a misleading appearance of egocentrism; contrary to popular opinion, Marsden believes in the self-interested altruism of extreme individualism. Her anarchists are “harmless, according to the disconcerting harmless manner of infants.” Thus Marsden’s editorials ultimately join in with the affirmation of benevolence and the public spirit of her age: “[J]ealous for the dignity of ‘Man,” the anarchist, “whose other name is ‘Humanitarian’…loves humanity but disapproves of men whose ways please him not” (Marsden, “The Illusion of Anarchism” 341-2). An anti-statist, anarcho-libertarian politics stems from this that privileges self-interest as the one category inclusive of its opposite, benevolence.

Marsden’s editorials for the 1914 issues of The Egoist not only framed the first public debut of many of the great works of modernism but played a central role in the genesis of their politics and aesthetics. Bruce Clarke, David Kadlec, and Paul Peppis have all addressed the role of Dora Marsden and The Egoist in shaping the complex and paradoxical politics of the British avant-garde. In his book Literature, Politic, and the English avant-garde, Peppis argues that
labeling early modernist politics “fascist” is an oversimplification; in his persuasive analysis, the English avant-garde united mutually exclusive radical strands such as proto-fascism and anarcho-libertarianism (11-12). Kadlec discusses how the radical anti-statist politics of *The Egoist* helped shape Ezra Pound’s poetics. In his article “Pound, Blast, and Syndicalism,” he claims that in developing his revolutionary aesthetics, Pound expressed “a sympathy with the tenets and spirit of [radical] syndicalism” (Kadlec 1019). Unlike the Labour party and the union movement who supported the 1911 National Insurance Act, syndicalists viewed state welfare measures as “instances of ‘capitalist discipline over the working class’” (qtd. in Kadlec 1019), a position supported by Marsden’s editorials in *The Egoist*. Bruce Clarke has also argued that Pound’s “‘conversion’ from a residual humanism to the militant antagonisms of vorticism” was influenced by Dora Marsden (Clarke 104). In this chapter I am going to argue that the anarcho-libertarian rejection of philanthropy as tyrannical and “occult” influenced Lewis’s own political and aesthetic position.

Marsden’s editorials in *The Egoist* demonstrate the central place that discussions of philanthropy, egoism, and altruism occupy on the modernist scene. Her writings show an interesting progression from the political implications of the Servile State, National Guilds, and syndicalism in the first issues of *The Egoist* to a more philosophical discussion of goodwill, morality, the gift, and the egoistic motivations behind every altruistic act by December of 1914.79 Both of these aspects of the welfare/philanthropy debates were very much a part of the self-definition of modernism in general and of Wyndham Lewis’s writing in particular.

79 “Altruism is egoism of the second and tenth rate, adopted because of one’s inability to make headway in the best.” In “Views and Comments,” July 1, 1914, 244-5.
Wyndham Lewis’s Public Persona: The Enemy as Philanthropist

Despite his idiosyncratic political views and his somewhat flippant critique of contemporary liberalism, the writer Wyndham Lewis took his satire and his role as a public intellectual very seriously. Lewis’s 1927 magazine *The Enemy* opens with an epigraph from Plutarch’s *Moralia* and an editorial that explains the significance of Plutarch’s statement for Lewis’s editorial and artistic goals. Here Lewis insists, with Plutarch, that one’s “bitter enemies,” just like “good friends” are instrumental in elevating character:

“A MAN of understanding is to benefit by his enemies…He that knoweth that he hath an enemy will look circumspectly about him to all matters, ordering his life and behaviour in better sort…therefore it was well and truly said of Antisthenes, that such men as would be saved and become honest ought of necessity to have either good friends or bitter enemies. But forasmuch as amity and friendship nowadays speaketh with a small and low voice, and is very audible and full of words of flattery, what remaineth but that we should hear the truth from the mouth of our enemies?…” (*The Enemy* 1: iv)

Lewis’s preface comments on Plutarch’s statement and points out how the persona of the Enemy brings honesty to contemporary society: “[t]he names we remember in European literature are those of men so satirized and attacked, rather than petted or fawned upon by their contemporaries. Only this time exacts an uncritical hypnotic sleep of all within it.” (Lewis, *The Enemy* 1: xi). Lewis’s works thus claim a public purpose but one free from “the misleading colours of friendship or of a universal benevolence” as well as from “detached omniscience, absence of parti-pris, which is such a feature of our time” (Lewis, *The Enemy* 1: ix). Criticism, aggression, and violence are Lewis’s recommended remedies for the stagnation of society and the degeneration of the individual artist. From Ker-Orr, the narrator of Lewis’s early short stories, to Pullman and Satters in his later work *Childermass*, Lewis’ protagonists assume a
hyper-masculine ethos designed to overthrow humanist values and the Victorian ideology of
benevolent laissez-faire. Yet in a characteristic reversal of the meaning of philanthropy and
violence, Lewis uses the rhetoric of philanthropy to justify his radical political and aesthetic
project.

Lewis saw himself as the “gadfly” of the complacent age that produced social security
legislation (like the Unemployment Act of 1904 and the National Insurance Act of 1911) and
collectivist politics in order to undermine and disenfranchise (in Lewis’s opinion) the individual
at the expense of the masses. To oppose the rise of what he understood to be a totalitarian
welfare regime, he positioned himself as a (philanthropic) Enemy of contemporary parliamentary
democracy. The “Enemy” lived up to his promise to strip contemporary political and social life
from “the misleading colours of friendship or of a universal benevolence” in many political and
fictional writings.

Lewis’s “One-Way Song” (1933) exposes the “great democrats” and “nice chaps” who
hide behind their “public rags” and abstract rhetoric; what they hide behind their promises of
affluence is that they are “One of our Conquerors”:

They’ve marked you down for robothood, it’s no use,
You’ll be the slave of a collective neo-Croesus,
Calling themselves this abstract name or that—
Chief agent of the Proletariat—
Wherever it occurs it comes that way,
With awful benevolence they take up sway.
Great democrats they are, demotic tags
Sprout from their mouths, they affect in public rags
Almost, or homespun—sweatshirts and apache caps.
They are not ‘One of our Conquerors’, but just ‘nice chaps’!
‘Your rugged individualism must go’!
They tell you. And they take it at one blow!
But first they teach you that you are just nix,
And wear you down with barbarous pinpricks.
The philosophy of a full-blown automaton
Is cooked up for you: and then one by one
All pleasant things removed from your reach.
They show you hunger. Nonentity they teach. (Collected Poems 85)

Like many of his contemporaries, Lewis was responding to what English men and women perceived as the crisis of parliamentary democracy at home, so well described in George Dangerfield’s The Strange Death of Liberal England (1935). As Paul Peppis remarks in Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde, at the turn of the twentieth century “[the English] were witnessing the ‘strange death’ of Liberal England, with all its indications of internal instability and decline: the Suffragette movement, trade union activism, parliamentary crises, working-class agitation, Irish rebellion, unemployment, rising poverty” (7). For Lewis, the entrance of the masses and their “benevolent” politics into the parliamentary arena spelled an end of an embattled masculinity (like the masculinity poeticized by fascist art) and the coming of a machine-like totalitarian state that would eviscerate the spirit of individualism and turn citizens into obedient automatons (like the anarcho-libertarians feared).

Lewis saw the rhetoric of benevolence as a mark of the erosion and corruption of modern democracy in which we are all implicated because we participate in the “parliamentary humbug” that we act “for somebody else’s good” while disavowing our position of power: “It is we who are the Machiavels, compared to the societist or the fascist, who makes no disguise of his forcible intentions, whose power is not wrapped up in parliamentary humbug, who is not eternally engaged in pretences of benefaction; who does not say at every move in the game that he is making it for somebody else’s good, that he is a vicar and a servant when he is a master” (Art 75). Therefore the author searches for a reality behind the deceptiveness of words, and for
truth more visceral than rhetoric; Lewis’s works find these in satire, violence, and the abject
body.

**Hobson, Rymer, and Satire**

Favorite targets of the Enemy’s satire are pseudo intellectuals and bohemian artists (like
Rymer in “The Bishop’s Fool” and Hobson in *Tarr*) who embrace poverty and compassionate
liberalism as their philosophy. Lewis’s anti-establishment politics influence the portrayal of
these characters appear in his fiction as scarecrow figures, “tatterdemalion” clowns (Lewis, *Soldier* 148), formidable yet intellectually inferior antagonists whom the “Enemy” gleefully tears
apart. Characters who speak for the author repeatedly physically assault such figures, verbally
destroy their credibility, or even precipitate their death (“The Death of the Ankou”). In the
earlier works (*The Wild Body* short stories and *Tarr*), the narrator focuses on challenging his
antagonists’ seemingly invincible position; in Lewis’s later works (such as *Rotting Hill*),
however, the Enemy persona engages the spokespeople of humanitarianism in order to persuade
them that they, too, have become victims of their own ideologies.

In Lewis’s first novel *Tarr* (1918), the individualist artist Tarr is provoked by the
sentimental pretense and shabby appearance of his bourgeois-bohemian friend Hobson to
arrogantly assault the other’s ego and physically knock down his Panama hat. Tarr argues, with
Baudelaire, that the “obsequious vagabond, cringing for alms” should be jolted into pride and
self-respect by the means employed by Baudelaire’s poet: “the poet seizes a heavy stick and
belabors the beggar with it. The beggar then, when he is almost beaten to a pulp, suddenly
straightens out beneath the blows; *expands, stretches,* his eyes dart fire! He rises up and falls on
the poet tooth and nail. In a few seconds he has laid him out flat, and is just going to finish him off, when an ‘agent’ arrives. The poet is enchanted. He has accomplished something!” Hobson calls for the same treatment because he is “meaner spirited than the most abject tramp” (Tarr 35).

In the figure of Hobson, Lewis exposes the ways in which the bourgeois bohemians appropriate poverty as a fad. Hobson is a pseudo-intellectual and a hypocrite: he has “exchanged [his] temper, [his] freedom and [his] fine voice” for “an old hat that does not belong to [him], and a shabbiness [he has] not merited by suffering neediness.” Tarr attacks Hobson for his “pseudo neediness” and “sentimental indulgence” (Lewis, Tarr 33); for Lewis, Hobson signals the degeneration of British society, evident perhaps in the sentimental liberalism of Asquith and Lloyd George that has effeminized modern democracy: “You represent, my poor fellow, the dregs of Anglo-Saxon civilization! There is nothing softer on earth. Your flabby position is a mixture of the lees of Liberalism, the poor froth blown off the decadent nineties, the wardrobe-leavings of a vulgar Bohemianism with its headquarters in Chelsea!” (34). Hobson represents a mixture of bourgeois art and liberal humanitarianism, the dual target of the Enemy’s attack. His poverty is trendy precisely because it is not the real thing. For the Enemy the cultured classes that Hobson represent are as blameworthy as the nonentity beggars that need to be taught self-respect through aggression and hardship. The Hobson episode signals Lewis’s anti-establishment position, a position he shared with the anarcho-libertarians of the Marsden circle.

Thirty-three years later, when the welfare states in England and the United States were well established, Lewis revisited the subjects of class and of philanthropy as a weapon in class warfare. Samuel Hartley Rymer, Rector of Bagwick in “The Bishop’s Fool” (one of the chapters of Lewis’s novel Rotting Hill [1951]), is not an artist like Hobson, but he is much more directly
involved with issues of philanthropy, being the priest of a small congregation. Rymer’s misplaced *noblesse oblige* towards his parishioners nearly brings about his annihilation at the hands of an angry mob. A union sympathizer and a champion of universal healthcare and state benevolence, the ‘red’ priest Rymer ends up beaten up by a farmer, derided by his own congregation, and expelled from his office. Like other “beggar” characters in Lewis’s fiction, Rymer is a larger-than-life, commanding, peremptory figure, who elicits the fascination of both author and reader. The narrative foregrounds the surprising empowerment of the state - subsidized farmers who reject the ideology of benevolence that helped them prosper in the first place. Despite the narrator’s disapproval of Rymer’s ideological position, the welfare state in “The Rector of Bagwick” proves to be in the service of creating independent and feisty capitalist individualists.

Rymer’s appearance “[takes] some time to digest” (Lewis, *Soldier* 139); he wears “[a] brownish tweed that [is] so obsolete that it necessitated a vertical patch the size of a folded newspaper in one place, the sleeves of which had to terminate in cuffs of leather three inches deep, and demanded to be reinforced with leather at the collar line and to have two pocket tops bound with pigskin,” attire worthy of “a mendicant friar.” Only one patch of black suggests his office; the rest of his “parti-colored” clothes seem “selected for their effect” and form a collage reminiscent of the new industry of advertising (Lewis, *Soldier* 148-9).

Rymer’s poverty, however, clashes with his carefully fostered Oxford accent and his “fastidious absence of dignity (the intelligent hallmark of English education).” He affects to be on equal footing with his interlocutors and parishioners, makes himself accessible to others “with the freedom of two tramps meeting at a dusty crossroad, open to one another in the free masonry of the propertyless” (Lewis, *Soldier* 138). Nevertheless, he unmistakably belongs to the ruling
class: “Oxford has cooked Rymer so successfully that whatever he may be he is not raw. At
times I have felt he is overcooked, or perhaps it would be better to say overoxfordized” (138).
Unlike the truly indigent whose rights he champions, he purchases a painting that no mendicant
priest in a loincloth could afford: “there was protest in his getup. He preferred to parade the
streets of his parish in rags— to go up to London and buy a drawing costing as much as a new
suit” (151). Rymer’s Oxford education and his taste for the fine arts (in addition to buying a
painting the Rector also writes verse) serve as class markers that separate Rymer from his
parishioners.

The narrator is suspicious of the purpose behind Rymer’s egalitarian dream and suggests
that his ideals of “social justice and a new, bright, bossy, fraternal world—a new Jerusalem”
(Lewis, Soldier 139) are at best a juvenile revolt against the bourgeoisie and at worst a political
ruse to deprive citizens of liberty. The clergyman’s idealism is a throwback to his youth, to his
Oxford years; a “juvenile impulse to épater le bourgeois” (161); and for this and other
mannerisms the author regards him as a “big fat baby” (149). Rymer combines his authoritarian
and bossy tendencies with an engaging naïveté: he meets his guest with a “big smiling face,
ruggedly handsome and anxiously sweet” (149). Even to his wife Rymer is “a big willful
schoolboy,” “a domesticated troll” (152); to the narrator he variously appears as a cephalopod, a
Don Quixote, or “a rather mechanically cheerful bird” (139). Lewis’s keen sense of the
grotesque evokes images of prehistoric and deep-sea beings, babyhood and femaleness, clowns
and madness (139). The narrator sets about to investigate, draw out, confront, deconstruct
Rymer, unmask his mystical presence; the stated purpose of the narrative is to get to know him.
However, in the end, the mystery of what animates this grotesque character remains; Rymer
eludes the narrator who eventually is left to “wonder whether Rymer exists or whether he is
not, rather, a figment of my imagination” (Lewis, Soldier 187).

The elusive Rymer is presented to the reader as a threat to modern democracy. Rymer’s
disquiet corresponds to the turbulent decades of shaping welfare and reshaping the British state
from the turn of the century until after the wars. He is “not a throwback to the religious
mendicant, he is an advance copy (imperfect but authentic) of the hobo-holiness of Tomorrow”
(Lewis, Soldier 138). In the opening of the story, the narrator imagines himself on a “sumptuous
ship” traveling in “utter peace,” and fantasizes how passengers and crew alike would be stirred
up if Rymer had been on board (130). The narrator lets us know that Rymer is an extremist in
his political views and a meddlesome busybody: had he been on board, “politics, religion, and
the itch-to-teach would have combined, a trinity of irritants, to sow disquiet in the ship from one
end to the other.” Yet his ill-advised actions hold a fascination for the narrator-author: the
character’s unbounded energy haunts the memory and the story like a ghost, “a Poltergeist, and
invisible something” (131). The metaphor of the ship expresses Lewis’s sense of the
precariousness of the British body politic and the perils facing modern democracy.

Despite the narrator’s insistence on Rymer’s subtle and insidious power, and despite
Lewis’s gloomy predictions of the end of democracy, “The Bishop’s Fool” portrays the Bagwick
villagers as lively and victorious antagonists to the benevolent politicians of tomorrow. Rymer’s
congregation tears apart both his theories and the clothes on his back. He fails to establish
rapport with the working poor because they mistrust his “garments literally dropping to pieces”
since their need teaches them to “dread and loathe poverty and want” (153):

Dressed in garments literally dropping to pieces he moves around his parish,
among people who dread and loathe poverty and want. And he stands in spite of
himself for poverty and want. He is one of the first English clergymen to stand for poverty and want. And as he moves around, from house to house, the doors quickly shut at his approach as if he were infected with some complaint which no one was particularly anxious to have; and out of rags tacked together his “Oxford accent” issues with incongruous patronage; his encyclopaedic affectations exasperate, his great-heartedness abashes—for there is no cash only credit in Heaven, the currency of religion, no longer legal tender. (Lewis, Soldier 153)

Rather than embrace poverty, the villagers side with a rising consumer culture that opens luxury department stores such as Harrods and Selfridges to the working class: “Any charlady now can go in, try on a mink coat or two, then fling them down and say she thinks she’ll wait till next season when they may have a better assortment” (Lewis, Soldier 159). They also do not defend Rymer when he is assaulted by Jack Cox, the “new-rich Farmer (rich partly owing to Government subsidies)” (141). This “little rustic capitalist…neither likes Rymer’s politics, nor his brand of religion (Anglo-Catholic), nor his big sweet worried argumentative face” (142). It is Jack Cox who precipitates the fight in front of the village pub during which Rymer’s clothes and body quite literally disintegrate, and after which the Rector is removed from Bagwick.

Trapped by the spirited and malicious farmer (who has been Rymer’s enemy for a decade), the clergyman tries to keep his adversary still in what looks like “an ardent maternal embrace” (Lewis, Soldier 183). But his love and goodwill and unselfishness have not scratched the surface of the villagers’ hearts; Rymer is surprised to see among the hostile faces “men with whom only recently he had had the most friendly conversations about labor conditions. But apparently they hated him! He thought inevitably of Christ and the Jewish populace” (183). The crowd jeers and derides their “tatterdemalion” clergyman: “Hi, sir, ye ‘comin’ onstuck! Why don’t ee get t’misses to sew ee together!” (183). “Bleeding, perspiring, panting”(184), Rymer is overcome by one of the farmer’s “thuggish tricks”(187) and “rush[es] away doubled up, in a
crouching run” (186). His wife finds him “disheveled, his patches gaping and fluttering,” bitten by Jacko (a villager’s dog), and followed by the “jeering laughter” of the bystanders (186). A black eye, a bleeding nose, and a bitten calf are the answers that the village gives to what the narrator calls Rymer’s “obscurantist absolute” (167).

Rymer’s story predicts the self-defeating end of the welfare state, but it also introduces doubt in Lewis’s and Habermas’s thesis that welfare measures necessarily weaken the people and render them passive. Jack Cox’s arrogance, his success, and his victory over the Rector spring from the welfare measures (state subsidies for farmers) that have empowered him and helped make him a self-conscious capitalist. At the same time, the peasants at Bagwick do not seem subdued in the least in their resistance to the “Bishop’s Fool.” In spite of the fact that the farmers’ relative wealth was achieved partly through government subsidies, they do not feel gratitude or sympathy with the welfare doctrines of the radical Rymer. In the end, the creation overpowers its creator as Jack manages to break “two of the new set of [Rymer’s] Health teeth” (Lewis, Soldier 182), making the priest not only a comical figure but also a sort of saint and martyr. The overall impression that we get of Rymer is that he is self-effacing; he is a representative of the educated middle classes who have allowed themselves to be duped by an ideology of unselfishness. Like “a silent self-effacing word” (178) from his “Persian miniature” poems, the benevolent Rymer appears to move towards his own extinction, and with him the possibility for upper-class patronage is gone as well.

In spite of Lewis’s satire of Rymer as “a Christian pest, a dangerous busybody, or a saint in motley” (Lewis, Soldier 131), his fate is a warning to idealistic supporters of British welfare that no system of state benevolence can discipline the entrepreneurial spirit and aggressive egotism of its beneficiaries. By the end of the story the reader half sympathizes with Rymer’s
“masterful vitality” (133) and his marginality in the face of the indifference with which the villagers and farmers treat the “Red Priest.”


Lewis’s opposition to the political left and his fictional representations of the ‘cult of poverty’ draw a lot of their rhetorical power from the contemporary philanthropic debates and the attack on the discredited nature of traditional philanthropy. His early story “The Death of the Ankou” and his political writings in *Left Wing Over Europe* both address the religious, or rather quasi-religious nature of alms-giving and of the modern ‘benevolent state.’ In his 1936 essays on fascism and the impending Second World War, *Left Wing Over Europe: or, How to Make a War About Nothing*, Lewis compares the emerging welfare state to the utopian schemes of the Salvation Army,80 that Victorian institution that had lost some of its credibility by his day. *Left Wing Over Europe* forges a connection between the messianic, impractical aspects of liberalism, communism, and socialism on one hand, and the ambitious but ill-conceived projects of the Salvation Army on the other. He quotes M.J.P. Lockhart on the “messianic” and “missionary” quality in bolshevism: “the true Bolshevist is a missionary and a crusader. Some of the technique of the Messianic quality in Bolshevism has been borrowed from the Church and the attitude towards doctrine is, moreover, religious” (qtd. in *Left Wing* 249). Such analysis seems to

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80 Please see my second chapter, “Empire and Philanthropy,” for a discussion of Salvationist schemes and of the book that popularized them, Charles Booth’s *In Darkest England and the Way Out*.
underscore the rational, anti-religious and unsentimental position of the writer, yet it conceals a more conservative critique of modernity and its utopias.

The fear that the authoritarian state, by virtue of its humanitarian claims, has replaced true democracy leads Lewis to allude to the decaying body politic as mechanized, threatening, and irrational. Frederic Jameson credits the right-leaning Wyndham Lewis with the most perceptive critique of emerging consumer society at the turn of the twentieth century. One salient critique by Lewis is that bolshevism is an imperfect copy of Christianity, “the refuse of discarded emotions” of Christian morality:

In the matter of religious’ manifestations, the peculiar godless Christianity of Anglosaxon communism is entirely meaningless: in effect it is an exploitation of the automatic Christian responses and reflexes which have survived the extinction of Christianity among the western proletariat, or intelligentsia. It is concocted out of the refuse of discarded emotions, engrained in Christiandom, and which cannot at once be extirpated—emotions of “decency,” of “charity,” of “kindliness,” of “compassion,” and of “selflessness.” (Left Wing 265)

It can be inferred from this passage that communist humanism is a false religion, one that springs from the corpse of Christianity, comes after its extinction, and subsists on its refuse. It is also not a living being but a concoction of automatic Christian responses and reflexes, like a cadaver, an automaton, or like Frankenstein’s monster. Thus Lewis creates a conflicted image of altruism as both a decaying corpse teeming with life (refuse and concoction) and a machine-like cadaver

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81 According to Jameson, Lewis exemplifies “a commonplace of Marxist historiography” which claims that “initial critiques of the nascent world of market capitalism emerge on the Right” (Jameson 18). In his work on Lewis entitled Fables of Aggression, Jameson discusses both Lewis’ novels and his political writings and concludes that Lewis’ “attacks on subjectivism, on establishment modernism, on the “Time-Cult” and the “Youth-Cult,” on the illusions of the stable subject or ego, and on the ideological dishonesty of hegemonic liberalism, are indeed more powerful and damaging than anything formulated by the Marxism of that period” (Jameson 19).
(automatic responses and reflexes). In this way, *Left Wing* criticizes socialism (or communism) from a progressive as well as from a conservative position, as both outdated and irrational, and as hyper-rational and hyper-scientific. Lewis’s progressive and conservative satires of benevolence intersect in his discussion of the power of the Occult in relationship to alms-giving (“The Death of the Ankou”), communism (*Left Wing*), and parliamentary democracy (*The Art of Being Ruled*).

In spite of this condemnation of both Christian and liberal humanitarianism, Lewis’s writing in *Left Wing* occasionally suggests a positive political vision that is absent from *Tarr* and *Blast*. In his chapter on “The ‘Haves’ and the ‘Have-Not’s’” Lewis appeals to the sympathy of the reader and to her sense of justice when he describes “those millions of unemployed people, wilting, shrinking and dying by inches, of under-nourishment, boredom and hatred of an existence which holds for them so little meaning” and “those foreign populations from whom we steadfastly, coldly, and arrogantly withhold what they require to live and prosper” (*Left Wing* 305, 300-1). This “poverty in the midst of plenty” is evidence of “some terrible ‘callousness’ somewhere about that all that should be tolerated; that men ‘in power’ should sit down day after day and spin phrases about the delinquencies of this or that foreign statesman, and never once remember what responsibilities ‘power’ brings with it” (305). Lewis’s criticism of neglect at home and imperial greed abroad betrays an inconsistency in his individualist politics: his sympathy for the “millions of unemployed people” coexisted with his appeal for a “smack in the eye” philanthropy (285).

However, Lewis’s purported sympathy for the poor and the disenfranchised does not develop into a program for social amelioration or individual empowerment. Instead, Lewis mobilizes the rhetoric of compassion in *Left Wing* to further his criticism of communism and of
contemporary democracy and to promote a radical political agenda. His “smack in the eye” philanthropy serves not so much as a positive political vision but as a vantage point from which Lewis attacks “the cheap salvationist imperialism of Marxian communism,” its “pompous utterances” and “sentimental nonsense” (*Left Wing* 320-1). It is interesting that Lewis sees himself implicated in the “sentimental nonsense” of modern parliamentary democracies; in the use of the pronoun “we” he suggests that he is part of the deceptive progress he decries: “[t]he more ‘progressive’ the form of compulsion, or punishment, is, the less humane, we generally find. A smack in the eye is, after all, a less savage form of attack than a social boycott. A duel is a more decent thing than a whispering campaign, to settle a dispute. *We ‘advance’, but we merely become subtler in our inhumanity* [my emphasis]” (285). Despite his overtures to humanist values in *Left Wing*, like Dora Marsden, Lewis uses contemporary debates over philanthropy to advocate a radical break with liberalism and sentimentality. In this break, the Enemy, who is confronting a hypocritical, feminized, and falsely altruistic society, seems also to be confronting the enemy within.

“The Death of the Ankou”

Derrida’s discussion of the gift in *Given Time* explores Mauss’ anthropological account of the relationship between the beggar and the god, alms-giving and worshipping, the demand of the poor and death. Following Mauss, Derrida argues that “as marginal people excluded from the process of production and circulation of wealth, the poor come to represent the gods or the dead” (*Given Time* 138). The institution of alms originates in the need to propitiate the divinity, to “get into its good graces and make peace with it” and in the need for redistribution, a sort of
“justice of alms.” For Mauss, “Generosity is an obligation because Nemesis [both distributive justice and the enforcing power of vengeance] avenges the poor and the gods for the superabundance of happiness and wealth of certain people” (qtd. in Given Time 139). Wyndham Lewis’s short story “The Death of the Ankou,” published in 1928 as part of his first volume of short stories, The Wild Body, makes a similar argument about modern alms-giving; his narrator, Ker-Orr, encounters Ludo, the village beggar at Ploumilliau, and associates this colorful personage with the folk myth of the death god, Ervoanik Ploumilliau, or Ankou. However, while Mauss celebrates the redistributive justice of the gift, Lewis challenges it; in the end of Lewis’s story the beggar-god is dead.

The narrator of Lewis’s story Ker-Orr challenges and is challenged by the threatening demand for gift- and alms-giving, a demand that he (like Mauss) associates with modern welfare states and with socialism. In the end of the story, Ludo is defeated by the very divinity which appears to favor, protect, and benefit him in his trade; the superstitious belief in the Ankou seems to precipitate his demise. The story underscores Ludo’s hollow strength and the ability of Ker-Orr to unmask it.

The character of Ludo (“The Ankou”) is Lewis’s way to comment on modern (corporate or state) power that finds justification in the increasing demands of the poor and of giving. Ludo is an “embodied calamity” rather than a victim. Although it is entrepreneurial on the beggar’s part to start his own collection at church, Lewis’s description hints at the institutional, machine-like quality of his business. Devoid of interiority, he resembles a corpse, a zombie, a machine: his face is a blind mask with “staring, milky eyeballs”; he moves like an automaton, “from the habit of wandering through the outer jungle of physical objects” (Soldier 61). He seems to have hypnotized the congregation of the local cathedral into giving him dues and thus stands for the
modern bureaucracies deplored by Lewis, Kafka, and Habermas. Ludo “must not be kept waiting;” he elicits an automatic obedience from the congregation. If the supplicants are not looking for his approach, he leaves them “crestfallen and astonished” (62). The narrator sees him as “an irritable Jack-in-office, with the waxed mustaches of a small pretentious official.”

He was strolling now, making a leisurely harvest from the pockets of these religious crowds. His attitude was, however, peremptory. He called out hoarsely his requirements, and turned his empty eyes in the direction indicated by his acolyte, where he knew there was a group who had not paid. His clothes were smart, all in rich, black broadcloth and black velvet, with a ribboned hat. He entered into every door he found open, beating on it with his clublike stick. I did not notice any Thank you! pass his lips. He appeared to snort when he had received what was due to him, and to turn away, his legs beginning to march mechanically like a man mildly shell-shocked. (Lewis, Soldier 62)

Lewis’s criticism of Ludo and of the institution of alms he embodies resembles his double vision of the failings of communism in Left Wing. On the one hand, Ludo is machine-like, “a steamroller”; on the other, he is primitive and bloodthirsty, “a sightless Juggernaut,” with a club in his hands (Soldier 61). Lewis’s peculiar description of the beggar as both a modern and an ancient “calamity,” and a “king among afflictions,” produces Ludo’s mystical, occult, and superstitious effect on the narrator and on the reader. His “insolent” and “imperious” figure “force[s] rudely aside everything in its path.” His blind “mask” is “highly impressive,” with “staring, milky eyeballs” and “an expression of ascetic ponderous importance” (Soldier 61).82

82 In “Wyndham Lewis’s Narrative of Origin: ‘The Death of the Ankou’” Paul Edwards discusses Ludo’s blindness as a sign that the character is both ‘anchored to a fixed sign-system’ (superstition, a symbolic order) and locked into a ‘dark unconscious’ that precedes the symbolic order”, a duality which makes freedom and creativity possible. For Edwards, “The Death of the Ankou” celebrates rather than ridicules the peasants and their superstitions (Edwards, 27, 33).
At the same time as the congregation is hypnotized by the Ankou, the narrator makes no exception as he, too, is fascinated with Ludo. In the course of the narrative, the narrator becomes obsessed with Ludo and the story of the Ankou, and he tries to extirpate his own unhealthy interest by confronting Ludo. First, the narrator presents us with the guidebook legend of the Ankou; then he adds details from local lore that he has learned in the village to the story; finally, he sneaks into Ludo’s cave for a private interview. He scrupulously details the story of an “authentic plastic” idol of the Ankou that until recently stayed in the local cathedral; at midnight mass, the Ankou was said to pass among the congregation and tap on the shoulders those he soon wanted to take with him. The priests got rid of the statue after “one impatient hag” who tried to enlist his magical power, “painted it a pillar-box red” to give it new power (Lewis, Soldier 58).

In spite of his sense of humor, the narrator seems drawn into the superstitious fear of the ancient god of death, the same fear that Mauss claims motivates alms-giving and the fear that perhaps still provides motivation for passing welfare measures today. Having first glanced at Ludo, the narrator imagines the beggar is the Ankou and shudders at the thought. Superstitiously, he too drops two sous in the Ludo’s lead mug and hopes that he “had no doubt averted the omen…with this bribe” (Lewis, Soldier 61). Perhaps even more fascinating, the narrator tells the legend of the blinding of the Ankou by St. Peter, whom Ker-Orr identifies as “a suppressed communist of the advanced type” (59). According to local legend, the Ankou was blinded by St. Peter for threatening to take a farmer at his work. In this way St. Peter, a socialist reformer who sets out to protect the workers’ rights, does the peasants no service by producing an even more haphazard death. The narrator does not have the philanthropic motivation of the
protective saint, but he follows Ludo in the cave just like Ulysses pursued the Cyclops, in order to become himself the hero of the story who met and vanquished death.83

Ludo’s power to coerce the parishioners into giving alms suggests the coercion of imperial expansion; just like colonialism, his seemingly unbounded power produces prejudices and a sense of superiority. While Ludo makes the most of his marginalized position and manages to exact payments from the congregation, he defines begging itself as an exclusive trade over which he has special prerogative. One fisherman who tells Ker-Orr about Ludo compares him to “a blind sailor, an Englishman” who, stranded in Bangkok, “would not beg from the black people” (Lewis, Soldier 63). Ludo’s “disgusting remark” about women, the content of which the reader never learns, contributes to the glimpse of Ludo’s narrow-minded egotism. The droll English sailor implicitly links Ludo’s exploits in Rot to colonial expansion. And just like the integrity of the empire is shaken, and British colonialism at the beginning of its decline, Ludo’s power over the town of Rot is beginning to disintegrate.

As the beggar draws his power from mysticism and superstition (like the philanthropic state itself in Lewis’s view), Ludo eventually falls victim to the very same mysticism and superstition that have taken hold over everyone in the village including the hero-narrator. The cause of his death remains unclear: perhaps he dies of indigestion; perhaps “the boy has poisoned him;” or “[p]erhaps [the narrator] had put [himself] in the position of the Ankou—even unseen as [he] was, a foreigner and, so, ultimately dangerous—by mentioning the Ankou, with which he was evidently familiar” (Lewis, Soldier 67). Ludo’s death is not tragic as he is already a mere

83 Daniel Schenker has argued that “Ker-Orr’s moment of victory over [Ludo] is also a moment of apostolic succession... By apparently ‘killing’ him, he takes on his powers. But, like Ludo, Ker-Orr will not finally avoid death by displacing grotesquely carved fetishes into the path of the Juggernaut, or by playing the Juggernaut himself” (Qtd. in Edwards 34).
shell. His blind face is a mask that does not express thoughts; “it looked the blindest part of his body, and perhaps the deadest, from which all the functions of a living face had gone.” Yet in spite of its “deadness,” the face of the beggar, devoid of thought like “an internal organ,” is “a health chart” of sick and even “sicklier shade” (65). The description of Ludo’s final illness seems to suggest that Lewis saw him as a commentary on modern liberalism, on its illness, and on its decline.

**The Art of Being Ruled**

Like the fictional story “The Death of the Ankou,” Lewis’s 1926 political writings *The Art of Being Ruled* explicitly discuss modern society under the hypnosis of welfare, consumerism, and the corporate state. Lewis saw men and women standardized, “drugged into a state of anaesthesia” (*Art* 147) by modern class politics, sex politics; men and women turned into “puppets” and “automata” by “education and suggestion, the imposition of the will of the ruler through the press and other publicity channels. So “democratic” government is far more effective than subjugation by physical conquest” (106). Lewis believed that he lived in such a mass society already in the third decade of the twentieth century; and even though he did not put the blame for the corrosion of liberty exclusively on ‘big business’ or the centralized welfare state, it is clear from *The Art of Being Ruled* that the lack of freedom has to do with the disempowerment of the individual (man) by the comprehensive system of state and corporate services packaged under the cover of universal benevolence.

Like Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Lewis claimed that instead of real politics and public participation the citizens of his day were encouraged to
amuse themselves at “the salon or the playing field or dance-hall” (Art 145). As concerns about “the private” (health, minimum wage, standard of living) took center stage, politicians found themselves less and less free to govern according to their principles and more and more puppets of contemporary corporate regimes.84 The government that concerned itself with providing its citizens with leisure activities and venues such as a game of tennis, a salon, a playing field, or a dance-hall also took it upon itself to ensure that they were cared and provided for in their old age and during periods of unemployment; it distributed milk to schoolchildren, worried about the health of the nation, regulated working hours and minimum wages. These concerns had originally been the domain of the private, and the concern of the family.

In Part IV, entitled “Vulgarization and Political Decay,” Lewis talks about the destruction of the family by the rising welfare state. In a communist state, for instance, ‘children [are] taken from the parents at birth to a public crèche, the state becoming the ‘bread-winner’ and the effective center of authority or All-father, as it were” (Art 151). Something similar is happening in Western democracies, too, as people become engrossed in trivial and infantile activities. He goes so far as to propose that society today is a gigantic kindergarten, and men and women live in a “Peter Pan world.” The erosion of democracy happens under the “sheltering wing” of a Zeitgeist that remains above all "a true benefactor” (166).

84 “The power of money and ‘big business’ has gradually withdrawn all initiative from individual males. Bourgeois, or parliamentary politics is today such a thin camouflage—so harassed, so pointless and discredited—the puppets have so little executive power (Lord Curzon is reported to have said shortly before he died, for example, that he had not enough ‘power’ to send a messenger across Whitehall), that politics no longer afford an outlet for energy comparable for a moment with the opportunities of game of tennis or a flirtation. Hence everyone, ambitious in other ways or not, is sent indiscriminately to the salon or the playing field or dance-hall, and that is the only real battlefield left for masculine and feminine ambition. ‘Private’ life, in short, has taken the place of ‘public’ life” (Lewis, Art 145).
Even though he describes the authoritarian state as an “All-father state,” Lewis tends
to describe modern society as both childish and feminine. In modern society, we are all either in
kindergarten or in the feminine *salon*; we play sports and receive slaps if we misbehave:

> the luxurious, hand-to-mouth, capitalo-revolutionary society of the interregnum
> has installed itself in the nursery…There they eat bread and jam round [the
> shadow of “the mechanical doll” or “puppet,” their “idol”] dressed in short print
> frocks and bibs, sit in demure and silent rows, while one dressed as a martinet
> scolds them, and then administers shuddering fesseés. With costly toys, pranks,
> and strictly juvenile games, they conform to the object of their devotion, and do
> nothing inappropriate in its presence. (Lewis, *Art* 136)

Hobson’s (*Tarr*), Rymer’s (“The Bishop’s Fool”), and Ludo’s (“The Death of the Ankou”) boyishness I discussed above are all fictional expressions of the infantilization that (feminized)
philanthropy incurs. Lewis is suspicious of the feminine as well as of altruism; for him the place
of women is in the private sphere and the effeminization of public life is a negative development,
a symbol of all that is wrong with modern democracy. His conservative gender rhetoric plays a
key role in his attempt to discredit (state or business) patronage.

Lewis’s discussion of the public and the private in *The Art of Being Ruled* culminates in a
description of a utopian society where power is concealed and its brutality is hidden under “its
final butterfly transformations” (146). Even though Lewis condemns the feminization of the

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85 In *Wyndham Lewis and Western Man*, David Ayers points out the importance of education in Lewis’s understanding of capitalist society: “Lewis was fond of quoting Trotsky to the effect that ‘The education of the young is for us a question of life and death’. His analysis of the essentially educationalist nature of the capitalist state—and also of the Communist state which Lewis viewed as an extension of capitalism—is given in *The Art of Being Ruled* (*ABR*, 110-12). ‘So that we call conventionally the *capitalist state* is truly an *educationalist state*’, declares Lewis, and the basis of this is essentially technological, man become not only the extension of the factory machine, but of the state machinery: ‘The contemporary European or American is a part of a broadcasting set, a necessary part of its machinery. Or he is gradually made into a newspaper reader, it could be said, rather than a citizen’” (Ayers, 112-3).
public sphere in *The Art of Being Ruled*, he paints a fascinating picture of the near future when a consumer society of motorcars and magical large pearls is going to succeed the society of mass politics, mass benevolence, National Insurance and unemployment acts, the popular press, feminism, and syndicalism. This society of the future is suspect, ruled by powers of “the occult.” But it is also a society of affluence where “[e]normous pearls will collect on the necks of ladies” (146). This is a very striking picture in spite of Lewis’s disapproval of modern life:

> The *results* will appear, however, in social life. Enormous pearls will collect on the necks of ladies, reaching their necks *from nowhere*—for it is unlikely that wealth will be explicit. All the ponderable forces of the world will be occult, and only flower mysteriously in social phenomena such as pearls and motorcars. As though waited on by genii, favoured persons will flourish in social life, and their ‘power’ (instead of revealing its larva stages to the world, and parading its vermiform ‘public’ shape in politics and industry) will appear in its final butterfly transformations as a social phenomenon. (Lewis, *Art* 146)

Lewis does not trust this ‘magical’ stage of social evolution, yet he admits that “[w]hat at least will be gained for the moment is that all the decaying and unsightly publicity of *imperfect* power will disappear” (146), thus admitting somewhat to the positive effects of the entry of the private into public life.

**Severity and Generosity in *Tarr* (1918)**

In his first novel *Tarr*, Lewis discusses the predicament of the individual artist caught between the private sphere (women, marriage, family, emotions) and the public sphere (his true vocation as a painter of severe, geometric forms that stand above morality and ordinary life). Paul Peppis has argued that *Tarr* is a satire that exposes the pretenses of modernist individualism. As Peppis points out, the protagonist of the novel Frederick Tarr, far from being
a hardened self, is “exposed as a deeply insecure and conflicted young man, unsure of his desires, attracted to the allure of bourgeois-bohemianism, incapable of separating himself from Bertha” (Peppis 142). While I agree with Peppis’s insight, I am going to explore how Frederick Tarr’s inescapable involvement with the concrete inevitably takes the form of pity, charity, generosity, and other “feminine,” private emotions. Despite his desire for independence, Tarr remains embroiled in the messiness of life and fascinated with the sentimental, feminine side of modernity he so virulently attacks.

As early as the first chapter (“Overture”), Wyndham Lewis associates charity and care for the poor with sentimentality and femininity, qualities Tarr despises. (We see Tarr’s low opinion of bourgeois-bohemian solidarity with poverty in his violent reaction to Hobson’s pretended shabbiness.) Yet this disgust with philanthropic pretenses does not prevent Tarr from continuing his involvement with his bourgeois-bohemian fiancée Bertha Lunken. Bertha prides herself on her generosity; she flatters herself that she is kind, giving, self-sacrificing, and generous to Tarr, of whom she is even ready to let go in the name of love. Frederick sees through the shallowness of her pity and self-pity and dreams of leaving her in order to be a true artist; however, he always returns to this kind, altruistic, generous fiancée.

Bertha is in love with her image of herself as the essential woman, and her deeply “private” politics of philanthropy prove a trap for both herself and Frederick. She is “phenomenally kind” (Lewis, Tarr 38), and “has a nice healthy penchant for self-immolation.” Tarr compares Bertha to a painting, an icon that exacts daily devotion, a portrait of the Gioconda. As an “exceptional woman,—‘spiritual woman—‘noble soul,’” Bertha draws him away from his work, from art: “[i]f you married one of them, out of pity, you would have to support the eternal grin of a Gioconda fixed complacently on you at all hours of the day, the pretensions of a piece
of canvas that had sold for thirty thousand dollars” (40). Yet by the end of the novel, he is not only engaged but married to Bertha, presumably from a sense of duty and in order to legitimize her child by another man. His pretended indifference is only a foil for his lasting devotion to an “exceptional woman,--‘spiritual woman—‘noble soul’” (40).

Lewis represents woman’s ideal of love and charity as both hypocritical and entrapping, mostly for the woman herself. Bertha’s compassion is not merely reserved for her romantic involvements; it extends to her philosophy of pity and charity for the poor and the suffering: “She is genial and fond of a gross pleasantry, very near to ‘the people’—‘le peuple,’ as she says, purringly and pityingly” (Lewis, Tarr 39). Her love for Tarr, for the poor, and for the undeserving eventually lead her into the arms of Tarr’s violent doppelgänger, Otto Kreisler. Having generously relinquished Tarr, Bertha throws herself into ‘helping’ Kreisler who “had awoken her pity by his miserable and starved appearance” (189). At the same time, she can not genuinely love Kreisler; “a prodigality and profusion of self-sacrifice [are] offered to [Bertha] in the person of Kreisler” only because Kreisler is “a somebody else who [is] at the same time nobody, and who would evaporate and leave no trace the moment he had served his purpose” (143). In fact, Bertha is using Kreisler as a publicity device to gain the attention and pity of her German friends, and she uses him to weave a complex narrative in which she is the heroine: “Her meeting Kreisler at present depended for its reasonableness and existence even on the ‘hunger’ theory; or, if that should fail, something equally touching and primitive” (184). In fact, Kreisler’s ennui stems not from a sensitive and suffering soul but from his frustrated love for the independent, unsentimental Anastasya. Bertha’s approach to Kreisler with the words “‘You are suffering! I know you are suffering. I wish I could do something for you. Can not I?’” (141)—
this only serves as a prelude to a sexual encounter, an encounter that demeans Bertha and leaves her pregnant with the despised pseudo-artist’s child.

Tarr prides himself on being different from Kreisler, and separated from the sexual, bodily, emotional, and otherwise private messes of life, but his actions throw doubt upon Tarr’s artistic individualism and his very theory of the radical separation of art and life. For Tarr, Kreisler is one of those people who mistake life for art: “The nearest the general run of men can get to Art is Action. Real, bustling, bloody action is what they want! Sex is their form of art: the battle of existence in enterprise, Commerce, is their picture” (Lewis, Tarr 302). The protagonist hopes to be emancipated through “the bunch of his [artistic] gifts,” (30); he aspires to be elevated above sex and love for woman into abstraction, asceticism, “invariable severity” (30). At the same time, just like Kreisler, Tarr is attracted to Anastasya and emotionally involved with Bertha, a pattern of behavior that the epilogue tells us will last throughout his life.

If Bertha’s philanthropic motives are an elaborately disguised self-interest, Tarr’s self-interest resembles concealed philanthropy. Though opposed to philanthropic pretensions, Tarr invariably returns Bertha’s generosity. He cannot leave her defenseless; he attempts to protect her from Kreisler’s violent sexuality; and, eventually, he marries her to legitimize Kreisler’s child. Confronted by Anastasya who believes that Tarr has given Kreisler’s child what he should have kept for his own, he says:

Sentimentality!—sentimentality!-cannot we, you and I, afford to give Bertha that? Sentimentality!-What an absurd word that is with its fierce use in our poor modern hands!-What does it mean? Has life become such an affair of economic calculation that men are too timid to allow themselves any complicated pleasures? –Where there is abundance you can afford waste. (Lewis, Tarr 319)
It is ironic that at the end of the novel Tarr gives Bertha what he at first considers a very mean gift: “For a moment it occurred to him to go back and offer marriage: It was about all he had to offer. He was ashamed of his only gift!” (Lewis, *Tarr* 74). Despite Tarr’s rationalization of his action as a calculation (he relies on the fact that this is Kreisler’s child as “an earnest of the altruistic origin of the action not being forgotten”), he feels drawn to the exuberance and waste of emotion, sentimentality, and generosity (319).

As Tarr betrays his own theory of geometric and severe art, he comes closer to embracing his own involvement with the private life of (feminine) emotions and the body. He even reasons eventually that art is not so separated from creative chaos, confusion, and exuberant philanthropic gestures. In the beginning, Tarr argues that art is pure form (as opposed to matter), “the God, or soul…of man” (Lewis, *Tarr* 298). It has a hard, permanent, uncompromising quality: “[t]he shell of the tortoise, the plumage of a bird, makes these animals approach nearer to art. Soft, quivering and quick flesh is as far from art as an object can be.” Art is egoistical, not sentimental: it is characterized by “absence of soul, in the sentimental human sense;” it is “something impelled like an independent machine by a little egoistic fire inside [that] lives soullessly and deadly by its frontal lines and masses (299-300). However, eventually Tarr changes his idea about the radical separation of art and life and allows for a corporeal and feminine element in it; he even claims that “The birth of a work of art is as dirty as that of a baby” (236).

By allowing for the “crudity in an individual’s composition” and the “stupidity and formlessness” of real life, Tarr fails as a radical individualist and as an enemy of the (feminine) body but comes closer to accepting the sentimental excess and the exuberance of the gift. His art- as-birth comparison suggests that in creating the work of art, the painter and poet partakes of
the feminine and the abject. To create one “must praise chaos and filth” as well as “virtue, self-sacrifice, and graceful behaviour” (Lewis, Tarr 236). In Tarr’s relationship with Bertha, his final gift to her (the gift of marriage) is not so much a repayment of his debt on her generosity but a creative act performed out of exuberance and in praise of waste, excess, and abundance, what Derrida calls the “essential excess of the gift” (Derrida, Given Time 10).

Abject Bodies and Abject Relationships in Childermass

The public and the private, the feminine and the masculine, altruism and cruelty, art and life are inextricably intermixed in Lewis’s archetypal pair, or what Frederic Jameson called the “agon” or the “pseudo-couple.” In Childermass, for example, it is this vacillation between these opposites that holds Satters and Pullman, the agonistic characters, together. Childermass demonstrates that not only does Lewis not dispense with philanthropy, the feminine, the private, and the body but that he shows them to be an indispensable part of the chaos of humanity and of the dynamic of the agon pair.

The extent to which Lewis was ultimately unable (or unwilling) to resolve the tensions between philanthropy and individualism, kindness and cruelty is evident from the actions of this archetypal agonistic couple in his later work Childermass. In Fables of Aggression, Frederic Jameson traces aggressivity to what he argues is the blueprint of Lewis’ novelistic technique, the presence of the agon form, of two by turn antagonistic and mutually supportive characters; for

86 “[T]he agon form [is] now hypostatized in the unity of the couple itself. Whatever Pulley or Satters may turn into individually, their relationship to each other remains and provides a stable system of coordinates to which the changes may be pegged: thus Satters becomes a baby, an old man, a navvy, a cockney soldier, a vamp, and a public school boy in rapid succession; yet Pullman, altering his own age and identity to follow suit, thereby continues to perceive him as “the same”; “the time- and class-scales in which they hang in reciprocal action are oscillating violently, as they rush up and down through neighbouring dimensions they sight each other only imperfectly” (Jameson 53).
Jameson, “[the agon] expresses the rage and frustration of the fragmented subject at the chains that implacably bind it to its other and its mirror image” (Jameson 61).87

Yet in Childermass, the pairing of Satters and Pullman is accomplished as much through philanthropy as through agonism. In the liminal space between life and heaven/hell, the two schoolfellows take a journey meant to educate the newly arrived Satters about the afterlife. Pullman, who in real life treated Satters as his public school flunkey (servant), is now a “model Abigail”88, tenderly removing obstacles from Satters’ way and making his tentative and fumbling steps more secure:

A small grip, with a metallic glitter of trickling water like iron-filings flowing in the bottom of its parched channel, holds up or confuses Satters as to its true width. He stands deciding if it is really to be leaped or not: at once the weaker vessel is assisted over it by way of a convenient stone, without noticing how he passed it, so discreet was the kind help. A rusty finger from the broken stave of a cask claws and catches in Satters’ stocking. Pullman, model Abigail, kneels down and removes it. Satters acquiesces, measuring the busy figure with bovine eyes, he does not see what it is doing. (Lewis, Childermass 26-7)

87 “Aggressivity in Lewis is therefore not some private characteristic of the novelist which diverts the narrative into the service of its own extrinsic gratification: it is structurally inherent in the agon itself, in that utterly distinct from Hegelian or dialectical negativity, and expresses the rage and frustration of the fragmented subject at the chains that implacably bind it to its other and its mirror image” (Jameson 61).

88 The beautiful and wise Abigail prevents bloodshed in her husband Nabal’s household by bringing gifts to King David’s men (1 Samuel 25:25). “Abigail: in the Old Testament, the wife of Nabal of southern Judah, on whose death she became one of the first wives of David (1 Samuel 25) and the mother of his son Chileab. The name Abigail was also borne by David's sister (1 Chronicles 2:16), who was the mother of Amasa, commander of the army of Absalom. From the former (self-styled “handmaid”; 1 Samuel 25:25) is derived the colloquial use of the word for a waiting woman” ("Abigail." Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2005. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online. 27 Aug. 2005 <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9003354>).
Later in the same text, Pullman is compared to a governess; both references (to Abigail, a waiting woman, a wise handmaiden) and to a governess (a “masterful Miss Pullman” [Lewis, *Childermass* 21]) point to feminine, altruistic, and nurturing roles. At one instance during their journey, Pullman has Satters’ head in his lap; he helps Satters dress; he teaches him to walk. Satters remarks that Pulley’s help is a god-sent gift to him: “So long as you’re with me I shall be all right. I sort of feel you were sent me Pulley it’s absurd I know” (30-31). The dependence that Satters feels around Pullman is matched only by Pullman’s compulsion to protect him.

Pullman’s philanthropy and altruism, however, are presented as obscure reflexes. Neither character has control over altruistic or agonistic behavior; both vacillate infinitely between the two. Pullman’s actions, philanthropic or otherwise, conform to his own definition of the denizens of afterlife as “behaviourist machines addressed to a static millennium of suffering for purposes of purification” (Lewis, *Childermass* 78). Having left his obstinate companion helpless in the desert heat, Pullman finds himself obliged by obscure forces to come back. Compassion comes to Pullman as a sense of lack, the sense of “having left something in the compartment of the train.” He feels “the ill-defined sense of loss. What is this missing object really? he gropes through all his senses very fusssed; continually his mind returns to the large staring uncouth bulk of his friend even Satters: that is not what is missing really? Indeed it must be though, since it is always back to that tiresome object that his mind is led” (117). Yet the relationship of Satter and Pullman (as well as their relationship to the peculiar afterworld of *Childermass*) constantly points towards something not so much machine-like as Frankenstein’s monster, physiological, and abject.
Satters’ claim to Pullman’s help comes from his helpless, infant-like condition. His smell is “the sticky vegetable odour of small babies in a close room, a distillation of the secretions and excrements of the earliest human life” (Lewis, *Childermass* 16). He is impulsive, fickle, manipulative, petulant, grateful, and aggressive by turns, “a perfectly ghastly baby” (31). His tentative grasp on his new condition and his confused feelings towards Pullman are expressed in a baby-like, Steinian stammer that underscores his abject bodily and linguistic helplessness:

Satters day-dreams and stares and steins while he clings to his new-found instrument for all he’s worth. Pulley has been most terribly helpful and kind there’s no use excusing himself Pulley has been most terribly helpful and kind—most terribly helpful and he’s been kind. He’s been most terribly kind and helpful, there are two things, he’s been most kind he’s been terribly helpful, he’s kind he can’t help being—he’s terribly. He’s been most fearfully tiresome when he likes and he’s been tiresome too but who doesn’t when they are not? He has been most terribly. But who does ever? Oh I don’t know! There can be no mistake about it all’s not on one side when it’s not all smooth sailing it shouldn’t be—there are one-sidedhousetops—brickholds and there are mutual arrangements not one-sided I mean they are mutual. That is his or he should say theirs. He’s sure it was so. He’s been terribly kind and helpful. Every fellow’s not then in the camp he’s sure this is the first. One doesn’t know when, to be well off. As well off. (Lewis, *Childermass* 44)

If in *Time and Western Man* Lewis declares the work of Gertrude Stein romantic, unreal, and dead (*Time* 63-4), in *Childermass* he uses a parody of her style to underscore the unreality, romanticism, and decay of philanthropy. In the course of several repetitions and only in a few pages, Satters’ litany of gratitude reveals a linguistic instability; then, from “one who has been terribly helpful and kind,” Pullman turns into “a hateful beast” (Lewis, *Childermass* 53) while at the same time Satters raises himself to the heights of philanthropic power: “He’s been terribly kind and in some ways most helpful he really has been most terribly helpful and kind to Pulley,
who is selfish he is hateful. Were he any one else. It is his good nature” (54). We can infer from Satters’ stream of consciousness a concept of kindness in transition, a kindness that is no longer a stable character trait but changes hands (most character traits and even physical characteristics are literally temporal in the novel). The linguistic instability also suggests that philanthropy’s narrative can no longer be reliably recorded in (or committed to) memory.

Yet Satters’ “steining,” like Satters’ baby smell, underscores a sort of excess and abundance, an abundance that is abject, perverse, yet all-pervasive. In the fantastic world of *Childermass*, Satter’s grateful nudge imparts to Pullman a sense of parturition (Lewis, *Childermass* 81); his bodily and emotional needs transform Pullman into a male nurse, a figure that assumes the attitudes of both creation and caring:

> The vomiting of heavy sobs at last decreases in intensity. Pushing back the hair from the face, massaging gently either temple, the amateur male-nurse squats in a Buddha-lethargy, all this chaos subsiding upon his lap. The last sigh grumbles out, the mass is still. Pullman reigns sightless over the land of Nod, his small fingers stuck into the damp coarse curls, like an absent-minded creator whose craftsman’s fingers have sunk into the wet clay he has been kneading into a man. (Lewis, *Childermass* 64)

As in *Tarr*, creation presupposes the abject; the artist stands on a par with the mother. And altruism itself, like much of the debates surrounding philanthropy and welfare at the time, is rooted in the body with its vomiting, stammering, reflexive and physiological functions. The fact that the relationship between Satters and Pullman is only possible as an abject excess of altruism, gratitude, and cruelty suggests that in spite of Lewis’s conservative assessment of the “new philanthropy” and of the democratic inclusivity of his age, this modernist author gave a prominent place to the private body and its excesses in his work.
Conclusion

*Left Wing Over Europe, The Art of Being Ruled,* and *The Wild Body* attack communism, liberalism, and alms-giving as both too scientific and mechanical constructions of an occult utopia and as outdated remnants of traditional religion. Yet philanthropy is indispensable for Lewis’s radical politics. It is particularly useful in constituting and buttressing his tough masculine image and creating his masculine persona; it is indispensable in his agon pair. In the little magazines he edited (*The Enemy* and *Blast*), Lewis challenged the hypocrisy of benevolence in the vein of Dora Marsden’s radical individualism and claimed for himself the role of the “smack in the eye” philanthropist. Yet his “individualist” characters, Tarr, Pullman, Satters are equally trapped by violence and benevolence.
Ernest Hemingway and the “New” Philanthropy

In his 1939 book *Adventures in Giving*, the American progressive reformer and philanthropist William H. Matthews writes that “respect for people is the first essential to successful living and working with them” (vii). In “summing up half a century of work” (vii), he emphasizes the relational aspects of philanthropy and the importance of establishing a personal connection between rich and poor, “privileged” and “underprivileged,” givers and beneficiaries. The introduction to the book advises that “the reader will look in vain in these pages for abstract theory or for universal solvents for social and economic problems. But he will find, revealed, a man who has discovered a method of approaching these problems—a method springing from human contacts, and based upon a common denominator in every human situation” (xv). Matthews himself hopes that “grace of giving” would be taught at every school of social work and that the most important principle of giving is “the identification of ourselves with the people to whom we would give”:

With the giving of material things I have had much to do. Speaking generally, I have never thought it important except as a means to an end, to the end that it gave larger chance for the individual to live his life in his own best way. I have always believed that the way I gave was of larger moment than what I gave. As a man gives, so shall he most likely accomplish the purpose he had in giving. *Grace of giving*, whether it be of money or of some less tangible service, is an art that should be taught diligently in the schools of social work, particularly in those departments that have to do with the training of family case workers of all the scientific principles with which giving is sometimes surrounded, there is no one
more important than the identification of ourselves with the people to whom we would give. (Matthews 245-6)

As head of the Emergency Work Bureau, a precursor of the WPA during the New Deal, the first president of the Board of Child Welfare, and an investigator of labor conditions in the mills of the United States Steel Corporation (in addition to his settlement work), Matthews had the rare experience of straddling two eras in philanthropy in the United States. As head of the Emergency Work Bureau alone, under the auspices of the Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor, Matthews directed the spending of 28 to 30 million dollars in relief wages. He witnessed the development of “scientific methods” of philanthropy and, during the devastating years of the Depression, became a convert to “The Newer Conception of Social Work” (Matthews 69) that opened the doors to Unemployment insurance, the Wagner Act, and the Social Security Act in the 1930s.

Matthews’ interest in grace of giving and in what he calls courage in living (247) of the destitute clearly falls into the larger twentieth century paradigm of questioning philanthropy and its practices. In this, he joins a conversation shared by many of his American contemporaries, including modernist writers such as Hemingway. Grace and courage, two concepts familiar to Hemingway readers and critics, inhere in the lives of Hemingway’s stoical characters. Like Matthews, Hemingway invites his reader to identify with the bodily suffering and spiritual breaking of others, to viscerally observe and respond to the bare truths about wounding, death, childbirth, war, the corrida. Indeed, while his writings extol brave, manly, and stoical characters, who appear to be the antithesis of philanthropic and altruistic personae, his works are densely populated with the disturbing and inglorious deaths of disemboweled horses, inexperienced and old toreros, criminals at their executions, deserting soldiers, and childbearing mothers. In his
objective descriptions of the abject body and the loss of bodily control and virility, Ernest Hemingway indirectly challenges and reworks parochial notions of philanthropy, identification with others, the courage of living, and the notion of giving with grace.

**Whimsical Philanthropy: *A Moveable Feast***

Matthews’ liking and admiration for destitute mothers and unemployed workers clearly show in his work relief stories from the twenties and thirties of the last century; what makes this human suffering bearable is his understanding of their “courage in living”: “The philosophy of courage in living, as expounded by William James, is richly exemplified in the lives of the poor” whom Matthews had “never been interested in teaching ... how to live on the lowest subsistence budget” (Matthews 247-8). Matthews’ respect for the worth of others is the ground on which he rejects the patronage and tyranny of social workers. Often in his memoir he refers to the deleterious effects of their meddling in poor people’s lives: “Heaven forbid that such punishment is inflicted upon [unemployed single women]! What they need is a chance to work at decent wages, rather than to be analyzed and dissected by social workers. Better that the analyzing and dissecting be directed at ‘the economic and social factors’ that have produced the conditions under which these jobless women suffer” (202).

To the impersonality of social work he juxtaposes the joys of whimsical and “clandestine” giving (Matthews 167). One of his “Clandestine Givers” is the famous actor Francis Wilson who in 1916 invited lonely elderly people to dinner on Christmas Eve. Pretending that the master of the house had been unexpectedly called on business, he dressed like his own butler and entertained his guests with songs, piano playing, dancing, and parts of plays
Wilson derived considerable satisfaction from his performance when “[o]ne old man told stories and became inarticulate with laughter over his own jokes long before he got to the end” and “[a]n old lady danced with ‘the butler’ and told him he was almost as good as a professional” (160). Another “Clandestine Giver” operated under the pseudonym “Jedediah Tingle,” in real life a “tall, wind-tanned, athletic, vibrant man” (166). He “wanted to know of persons to whom the pinch of poverty meant more suffering than merely that of an empty stomach,” particularly “elderly people, poor in worldly goods but rich in things of the spirit.” To such persons ‘Jedediah’ sent gifts accompanied with “a most charmingly phrased and gracious letter” (167). He continued this “clandestine correspondence” to his death.

In his posthumously published memoir of the Paris years, *A Moveable Feast*, Hemingway discusses similar transformations of philanthropy into whimsical, playful, graceful giving. The pages of the memoir are populated with charitable characters like Ezra Pound and Sylvia Beach, whose generosity to artists is remembered fondly and appreciatively. Sylvia Beach, owner of the Shakespeare and Company bookstore and lending library, gives Hemingway books on trust, loans him money, listens to his story about his financial troubles, advises him to eat and take care of himself, and invites him and his wife for dinner when she knows they do not have enough money for a decent meal. Her gift is not binding, expected, or calculating: “There was not reason for her to trust me. She did not know me and the address I had given her, 74 rue Cardinal Lemoine, could not have been a poorer one. But she was delightful and charming and welcoming and behind her, as high as the wall and stretching out into the back room which gave onto the inner court of the building, were shelves and shelves and shelves of the wealth of the library” (Hemingway, *Feast* 35–6). Such examples of disinterested support contrast with the charity of “the good, the attractive, the charming, the soon-beloved, the generous, the
understanding rich” who “leave everything deader than the roots of any grass Attila’s horses’
hooves have ever scoured” (Hemingway, *Feast* 208).

Another whimsical and saintly benefactor of writers and poets and painters is Ezra
Pound. One of the chapters of *A Moveable Feast* is entitled “Ezra Pound and His Bel Esprit.”
The first sentence of the section reads, “Ezra Pound was always a good friend and he was always
doing things for people” (Hemingway, *Feast* 107). He is “the most generous writer I have ever
known and the most disinterested” (110). Like Jedediah Tingle, Pound likes to help people that
are rich in things of the spirit: “poets, painters, sculptors, and prose writers that he believed in”
but also “he would help anyone whether he believed in them or not if they were in trouble”
(110). Hemingway regards Pound as “kinder and more Christian about people than [he] was”
and “a sort of saint” (108).

Hemingway’s own involvement with Pound’s philanthropy is related as a humorous
parallel to Pound’s Quixotic schemes. At the time, Pound is worried about T.S. Eliot, who has to
work in a bank in London and has “insufficient time and bad hours to function as a poet”
(Hemingway, *Feast* 110). With the help of Natalie Barney, a rich American woman and
patroness of the arts, Ezra starts the Bel Esprit initiative to raise money for T.S. Eliot.
Hemingway “campaign[s] energetically” (111) though somewhat confusingly to get “Major
Eliot” out of the bank, “pretending to confuse [T.S. Eliot] with Major Douglas an economist
about whose ideas Ezra was very enthusiastic” (111). We also learn that the forgone opportunity
to help caused disappointment as the showiness of the grandiose gesture was no longer a
possibility: “It was always a disappointment to me that we had not been able to get the Major out
of the bank by Bel Esprit alone, as in my dreams I had pictured him as coming, perhaps, to live
in the small Greek temple and that maybe I could go with Ezra when we would drop in to crown
him with laurel.” In the same flippant vein, he continues, “I knew where there was fine laurel that I could gather, riding out on my bicycle to get it, and I thought we would crown him any time he felt lonesome or any time Ezra had gone over the manuscript or the proofs of another big poem like *The Waste Land*” (112). In spite of his eccentricities, Hemingway keeps his commitments as a campaigner, at least until Eliot gets the Dial award.

Hemingway’s philanthropy turns out to be morally ambiguous and marks a break with Victorian respectability. When Eliot no longer needs the Bel Esprit money, Hemingway gambles the sum he has earmarked for the fund on horse races; he claims that “[t]he whole thing turned out badly for me morally” (Hemingway, *Feast* 112). The narrator says, “I would have been happier if the amount of the [lost] wager had gone to Bel Esprit which was no longer existent. But I comforted myself that with those wagers which had prospered I could have contributed much more to Bel Esprit than was my original intention” (113). Just like Matthews, Hemingway privileges the philanthropic intention, the relationship with another, over the outcome or the practicality of the philanthropic scheme. In a related vein, Lieutenant Henry and Emilio the barman in *Farewell to Arms* celebrate a gift that was promised and never received. With good-natured bantering they pretend that the American pipe-tobacco Emilio wanted has been delivered: “‘Did you ever get the tobacco I sent?’ ‘Yes. Didn’t you get my card?’” (244). In spite of the failure of this transaction, Emilio remains Frederic’s loyal friend; it is because of his warning and assistance that Frederic, who has deserted from the Italian army, escapes arrest and maybe death.

*A Moveable Feast* not only critiques the moral ambiguity of giving as a transaction but also gives a voice to the supposedly grateful and silent beneficiary. In a section entitled “An Agent of Evil,” Ralph Cheever Dunning, a poet and an opium addict, violently rejects the
philanthropic jar of supposed opium. At Ezra Pound’s request, Hemingway promises to keep a jar of opium and give it to Dunning “in any true emergency” (Hemingway, Feast 144). We learn about Pound’s earnest intentions: how he stayed with Dunning “waiting for death to come;” how “the matter was put in the hands of a physician and Dunning was taken to a private clinic to be disintoxicated;” how Ezra “guaranteed his bills and enlisted the aid of I do not know which lovers of poetry on Dunning’s behalf” (144). We also learn about the dear origins of the jar: “Ezra had bought it from an Indian chief, he said, on the avenue de l’Opéra near the Boulevard des Italiens and it had been very expensive” (143). When the state of emergency presents itself in the form of Ezra’s concierge, pleading for help with Mr. Dunning, who had “climbed to the roof of the studio and refused categorically to come down” (144), Hemingway takes the jar of “alleged opium” (145) to the poet. Dunning, however, reacts unexpectedly to this gift by throwing it at its bearer, then continuing to aim milk bottles at Hemingway. The jar and the bottles hit Hemingway on the chest and in the back as he inches towards the door under Dunning’s invectives, “You son of a bitch. You bastard.” An angry beneficiary, Dunning shuts the door (145).

This episode is one of many in A Moveable Feast that help to make Hemingway’s point that not only material gifts matter; that the true gifts do not literally change hands. Time and again in his writing the material gift is either transformed into its opposite or it vanishes completely: perhaps the jar did not contain opium, and Ezra was duped by the Indian chief; perhaps “Dunning took [Hemingway] for an agent of evil or of the police;” or perhaps Dunning harbored “an innate dislike of [Hemingway’s] personality (Hemingway, Feast 146). Hemingway stores the jar in an old boot, and it eventually (and inexplicably) disappears. The rejected gift is the occasion for a discussion of poetry between Hemingway and his friend Evan
Shipman. Was Ezra’s philanthropy worth its price? Was “Dunning…as fine a poet as Ezra believed him to be”? Evan Shipman’s answer concerns not generosity but writing, “‘We need more true mystery in our lives, Hem. The completely unambitious writer and the really good unpublished poem are the things we lack most at this time’” (146). Shipman’s comment takes writing as a gift outside of economy; it is only then that the gift and the writing become authentic, a gift that keeps on giving. *A Moveable Feast* suggests on many levels Hemingway’s ambiguity about fame, recognition, and publishing and his preference for the gift that cannot merely be reduced to exchange, for writing that would not become hack work.

The biggest gift of all in the memoir is the city of Paris in the nineteen twenties. For Hemingway and American expatriate writers, Paris brings a variety of gifts including food, romance, and art. Sitting in “a pleasant café, warm and clean and friendly,” the young Hemingway sees a girl at a nearby table, “very pretty with a face fresh as a newly minted coin if they minted coins in smooth flesh with rain-freshened skin, and […] hair […] black as a crow’s wing and cut sharply and diagonally across her cheek” (Hemingway, *Feast* 5). He looks at her while he is writing and her beauty excites him (like Leopold Bloom in Joyce’s *Ulysses* is excited by the freshness of Nausicaa). When he finishes his story, he realizes that the girl is gone, though the gift of her beauty is no less in his possession: “I’ve seen you, beauty, and you belong to me now, whoever you are waiting for and if I never see you again…You belong to me and all Paris belongs to me and I belong to this notebook and this pencil” (6). This passage from the

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89 Also see Hemingway’s short story “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” for a description of space, “light … and a certain cleanliness and order” as gifts for “all those who need a light for the night” (*Short Stories* 382-3). As the two waiters disagree about staying late at the café, the text seems to suggest that the meaning of the “clean, well-lighted place” as gift is not universally available but subjective.
first story in *A Moveable Feast*, “A Good Café on the Place St.-Michel” brings together the themes of the various gifts later related in the text: work, Paris, romance.

Literally and metaphorically, Paris is “a moveable feast,” a feast that is all the more authentic because it is inexhaustible. Here the reader encounters the young Hemingway writing in the company of an alcoholic beverage, a cup of coffee, and a good meal, and many friendships and artistic encounters happen in the same sumptuous atmosphere of bars, restaurants, and Parisian coffee shops. Yet Paris also arouses more appetites than it can satisfy. Here a penniless Hemingway carefully dodges tempting bakery shops and restaurants when he cannot afford to buy lunch (Hemingway, *Feast* 69). But even this hunger becomes a precious gift when, in the Luxembourg museum, “all the paintings [and particularly Cezanne’s] were sharpened and clearer and more beautiful if you were belly-empty, hollow-hungry” (69). It is because of and not only in spite of hunger that Hadley and Ernest realize they are “too lucky” to be in love, to be young, to be in Paris (55). For Hemingway it is this paradoxical mixture of hunger and lavishness that produces the discipline necessary for good writing, and good, sinewy writing itself.

Physical and emotional hunger in the text corresponds to the austerity of writing which Hemingway evolves while he is working on his short stories in Paris: “It was a very simple story called “Out of Season” and I had omitted the real end of it which was that the old man hanged himself. This was omitted on my new theory that you could omit anything if you knew that you omitted and the omitted part would strengthen the story and make people feel something more than they understood” (Hemingway, *Feast* 75). These omissions, like gifts that are both present and absent at the same time, mark Hemingway’s mature writing and his future success. Even though one would-be critic calls his writing “too stark,” “too stripped, too lean, too sinewy” (96), what stands out most in Hemingway’s narrative is his satisfaction with the productivity of his
Paris years. To the writer, the best and the most enduring gift of all emerges from the
discipline of his Paris life and from the omissions of his Paris writing.

As a posthumously published memoir *A Moveable Feast* itself is a gift returned: to youth, to the people whom the young Hemingway loved, to his first wife Hadley, to the city of Paris, and to writing itself. It is a small return on the gifts that Paris bestowed, the gifts that kept on giving, according to the author’s own description: “To have come on all this new world of writing, with time to read in a city like Paris where there was a way of living well and working, no matter how poor you were, was like having a great treasure given to you. You could take your treasure with you when you traveled too” (Hemingway, *Feast* 134). The title itself refers to this treasure as a feast, a feast of creativity, exuberant and magical, a true gift; the concluding sentences of the book read, “Paris was always worth it and you received return for whatever you brought to it. But this is how Paris was in the early days when we were very poor and very happy” (211).

**Hemingway’s Soldiers and Mothers: A Farewell to Arms and the Great War**

*Soldiers, Mothers, and American Philanthropy*

Hemingway’s romance between a nurse in a British hospital in Italy and an American lieutenant in the ambulance corps addresses love at a time of war and questions gender expectations and philanthropy. *A Farewell to Arms* forges a comparison between two quintessentially tragic and heroic experiences, the masculine experience of war and the feminine experience of childbirth.
Since the late nineteenth century, soldiers and mothers were two particularly honored categories in the American welfare state; so honored, in fact, that they were awarded federal benefits and pensions, and largely perceived as deserving of their privileges. Works such as Theda Skopol’s *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* and Mink and Solinger’s *Welfare. A Documentary History of US Policy and Politics* document these sentiments.

Skocpol argues that even though the welfare system of the United States did not really develop until the 1930s and the New Deal, an extensive system of veterans’ pensions and mothers benefits was in place since the end of the nineteenth century; this system, she argues, rivaled and outstripped the social security systems established in some European countries during the first two decades of the twentieth century. In the North only, Civil War pensions extended to “over a third of the elderly men” (Skocpol 1) and to many widows and dependents.90 The system of veterans’ pensions was so extensive that “[b]y 1910, about 28 percent of all American men aged 65 or more, more than half a million of them, received federal benefits averaging $189 a year. Over three hundred thousand widows, orphans, and other dependents were also receiving payments from the federal treasury” (Skocpol, 65).

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90 “By the time the elected politicians—especially Republicans—had finished liberalizing eligibility for Civil War pensions, over a third of all the elderly men living in the North, along with quite a few elderly men in other parts of the country and many widows and dependents across the nation, were receiving quarterly payments from the US Pension Bureau. In terms of the large share of the federal budget spent, the hefty proportion of citizens covered, and the relative generosity of the disability and old-age benefits offered, the United States had become a precocious social spending state. Its post-Civil War system of social provision in many respects exceeded what early programs of workingmen’s insurance were giving needy old people or superannuated industrial wage earners in fledgling Western welfare states around the turn of the century” (Skocpol 1-2).
In addition to protecting soldiers, Americans were earnest in their protection of mothers. Skocpol reminds us that “America’s first publicly funded benefits other than military pensions and poor relief were mother’s pensions.” Between 1911 (the year when the Social Security Act was first passed in Great Britain) and 1920, 40 states passed laws to enable needy widowed mothers to receive pensions in order to enable them to take care of their children at home. Four more states passed mothers’ pension laws during the 1920s, and 2 did so in the early 1930s (Skocpol 10). In addition to pensions, “most U.S. states enacted new and tightened restrictions on women’s hours of employment, and many states also passed minimum-wage laws and special safety regulations for women” and, in 1912, the U.S. government established a Children’s Bureau. During the same period, the Sheppard-Towner Infancy and Maternity Protection Act “mandated the creation of federally-subsidized clinics to disseminate healthcare advice to mothers before and after the birth of their babies.” Skocpol calls this “maternalist legislation” in opposition to the paternalist labor legislation passed in the United Kingdom around the same time (317).

Both soldiers and mothers were privileged populations, and public opinion held that they deserved the benefits they got. Also both of these protected constituencies eventually lost considerable public support: veterans’ pensions became a system known for its corruption early in the twentieth century, and welfare mothers became suspect from the 1940s onward, when white and middle-class women left the welfare system to be covered under their husbands’ social security benefits.91 At the First International Congress in America on the Welfare of the Child in

91 In 1939 the Social Security Act was amended to expand coverage to whole families of socially insured workers. The Survivor’s Insurance Program was created, which included benefits for widowed mothers and minor children in the event of a socially insured worker’s death (“A Social Security Program” 77).
1908, Theodore Roosevelt addressed the delegates to emphasize the importance of protecting mothers “so that the race shall increase, and not decrease” (T. Roosevelt 20). He claimed that “the mother is the one supreme asset of national life; she is more important than the successful statesman or businessman or artist or scientist…” (20). In order to make an argument for larger federal contributions to mothers’ pensions, he drew a parallel between the honor, duty, and contribution of mothers and those of soldiers:

I abhor and condemn the man who fails to recognize all his obligations to the woman who does her duty. But the woman who shirks her duty as a wife and mother is just as heartily to be condemned. We despise her as we despise and condemn the man who flinches in battle. A good woman, who does her full duty, is sacred in our eyes; exactly as the brave and patriotic soldier is to be honored above all other men. But the woman who, whether from cowardice, from selfishness, from having a false and vacuous ideal, shirks her duty as wife and mother, earns the right to our contempt, just as does the man who, from any motive, fears to do his duty in battle when the country calls him. (T. Roosevelt 21)

But even as they were honored, mothers were subjected to degrading surveillance procedures in order to obtain and keep their welfare benefits. Mink and Solinger emphasize the similarities between the American early “maternalist” welfare system and the older forms of poor relief: “[g]rants were still abysmally small, welfare agency practices degraded supplicants, and the price of assistance was continuous surveillance.” The surveillance included sexual and family practices and resembled that enacted over female paupers (Mink and Solinger xx). In spite of the efforts of the Federal Bureau of Public Assistance to have exclusionary rules repealed, such practices continued on a local and state level even into the 1930s and 1940s; the Louisiana Mothers’ Pensions Statute of 1939, for instance, stated that in order for her application to be approved, “such a mother must, in the judgment of the parish or the city board of trustees,
be a proper person, physically, mentally, and morally fit to have the care and custody of her child or children” (“Louisiana Mothers’ Pension Statute” 87). In Michigan, ADC mothers had to sign an affidavit stating, “I will not have any male callers coming to my home nor meeting me elsewhere under improper conditions.” Various “suitable home” laws excluded from welfare eligibility “women who had children outside of marriage, or were suspected of having sexual relations while on welfare, or any of a number of other ‘nonconformist’ behaviors“ (Mink and Solinger 90).

_The American Red Cross and the Great War_

The connection between soldiering and mothering, the front and the home front, philanthropy and war, the public and the private transpires in _The Story of the American Red Cross in Italy_ from 1920. The author of the book Charles Bakewell addresses American audiences after the war in order to give account of the way in which his organization spent the generous donations of Americans. He repeatedly draws connections between the war effort and relief work with civilians:

One still thinks of the Red Cross as primarily concerned with relief for the wounded and the sick among the soldiers. This is, however, nowadays but a small part of its activity. There are other wounds besides those made by enemy guns, wounds that reach the entire civilian population. And every soldier at the front is linked by ties of affection to those at home, his mother, his wife, his children. Their wounds are his wounds. If they are neglected his courage is sapped. In a word, this war has brought into prominence the importance of what the Italians call the “inner front” (_il fronte interno_). The army is the nation, not merely the men in the trenches, and the work of the Red Cross must be correspondingly extended. It is its task to heal the wounds on the “inner front.” And here, as with the soldier, the wounds may be of the spirit as well as of the body. (Backwell 36)
As a volunteer ambulance driver during the First World War in Italy, the young Hemingway would have been aware of the complex politics of philanthropy and war. According to his biographers Kenneth S. Lynn and Jeffrey Meyers, Hemingway volunteered as a Red Cross ambulance driver in December 1917 and on or about June 6 1918, he joined his ambulance unit—Section Four—“in the wool manufacturing town of Schio, sixteen miles northwest of Vicenza in the shadow of the limestone peaks of the Dolomites” (Lynn 77). A few weeks later, on the night of July 8, 1918, he rode his bicycle to the trenches on the west bank of the Piave river “to see what he could do for the morale of the men in a forward listening post.” While passing out chocolates in a dugout, he was hit by fragments of a trench mortar shell, an incident that he later described in his novel about war and love, *A Farewell to Arms*.

Biographies of Hemingway typically underscore his courage and his prowess on the battlefield, somewhat in contrast to and at the expense of his actual philanthropic role as an ambulance driver and an officer of the American Red Cross. The tale of Hemingway’s wounding has been much publicized including by the author himself. W.R. Castle, the American Red Cross representative in Italy, told Hemingway’s father that his son had received 237 separate wounds in his legs, and Hemingway himself boasted 227 (Meyers 32). He later added to his story of courage and wounding a somewhat contested tale of being hit by bullets, a tale Lynn considers implausible as no bones in Hemingway’s legs and knees had been shattered (Lynn 83). For his wounds, Hemingway received the Silver Medal of Military Valor from the Italian government. Lynn argues that Hemingway purposefully emphasized the gravity of his wounding to buttress up his masculine image and obviate the fact that he had been passing out cigarettes and chocolates at the time of his injury, a philanthropic work that could have been
construed as woman’s work (Lynn 71). But what Hemingway arguably deemphasized in his biography, he more than amplified in his fiction.

Hemingway’s war novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, narrates the war as seen from the point of view of Red Cross workers: it dwells on the experiences of doctors, nurses, patients, ambulance drivers, bartenders, civilians. It features the bereaved Mrs. Meyers, “a big-busted woman in black satin,” who brings “fine marsala and cakes” and the Boston papers to the wounded soldiers and officers at the British hospital in Milan, “[her] dear boys” (Hemingway, *Farewell* 119). The main plot of the novel follows Frederic Henry, a lieutenant of the ambulance core, from his wounding to his hospital stay in Milan and through his love affair with nurse’s aid Catherine Barkley. Other works also address war and philanthropy; in the short story “A Way You’ll Never Be” a shell-shocked soldier, Nicolo, is sent to uplift the spirit of the troops in a makeshift American uniform. Like Hemingway himself, Nicolo is supposed to carry chocolates, cigarettes, and postcards to the front lines.

Both Bakewell and Hemingway emphasize the importance of philanthropy and the family on the “inner front” of the hostilities. They dwell on the relationship between the soldiers’ loyalty to their country and to their families. Bakewell’s praise for Red Cross work underscores the beneficial effect of relief on both the soldiers’ morale at the front and on the virtue and respectability of women and children at home. Some of the activities of the Red Cross included running ambulance services; providing canteens and rest areas for soldiers; organizing camps for sick and starving Italian children; opening workshops to give employment to soldiers’ wives and to provide clothing for the poor; delivering soldiers’ pay to their families; housing and feeding refugees and prisoners of war; and even distributing money to abet the suffering and save the lives of those in most desperate circumstances. The author reiterates over and over again the
importance of the wellbeing of the families of the soldiers: “It is in fact a truth, borne out from many quarters, that the main cause for desertions from the Italian army has been neither cowardice nor lack of patriotism, but devotion to the family, for which the Italian is noted, and worrying over conditions at home” (Bakewell 62). In one telling story, a soldier married just a few months before the war fears what might happen to his young and pretty wife in his absence. He deserts the army and works for a year to support his wife and child before he decides to give himself up to the authorities (62). In another story, a Red Cross worker reads to an aged mother the letters from her only son at the front who has been absent for six years—and promises to write to his commander to let Amedeo come visit her one last time (173-4). Even though the son is killed at the front soon thereafter, Red Cross workers act as a substitute family and provide the “this suffering old mother who gave her all” with a small check, sympathy and support. On another occasion, three Red Cross nurses march in the pouring rain to place flowers on a soldier’s grave; in this funeral procession, they are consciously “taking the place of the mother, sister and sweetheart” (168). Throughout Bakewell’s book, the Red Cross lightens up the lives of careworn, starving, weary, struggling soldiers and civilians and transforms pinched-faced children into “cheerful chubby babies” (50).

Like Bakewell’s text, Hemingway’s novel *A Farewell to Arms* dwells on the importance of the family and the war, but with quite different conclusions: it argues how philanthropy and the family not only do not support the war effort but also become themselves the casualties of war. Early in the novel, the ambulance drivers, who deplore the war, tell of the retributions against deserters’ families: “Now they have a guard outside [the deserter’s] house with a bayonet and nobody can come to see his mother and father and sisters and his father loses his civil rights and cannot even vote. They are all without law to protect them. Anybody can take their
property” (Hemingway, *Farewell* 49). The vicissitudes of war, of the retreat in particular, are not a suitable place for the young virgins such as the two girls that Bartolomeo takes in his car. Aymo (Bartolomeo) himself, who often takes on feminine and philanthropic tasks such as preparing pasta for his sleeping comrades or giving a ride to two scared and lost girls, dies gratuitously by friendly fire. Like the Italian soldier in Bakewell’s narrative, who deserts in order to support his young wife and child, Lt. Henry in *A Farewell to Arms* feels symbolically “married” to Catherine Barkley and returns to her after his desertion. However, he does not maintain his loyalty to the army or return to the front; and Catherine and her child are not safe behind enemy lines. It is precisely Catherine’s death in childbirth and the death of the baby, choked by a tangled umbilical cord, which underscore the futility and inhumanity of modern warfare. Catherine’s death in childbirth is explicitly associated by the narrator with Aymo’s and possibly Rinaldi’s: “That is what you did. You died. You did not know what it was about. You never had any time to learn. They threw you in and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they killed you. Or they killed you gratuitously like Aymo. Or gave you the syphilis like Rinaldi. But they killed you in the end. You could count on that. Stay around and they would kill you” (Hemingway, *Farewell* 327). In *A Farewell to Arms* the world “kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially” (249). Such fatalism is far removed from Bakewell’s optimistic account of the accomplishments of the Red Cross in Italy.

Like Hemingway, Bakewell’s account of unnecessary deaths also deplores the cruelty of war. Both point out, for instance, the catastrophe of the Italian defeat at Caporetto; the soldiers who throw away their guns, and shout “Peace! We are going home. The war is over” (Bakewell 22); the panicky retreat of civilians in the rain, mothers with babies in their arms, “hastily snatched up a few prized possessions,” families separated in the flight. Bakewell likewise tells
of the summary executions of deserters at the bridge crossings of the river Piave: “There was nothing heroic in their last moments. They did not go to their death with head erect and defiant, but cowering and weeping and sadly bewildered. . . . It was such a horrible ending to the sweet dream of peace, which had begun with a song in the distant mountain valleys” (Bakewell 23). His narrative can barely contain the tragedy and bewilderment at such a waste of life with the rationalization, “But,--è la guerra. Stern measures were necessary to bring order out the chaos of those terrible days…” (Bakewell 23). Hemingway, on the other hand, makes the retreat after Caporetto a turning point for his hero: after abandoning his ambulances in the mud, shooting two sergeants who refuse to follow his orders, losing one ambulance driver to friendly fire and another to desertion, Lt. Henry barely escapes a firing squad (who believe he is a German in Italian uniform) and makes his “separate peace” (Hemingway, Farewell 243). The chaos of war is not contained, and it perpetuates itself in the tragic story of Catherine’s death.

Where Bakewell’s war narrative asserts Victorian respectability, Hemingway and his characters flaunt it by necessity as a result of the exigencies of war. The Story of the American Red Cross in Italy suggests that the efforts of the Red Cross are all the more valuable because they restore order and decency. If the retreating Austrians leave the Italian civilians “with nothing but the ragged garments on their backs,” the Red Cross is there to feed and clothe them; it is there to redress injustices and insults to decent women: “In some communities the best of the women’s garments had been given in the early days of the occupation to the small army of prostitutes that the enemy brought with them, who were in every way favored at the expense of decent women” (Bakewell 192). In the description of one celebration at the Colosseum, Red Cross nurses are compared to Vestal Virgins (64); together with other Red Cross workers, they
preside over aged but hospitable mothers, “cheerful chubby babies” (50), and respectable wives so that soldiers can do their supreme duty and meet a heroic death at the front.

By contrast, in *A Farewell to Arms* Frederic loses his ambulances and deserts the army. Catherine gives herself over to Frederic, attempts to get rid of an unwonted pregnancy, follows her lover to Switzerland, and delivers a stillborn baby outside of wedlock. Neither Catherine nor Frederic are in a position to look forward to their baby’s birth, and when they do, they mostly think of the baby as “a by-product of good nights in Milan” that “makes trouble and is born and then you look after it and get fond of it maybe” (Hemingway, *Farewell* 320-21). After Catherine’s C-section, Frederic experiences “no feeling of fatherhood” (325). Both might have fallen short of welfare criteria such as the “suitable home” and the “pitiful but blameless” single mother. Yet the narrative invites the readers’ compassion for the protagonists and insists that they are worthy and heroic. Even though we see no heroic battlefield scenes in *A Farewell to Arms*, we cannot forget Catherine’s whisper shortly before her death: “I’m not afraid. [Death] is just a dirty trick” (331).

Hemingway’s novel asserts the worth of the two privileged constituencies of the nascent American welfare state, soldiers and mothers. Hemingway’s war writings forge a comparison between two quintessentially tragic and heroic experiences, the masculine experience of war and the feminine experience of childbirth. A short vignette captures a childbirth scene during a civilian evacuation in Greece: “a [supine] woman [on a cart] having a kid with a young girl holding a blanket over her and crying. Scared sick to look at it” (Hemingway, *Short Stories* 97). In the opening scene of *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway explicitly links the bodies of the marching soldiers to pregnant women’s bodies: “their rifles were wet and under their capes the two leather cartridge-boxes on the front of the belts, gray leather boxes heavy with the packs of
clips of thin, long 6.5 mm. cartridges, bulged forward under their capes so that the men, passing on the road, marched as though they were six months gone with child” (*Farewell* 4).

The allusion to pregnancy suggests from the very beginning the themes of (biological and man-made) entrapment and foreshadows the deaths of Catherine Barkley and her baby. It also intimates the vulnerability of the men bent under the weight of mechanized death; just like expectant mothers, they appeal to the reader’s protective instincts.


If Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms* is brave, many of Hemingway’s male characters are studies in cowardice, loss of control, emasculation, and abjection. Hemingway’s tragic (or pathetic) failed heroes frequently prove unable to control their bodily functions. The description of the hanging of Sam Cardinella in “Big Two-Hearted River” is one example. Here, the condemned man loses control of his bowels and legs and has to be strapped to a chair on the scaffolding. A priest whispers to him, “Be a man, my son” (Hemingway, *Short Stories* 219), but that is precisely what Sam fails to do. In “A Natural History of the Dead,” the patient who is dying of the flu “turns to be a little child again, though with his manly force, and fills the sheets as full as any diaper with one vast, final, yellow cataract that flows and dribbles after he’s gone” (Hemingway, *Short Stories* 445). In another example, a young matador (“the kid”) has to kill five bulls; by the end of it he has to “sit down in the sand and puke” (Hemingway, *Short Stories* 159) while the crowd throws objects into the bull ring. The Hemingway hero typically fears the loss of control that these infantilized and feminized characters represent, and at the same time, he profoundly understands and identifies with the pathos of their condition. Insofar as the
Hemingway hero does that, he or she is able to partake of experiences on both sides of the gender divide.

Hemingway was not alone in his interest in the relationship between masculinity and abjection. A large body of work on shell shock, including criticism by Joanna Bourke, Doris Kaufmann, Paul Lerner, George L. Mosse, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, and Elaine Showalter,\(^2\) dwells on the confluence of femininity, hysteria, degeneracy, and shell-shock during the Great War. What is known today as PTSD “was understood by the military as a failure of masculinity: a failure of hardness, courage or willpower—and a manifestation of latent effeminacy or immaturity” (Higonnet 93). Some of the symptoms of male hysteria included “functional disorders of sight, hearing, speech and gait as well as insomnia, tremors, and uncontrollable emotionality” (Lerner 16). According to Bourke, fear was not the only symptom of shell shock; loss of control over bodily functions was another: “The ‘weak and degenerate’… were said to be likely to suffer psychoneuroses associated with their rectal sphincter, thus soiling their clothes with feces and urine in battle;” victims of war trauma were also considered “soft-hearted,” lacking in critical abilities, and more primitive and feminine (Bourke 59).

Hemingway’s short story “A Way You’ll Never Be” associates such loss of control and mental instability with a philanthropic mission. Having suffered head injury and shell shock,

Nicolo (Nick Adams) is sent to the front lines to inspire the Italian troops by displaying his “American uniform”: his presence is a reminder that “[t]here will be several million of Americans here shortly” (Hemingway, *Short Stories* 409). Such role was often undertaken by the workers of the American Red Cross in Italy prior to the U.S. involvement with the war. However, unlike the young Hemingway, Nicolo is sent to the front empty-handed; he apologizes, “I’m supposed to have my pockets full of cigarettes and postal cards and such things…I should have a musette full of chocolate. These I should distribute with a kind word and a pat on the back. But there weren’t any cigarettes and postcards and no chocolate. So they said to circulate around anyway” (406). Moreover, his uniform is fake; it was made by Spagnolini, an Italian, and is “not quite correct” (410). Ironically, it is the soldier afflicted with post-traumatic stress disorder who promises reinforcements that are the picture of physical and mental health: “Americans twice as large as [himself], healthy, with clean hearts, sleep at night, never been wounded, never been blown up, never had their heads caved in, never been scared, don’t drink, faithful to the girls they left behind them many of them never had crabs, wonderful chaps” (410). Yet the absence of the concrete gifts in the story only underscores the act of giving.

In the course of the story we learn that Nick has been “certified as nutty” (Hemingway, *Short Stories* 407). The symptoms of his condition--uncontrollable chattiness, nightmares, flashbacks, and anxiety attacks--are some of the characteristics described at length in trauma literature from the turn of the century. Nicolo tries in vain to notice every detail of his surroundings, “to keep it all straight so he would know where he was” but is always suddenly “confused without reason” (409). He has recurring nightmares in which he is frightened by “a low yellow house painted yellow with willows all around it and a low stable and …a canal” (408). Like a “neurotic woman,” the shell-shocked soldier can tell that he is going to have “one”
(a panic attack) “because [he] talk[s] so much” (414). When he has these attacks, he becomes critical of the war: “Why don’t they bury the dead? I’ve seen them now. I don’t care about seeing them again. They can bury them any time as far as I’m concerned and it would be much better for you. You’ll all get bloody sick” (413). Captain Paravicini talks “gently” (413) to him, as people usually do with children and the sick.

Nicolo’s loss of control and his empty-handedness are paralleled by those of the swollen corpses in the opening scene of the story. In “A Natural History of the Dead” the bodies are gradually deprived of identity: they change color “from white to yellow to yellow-green to black” until they reach “quite a visible tarlike iridescence.” Death visits upon these bodies a “progressive corpulence” and the indignity of having their pockets turned out and their personal belongings scattered on the battlefield where they lie (Hemingway, *Short Stories* 443). In death the soldiers are deprived of their humanity; they “[die] like animals” (444). Similarly, the dead in “A Way You Will Never Be” lie surrounded by flies, “alone or in clumps in the high grass of the field and along the road” (402) among the debris of military equipment and papers:

There were mass prayer books, group postcards showing the machine-gun unit standing in ranked and ruddy cheerfulness as in a football picture for a college annual; now they were humped and swollen in the grass; propaganda postcards showing a soldier in Austrian uniform bending a woman backward over a bed; …smutty postcards, photographic; the small photographs of village girls by village photographers, the occasional pictures of children, and the letters, letters, letters. There was always much paper about the dead and the debris of this attack was no exception. (Hemingway, *Short Stories* 402-3)

The swollen bodies of the dead have yielded the gifts of their pockets just as their owners have yielded the gift of their youth and of their lives. After his injury, Nick, too, has little left to give
to the army apart from a fake uniform. What he gives is a gift the army does not treasure: his disappointment with the war and his bitterness with death.

Even though he starts praising the American soldiers who will soon join the Allied forces, Nick quickly switches to telling a story about locusts and fishing instead. “Don’t you think [the American uniform] is very significant,” asks he. “[S]oon you will see untold millions wearing this uniform swarming like locusts” (Hemingway, *Short Stories* 410-11). It is these locusts, usually mistakenly named grasshoppers, that Nick uses as bait in the story “Big Two-Hearted River.” He now tells the soldiers what kinds of locusts there are; which kind is best for fishing; how not to gather them with hands or hit them with a bat; and how to catch them best with a net. The latter technique, he argues, “should be taught all young officers at every small-arms course” (412). By confusing fishing and military training, soldiers and bait, a savior army and locusts, Nick’s mad ramblings subvert language and military discourse, and challenge military discipline. The conclusion to Nicolo’s locust parable, “Gentlemen, either you must govern or you must be governed” (412), very nearly incites the soldiers to disobedience. Even though Nicolo does not bring chocolate, postcards or cigarettes, he gives a voice to the soldiers’ lived experience of combat.

Hemingway’s narratives persuade the reader of the futility and waste of war; in their treatment of abjection and death they also suggest identification with the other and a call for ethical responsibility. As Derrida has argued, “[i]t is only from the site of death as the place of my irreplaceability, that is, of my singularity, that I feel called to responsibility. In this sense only a mortal can be responsible” (*The Gift of Death* 41). In his work *The Gift of Death*, Derrida argues that death, like the gift, is outside economy: “dying can never be taken, borrowed, transferred, delivered, promised, or transmitted. And just as it can’t be given to me, so it can’t be
taken away from me” (*The Gift of Death* 4). For this reason, he argues, death makes the gift as well as responsibility possible: “Death would be this possibility of giving and taking [donner-prendre] that actually exempts itself from the same realm of possibility that it institutes namely, from giving and taking. But to say that is far from contradicting the fact that it is only on the basis of death, and in its name, that giving and taking become possible” (Derrida, *The Gift of Death* 4). For Hemingway, too, “War is a further experience of the gift of death [le mort donée]” (Derrida, *The Gift of Death* 17) and therefore of the possibility of identification with the other. Here the other is often not the enemy, but what his narrators perceive as feminine, abject, victim.

*To Have and Have Not: Family, Violence, and the New Deal*

In Hemingway’s only novel with an American setting, *To Have and Have Not* (1937), the famous words of the dying Harry Morgan appear to sound a note of disillusionment with American individualism and an affirmation of social solidarity: “‘One man alone ain’t got. No man alone now.’ He stopped. ‘No matter how a man alone ain’t got no bloody fucking chance.’ He shut his eyes. It had taken him a long time to get it out and it had taken him all of his life to learn it’” (Hemingway, *To Have* 225). Another episode tells the reader of the high (social) price of success in a society where “[y]ou win; somebody’s got to lose, and only suckers worry” (238) and where suicide, “the native [American] tradition of the Colt or Smith and Wesson; those well-constructed implements that end insomnia, terminate remorse, cure cancer, avoid bankruptcy...so well designed to end the American dream when it becomes a nightmare” (238), is the only exit from the utopia of the American dream. It appears as if the narrative rejects individualism in favor of compassion, solidarity, and a moral imperative. This message is placed in the context of
the New Deal economy, with relief plans, veterans’ welfare issues, inflation and unemployment, and the questions of workers versus elites, big government versus the individual all threaded throughout the narrative.

The unlikely spokesman for the limited opportunities of the individual is Harry Morgan, a boat owner, fisherman, smuggler, unwilling murderer, and a working man who is simply trying to keep his family afloat. Harry indict the dissipated wealthy yachtsmen, the educated elites (represented by the writer Richard Gordon), and government officials for their biased understanding and deleterious influence over the lives of ordinary men and women.

His story proves that the New Deal elites are not in fact facilitating the survival of the working class family but only taking away its hope and dignity. By both affirming and questioning American individualism, the narrative of To Have and Have Not furthers the contemporary debates over the role and the responsibility of the government for the lives of its citizens. In this reading of To Have and Have Not I am going to argue that the text negotiates the politics of the New Deal era and contributes to the contemporary debates over compassion and state-sponsored philanthropy.

"The Poor and the Lowly” and the New Deal

Hemingway’s most American novel was published in the midst of the New Deal and two years after the Social Security Act was signed into law in August 1935. In the year prior, FDR had created the Committee on Economic Security. The recommendations that this committee presented to the President in January of 1935 became the foundation of the Social Security Act. The Committee called for “the development of safeguards which are so manifestly needed for
individual security” (Mink and Solinger 57), but emphasized that their suggestions had deep roots in the American tradition: “these represent not ‘a change in values’ but ‘rather a return to values lost in the course of our economic development and expansion.’” At the same time the committee insisted that “The road to these values is the way to progress” (57). In one of his ‘fireside chats,’ a radio address on the third anniversary of the Social Security Act (August 15, 1938), FDR reiterated this message by resurrecting the metaphor of the American frontier, “We have gone a long way. But we still have a long way to go. There’s still today a frontier that remains unconquered—an America unclaimed. This is the great, the nationwide frontier of insecurity, of human want and fear. This is the frontier—the America—we have set ourselves to reclaim” (Mink and Solinger 79).

Like FDR’s address, To Have and Have Not echoes a concern with American tradition and American values: its main character is the American outlaw-hero; among its primary concerns are the endurance and prosperity of the American family, patriotism, and the elusiveness of the American dream. FDR’s radio address places the ‘right to security’ for all (rich and poor) Americans in the narrative of the American quest for a (secure) home. He argues that “the underlying desire for personal and family security [in America] was nothing new” and goes back to “the early days of colonization and through the long years following” when “the worker, the farmer, the merchant, the man of property, the preacher and the idealist came here to build, each for himself, a stronghold for the things he loved. The stronghold was his home; the things he loved and wished to protect were his family, his material and spiritual possessions” (F.D. Roosevelt 78). However, FDR continues, as “the hazards of life have become more complex,” and “it has become increasingly difficult for individuals to build their own security single-handed” (79), the Government must now ensure justice for all who, like their forefathers,
seek security today, not only for “the rich and the strong” but also for “the poor and the lowly” (78). Hemingway’s novel, too, affirms the value of the home and the right of every American to “protect his family, his material and spiritual possessions.” However, unlike the report of the Committee on Economic Security and unlike FDR’s address, *To Have and Have Not* takes a gloomier view of federal relief programs.

In Hemingway’s novel, there are two groups of people directly affected by the Great Depression and government policies (New Deal policies) designed to alleviate it: the working poor and the vets. The working poor are represented by Albert, the father of a large family working on the relief during the New Deal era, who is also one of the narrators of the novel. He is building a sewer and taking old street car rails up for seven and a half dollars a week, a wage on which he cannot support his starving family. Despite starvation wages, Albert is scrupulously honest, particularly when he stands up to the bank robbers whom Harry has promised to charter. His idealism and passivity are contrasted with Harry Morgan’s self-reliance and pragmatism: “You’re making seven dollars and a half a week. You got three kids in school that are hungry at noon. You got a family that their bellies hurt” (Hemingway, *To Have* 95). Harry is resolute that his own family “is going to eat as long as anybody eats” regardless of the means because “there ain’t no law that you got to go hungry.” Harry is motivated by mistrust for government charity that makes opposition and protest even more difficult; he points out to Albert, who went on strike to protest the low wages, that organized labor is powerless against the united forces of business and charity: “They said you were striking against charity. You always worked, didn’t you? You never asked anybody for charity.” When Albert remarks on his radicalism, Harry admits to his discontent: “I been sore a long time” (96-7).
Government officials such as the “two men [fishing] in flannels and white cloth hats” (Frederick Harrison and his secretary) and intellectuals like Richard Gordon represent a class antagonistic to the hardy working class characters in the novel. Both Frederick Harrison, the government official who gets Harry’s boat confiscated, and writer Richard Gordon regard men like Harry and women like Harry’s wife Marie from afar as if “through a pair of glasses” (Hemingway, *To Have 77*). The working class for them is an idea, and their interventions in the somewhat crude reality of ordinary life are fumbling, erroneous, and destructive. Frederick Harrison, “one of the biggest men in the administration” (80), a Doctor, though not a medical one (79) is described as “a high-cheekboned, thin-lipped, very ruddy face with deep set gray eyes and a contemptuous mouth looking […] from under a white canvas hat” (79). He is the official who happens to see Harry’s liquor-running boat and report it to the Key West authorities, as a result of which Harry loses his livelihood. Captain Willie, another of Hemingway’s spokesmen, tries to talk Harrison out of pursuing Harry: “He’s [Harry’s] got a family and he’s got to eat and feed them. Who the hell do you eat off with people working here in Key West for the government for six dollars and a half a week?” (81). Captain Willie’s solidarity with the plight of a fellow fisherman leads him to warn Harry and to refuse to follow Harrison’s orders. To Willie, as well as the rest of the Key West working men, government people are “mixed up in the prices of things we eat or something;” Willie’s understanding of New Deal initiatives reveals a deeply rooted mistrust of government intervention: “Ain’t you mixed up in the prices of things that we eat or something? Ain’t that it? Making them more costly or something. Making the grits cost more and the grunts less?” (84).

Part of the New Deal agenda, particularly during the first hundred days, was to rouse public opinion in order to encourage consumption. Hemingway’s novel both reflects and fuels
those sentiments. According to Meg Jacobs, “the push for better process and higher living standards—what journalist Walter Lippmann grasped as ‘a young social power’—was a unifying, radicalizing, and politicizing power that helped to give rise to the reform politics of the Progressive New Deal” (Jacobs 45). The initial policies included the creation of agencies such as the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the National Recovery Administration. Congress passed the National Industrial Recovery Act in May 1933 and created the NRA “to oversee what were called codes of fair competition” (Jacobs 107). The administration appealed to employers to raise wages without substantially increasing prices; and FDR encouraged consumers to “insist upon fair prices and honest sales” (123). Businesses who complied with NRA policies sported the sign of the Blue Eagle, the symbol of the NRA. This strategy for encouraging consumption did not really work; as Jacobs notes, “In spite of the appeal to buy now, if anything, consumers had a harder time at the market than before the New Deal…Rapid increases in the price of bread, milk and meat, as well as many other manufactured goods, surpassed most wage increases” (112-3). NRA codes “only exacerbated and sanctioned a pre-existing tendency toward ‘rigid prices.’” In his report on *Industrial Prices and Their Relative Inflexibility*, Gardiner Means wrote that “[m]odern industrial organization… has… destroyed the free market” (130). Initial enthusiasm for the NRA waned, and in the summer of 1935, the Supreme Court declared the NRA unconstitutional. Hemingway’s characters register the purchasing power arguments that animated American consumers across class, political, and ethnic divides: “‘The New Deal had made them believe that more purchasing power at the market was both their right and a matter of national necessity’” (135).

Unlike the working class characters, socially concerned intellectuals and government officials in Hemingway’s narrative appear hypocritical; they fall short of the Hemingway ideal of
the rough, confident, courageous, and virile Hemingway hero. Harrison and his secretary, for example, do not share the passion for fishing of the true Hemingway hero: “Fishing is nonsense” (Hemingway, To Have 82), claims Harrison at the height of his passion for pursuing bootleggers as a self-fashioned G-man. Moreover, as Rena Sanderson has noted in her article “Hemingway and Gender History,” the wealthy (and I would add elitist patrons of and self-fashioned spokesmen for the working class) have deficient marital relationships. Upon noticing one of the tourists in his bar, a flirtatious and not particularly attractive woman, with “blonde hair cut like a man’s, a bad complexion, and the face and build of a lady wrestler,” Freddy the barman observes that “Any one would have to be a writer or a F.E.R.A. [Federal Emergency Relief Administration] man to have a wife look like that…God, isn’t she awful?” (Hemingway, To Have 129, 137). It is not so much the woman’s appearance but her perceived unfaithfulness to her husband that matters here. Both Richard Gordon, the “socially aware writer,” and the anonymous tourist at Freddy’s bar are in dysfunctional and broken-up relationships with women. Their therefore perceived lack of virility is a reflection of their failure in other ways.

Richard Gordon is a writer working on a book about a strike in a textile factory and the social conflict. Hemingway’s narrative underscores the delusional character of his insights;

93 “Fishing is nonsense,’ said Frederick Harrison. ‘If you catch a sailfish what do you do with it? You can’t eat it. This [arresting Harry] is really interesting. I’m glad to see this at first hand. Wounded as he is that man cannot escape. It’s too rough at sea. We know his boat.’
‘You’re really capturing him single-handed,’ said his secretary admiringly.
‘And unarmed, too,’ said Frederick Harrison.
‘With no G men nonsense,’ said the secretary.
‘Edgar Hoover exaggerates his publicity,’ said Frederick Harrison. ‘I feel we’ve given him about enough rope. ..’” (To Have and Have Not 82).

94 “To Have and Have Not consists of two loosely interwoven plots that align the contrast between socioeconomic classes with a contrast between marital situations. The first plot depicts the hard-boiled, violent world of Harry Morgan and his wife Marie; the second shows the unhappy lives and marital infidelities of the writer Richard Gordon, his wife Helen, and their wealthy friends” (Sanderson 185).
Nelson Jacks (a communist, presumably familiar with the subject matter) thinks that “[Gordon’s books are] shit” (Hemingway, To Have 210). Richard’s own observations of Marie Morgan are proven naïve by the narrative. Marie has just heard about Harry’s death when Richard Gordon passes by and imagines her as a prototype of a character in his book: “Her husband when he came home at night hated her, hated the way she had coarsened and grown heavy, was repelled by her bleached hair, her too big breasts, her lack of sympathy with his work as an organizer. He would compare her to the young, firm-breasted, full-lipped little Jewess that had spoken at the meeting that evening” (To Have 177).

Unlike Richard’s stereotypical fantasy about middle-aged, working-class sexuality and marriage (“desire for children and security,” “sad attempts to simulate an interest in the sexual act that had become actually repugnant to her” [Hemingway, To Have 177]), in reality Harry and Marie Morgan enjoy a vibrant, animal attraction as well as marital fidelity. Marie is an independent woman, who goes “dead inside” (261) from grieving but does not fall apart. She is also honest enough to admit to herself that her love for her three daughters alone is not going to give meaning to her life (256). Harry, on the other hand, may lead a life of crime, but his saving grace is that he does it in order to support his family and the woman he loves.

Good and bad characters are thus contrasted based on their success or failure not simply in love but in the keystone American institution, marriage. In contrast to Harry’s devoted wife, Richard Gordon’s wife Helen leaves him, implying he is not a real man (Hemingway, To Have 187). The dissipated rich and their broken families are contrasted with the honest poor in chapter twenty-four, the chapter that reveals a glimpse of the lives of the wealthy yachtsmen: “The money on which it was not worth while for [Henry Carpenter] to live was one hundred and seventy dollars more a month than the fisherman Albert Tracy had been supporting his family on
at the time of his death three days before” (233). On other yachts, the omniscient narrator observes upon the broken loveless marriage of a ruthless grain broker in contrast with the “pleasant, dull, and upright family” of the honest rich: “The father is a man of civic pride and many good works, who opposed prohibition, is not bigoted and is generous, sympathetic, understanding and almost never irritable. The crew of the yacht are well-paid, well-fed, and have good quarters” (239). While the grain broker loses sleep over a government audit, the “happy family” (239) enjoys the restful sleep of the innocent.

When the self-proclaimed revolutionaries /bank-robbers execute the honest worker Albert, Harry brings up Albert’s marital status in order to condemn his executioners and their hypocritical altruism: “To help the working man he robs a bank and kills a fellow works with him and then kill that poor damned Albert that never did any harm. That’s a working man he kills. He never thinks of that. With a family. It’s the Cubans run Cuba… They all double-cross each other. The hell with his revolution…” (Hemingway, *To Have* 168). Harry here uses the same appeal to family as a value that Captain Willie uses with the government man Frederick Harrison: both government relief programs and revolutionary violence fall short of their purported goal of preserving the American family and the American worker and betray the hypocrisy of their compassionate ideals.

*The “Forgotten Men” of the Depression*

Another vantage point from which the narrative of *To Have and Have Not* critiques the social politics of the New Deal is the plight of the abandoned American veterans during the Great Depression. Hemingway protested the pitiful plight and tragic death of veterans relocated
by the Roosevelt administration to the Civilian Conservation Corp work campus in Key West. After a disastrous hurricane hit the keys on the eve of August 31, 1935, Hemingway expressed his horror and indictment of the FDR administration in both his private correspondence and in “Who Murdered the Vets,” an article he published in the September issue of the *New Masses* (Kinnamon 153). He wrote to Maxwell Perkins on September 7th,

> Imagine you have read it in the papers but nothing could give an idea of the destruction. Between 700 and 1000 dead. Many, today, still unburied. The foliage absolutely stripped as though by fire for forty miles and the land looking like the abandoned bed of a river. Not a building of any sort standing. Over thirty miles of railway washed and blown away. We were the first in to Camp Five of the veterans who were working on the Highway construction. Out of 187 only 8 survived. Saw more dead than I’d seen [in] one place since the lower Piave in June of 1918. (Hemingway, *Selected Letters* 421)

Hemingway claimed that “[t]he veterans in those camps were practically murdered” by a government slow to send in relief trains and that “Harry Hopkins and Roosevelt who sent those poor bonus march guys down there to get rid of them got rid of them all right” (Hemingway, *Selected Letters* 421, 422). Hemingway’s references to the plight of veterans, the bonus marchers, and the Economy Act during the New Deal occupy a prominent place in his correspondence, his journalistic writings, as well as in *To Have and Have Not*.

The presence of the veterans in *To Have and Have Not* is part of the narrative indictment of unequal redistribution of wealth during the Great Depression. Before Roosevelt’s election, veterans, many of whom unemployed and on the relief, had hoped that FDR would back their cause for more substantial benefits; however, they were soon disappointed by his defense of the Economy Act. The Economy Act, which FDR signed less than two weeks after his inauguration, severely reduced veterans’ benefits known as the Bonus. Before FDR’s election, Post 2235 in
Neponset, Massachusetts, had addressed FDR enthusiastically, “It’s zero hour. We are ready to go over the top with you and drive old man depression out of his trenches by X-mas.” After the election, veterans felt that they were becoming the “forgotten men” of the depression and that “democracy [was failing] its saviors” (qtd. in Ortiz, “The ‘New Deal’” 420, 424-5).

According to Stephen Ortiz, “Veterans widely considered corporate avarice and greed, the concentration of wealth, and the corruption of the political system by ‘Wall Street’ and ‘Big Business’ to be the causes of both the Great War and the Great Depression “ (“The ‘New Deal’” 422). The New Deal and the Roosevelt administration were immediately preceded by the 1932 occupation of Washington by 40,000 World War I veterans who demanded immediate payment of certificates known as the “Bonus” (417). When the Senate defeated the Patman bill (June 17, 1932) that was going to grant the veterans’ claim for immediate payment, the marchers refused to go home. They were forcibly dispersed from their encampment in Anticosti Flats by the army under the command of Douglas MacArthur. (The Columbia Encyclopaedia). In March of 1933, when the Roosevelt administration initiated the first hundred days of the New Deal, Congress debated and passed a controversial bill that again inflamed veterans’ aspirations for rightfully deserved benefits: “the Bill to Maintain the Credit of the United States’ Government,” otherwise known as the Economy Act (Ortiz, “The ‘New Deal’” 417-8). The Economy Act removed 501,777 veterans and their dependents from the pension roll and imposed further reductions in disability benefits from 25 to 80 percent, a total of $460,000,000 (Ortiz, “The ‘New Deal’” 424-5).

The veterans’ disappointment with FDR handed him his first significant congressional defeat; on 29 March 1934, both houses of Congress overrode FDR’s veto of the Independent Offices Appropriation Act limiting reductions to disabled veterans and creating opportunities for
veterans to appeal their disability certifications (Ortiz, “The ‘New Deal’” 428, 436). The Roosevelt administration had been hoping that FDR’s charisma and influence would sway veterans and voters and would persuade them that “no person, because he wore a uniform must thereafter be placed in a special class of beneficiaries over and above all other citizens” (qtd. in Ortiz, “The ‘New Deal’” 433). His attempts failed to stem a popular movement of dissent with the first hundred days of the New Deal.

In his article “The ‘New Deal’ for Veterans. The Economy Act, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Origins of New Deal Dissent,” Ortiz situates the veterans’ protest against the Roosevelt administration at the center of public criticism and opposition to the New Deal. He claims that “[t]he response of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) to the Economy Act situated the organization in the vanguard of "New Deal Dissidents," including Huey P. Long, Father Charles E. Coughlin, and their supporters” and that “the politics of veterans' pensions and benefits, in turn, profoundly shaped the New Deal era” (415). Certainly, as an American icon, the cause of the veterans of foreign wars during the depression made a strong emotional and ethical appeal to the hearts and minds of ordinary Americans.

95 From FDR’s speech addressing the Legion national convention in Chicago, 2 October 1933 (“The New Deal for Veterans” 424-5).

96 The cause of the veterans and the story of the bonus marchers made the news during both Hoover’s and Roosevelt’s administrations and shaped the policies and image of both presidents. According to Stephen Ortiz, “The Bonus March, and its pitiable denouement, figure prominently in the Depression-era historical narrative. For, in addition to capturing the social dislocation wrought by the Great Depression, the violent conclusion to the Bonus March has come to symbolize the Herbert Hoover administration's perceived disregard for the suffering of average Americans during the Depression's bleakest days. Indeed, despite persuasive evidence exculpating Hoover for the rout of the Bonus Marchers, the episode remains historical shorthand for the failure of the Hoover presidency” (“Rethinking the Bonus March: Federal Bonus Policy, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Origins of a Protest Movement” 275).
“What’s the matter? Don’t you think I can take it?”

In Hemingway’s narrative veterans stand for the “forgotten man” of the depression, the man who, like Harry Morgan, has nothing left but to “take it.” In Chapter twenty-two, the Vets from the Keys “raise the devil” at Freddy’s bar every night (Hemingway, To Have 200). One of the men seems insensitive to pain. In a scene that reminds of Wyndham Lewis’s agon pair, a fellow vet bangs his head repeatedly on the sidewalk: “a man came hurtling out of the open door, another man on top of him. They fell and rolled on the sidewalk, and the man on top, holding the other’s hair in both hands, banged his head up and down on the cement, making a sickening noise” (Hemingway, To Have 200-1). When the sheriff runs to his rescue, the seemingly victimized veteran, “blood in his hair, blood oozing from one ear, and more of it trickling down his freckled face,” addresses the sheriff thus, “Leave my buddy alone. What’s the matter? Don’t you think I can take it?” (201). The absurdity of the violence (“I had him down and I was hitting him on the head with a bottle. Just like playing on a drum. I bet him fifty times” [202]) is striking. One of the veterans, a tall man, explains,

“I would like to bet you that not three men in this room were drafted. ...These are the elite. The very top cream of the scum. What Wellington won at Waterloo with. Well, Mr. Hoover ran us out of Anticosti Flats and Mr. Roosevelt has shipped us down here to get rid of us. They’ve run the camp in a way to invite an epidemic, but the poor bastards won’t die. They shipped a few of us to Tortugas but that’s healthy now. Besides, we wouldn’t stand for it. So they’ve brought us back. What’s the next move? They’ve got to get rid of us. You can see that, can’t you?”

“Why?”

“Because we are the desperate ones,” the man said. “The ones with nothing to lose. We are the completely brutalized ones. We’re worse than the stuff the original Spartacus worked with. But it’s tough to try to do anything with because we have been beaten so far that the only solace is booze and the only pride is in being able to take it…” (Hemingway, To Have 205-6)
These words reverberate with popular fears that left and right-wing radicalism was going to take over during the Great Depression, fears that fuelled a more extensive social welfare program during the Roosevelt administration second hundred days (the second New Deal). Military veterans had been in the center of fascist dictatorship regimes in Europe after World War I; only two years after the rise of Hitler in Germany, John Allen of Jersey City warned FDR that “if this [Bonus] bill is beaten, this country is going to see a dictator in the White House in 1936, [a] veteran of the World War, backed by the veteran vote, Father Coughlin, and Huey Long” (qtd. in Ortiz, “The ‘New Deal’” 437). If this possibility is suggested by the narrative of To Have and Have Not, it is not one to look forward to.

While in Wyndham Lewis’s works (such as “The Death of the Ankou,” “The Bishop’s Fool,” The Enemy, Tarr, and The Art of Being Ruled) violence is presented as constructive, philanthropic, and transformative, the violence that is so much a part of Harry Morgan’s and the veterans’ lives is presented as a hopeless dead end. Instead of instilling dignity in beggars and honesty in hypocritical artists-bohemians, the violence in To Have and Have Not dehumanizes and leads to Harry’s demise. The novel opens with a shooting scene on a Havana square, where three young Cubans find their deaths; the shooting scene explodes the early Havana morning when nothing stirs except one beggar drinking water from a fountain while the rest of “the bums [are] still asleep against the walls of the buildings” (Hemingway, To Have 3). Having rejected in the beginning of the novel the young men’s offer to take them to the states, Harry Morgan nevertheless finds himself progressively involved in a dangerous life of crime. When the depression makes charter-boat fishing unprofitable, Harry makes a living by smuggling alcohol and people. Described by critics as a gangster-hero and a pirate-smuggler, Harry cold-bloodedly snaps Mr. Sing’s head, considers killing Eddy (the rummy who helps him on board and
witnesses the murder), and kills the bank-robbers to save his own life. Though Harry does not enjoy killing, his account of Mr. Sing’s murder reveals his profound emotional numbness: “I took him by the throat and with both hands, and brother, that Mr. Sing would flop just like a fish, true, his loose arm flailing, But I got him forward onto his knees and had both his thumbs well in behind his talk-box, and I bent the whole thing back until she cracked. Don’t think you can’t hear it crack, either” (53-4). In his emotional inability to process cruelty, he much resembles the downtrodden veterans in the story, whose only pride is to “take it.”

Eye-witness accounts of the depression suggest that most Americans responded to this economic and personal calamity by focusing even more on materialist demands and on supporting their families at all costs. Virginia Durr, one of the respondents in Stud Terkel’s *Hard Times, An Oral History of the Depression*, describes these sentiments: “The great majority reacted by thinking money is the most important thing in the world. Get yours. And get it for your children. Nothing else matters. Not having the stark terror [of not getting another paycheck] come at you again” (Terkel 462). Survivors remember the horrors of starvation in the midst of plenty: great piles of oranges, apples, and vegetables set on fire and federal programs (such as F.E.R.A.) destroying little pigs to keep the price up. One person asks, “Have you ever seen a child with rickets? Shaking as with palsy. No protein, no milk. And the companies pouring milk into gutters. People with nothing to wear, and they were ploughing up cotton”

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97 My reading of violence in *To Have and Have Not* differs from Michael Szalay’s. In *New Deal Modernism*, Szalay states that for Hemingway the literary text is “whole, pure, and complete” in a way that actual living organisms can never be: “Pressing the Romantic analogy between bodies and texts to an entirely new conclusion, Hemingway contrasts bodies that can continually absorb replacement parts to texts for which every word counts as a vital organ. He claims in this way to produce safe, unwoundable identities that respond to violation more distinctly and adequately than any human body. His texts can be altered, but never wounded; once changes, his texts are gone” (Szalay 95).
(Terkel 32). Harry Morgan, with his animosity to federal programs, his mistrust of philanthropic motives, and his preoccupation with individual success, would have been a perfect spokesman for their desperation as well as a cultural hero. Morgan’s tragic ending is significant in the light of these Americans attitudes.

Despite his self-confidence, innate intelligence, emotional invulnerability, and determination to make a living by any means necessary, Harry Morgan is beaten in the end. His boat is confiscated by customs for smuggling liquor; he loses an arm; and he bleeds to death after one of the gangsters shoots him in the stomach. Even though he recognizes the limitations of government philanthropy (“One bunch of Cuban government bastards cost me my arm shooting at me with a load when they had no need to and another bunch of U.S. ones took my boat.”), he also realizes that a life of crime, the only choice left for him in order to try and keep his house, is not a winning choice (Hemingway, To Have 148). His body is progressively torn apart by the tumultuous forces of social conflict and economic disempowerment.

In a reverse metaphor of the American individualist pulling himself up by his bootstraps, Harry is unable to protect himself against death. Though he kills the bank robbers, he is slowly dying of a mortal wound to his stomach: “For a time he had thought that if he could pull himself up over himself it would warm him like a blanket, and he thought for a while that he had gotten himself pulled up and he had started to warm…he knew that you could not pull yourself up over yourself and there was nothing to do about the cold but to take it” (Hemingway, To Have 181). Harry’s last insight, that “[n]o matter how a man alone ain’t got no bloody fucking chance” (225), privileges community over individualism, and despite criticisms of the policies of the New Deal, uneasily endorses the social consciousness of the age that established public relief and public works programs that would last into the next millennium.
Conclusion

Although both Wyndham Lewis and Ernest Hemingway offer constructive criticism of the nascent welfare states in Britain and the United States respectively, they do so with differing objectives. Both authors maintain a tough masculine image; their fictions betray a fascination with violence and an interest in the abject body. Nevertheless, while Lewis’s satire seeks to relegate the feminine and the sentimental to the isolated realm of the private, Hemingway’s texts aim to bring relationships to others, gender issues, and philanthropic interests into the center of public debate. Despite Lewis’s and Hemingway’s tough, rugged, and individualist characters, their works evidence the persistence of philanthropy, the private, and the feminine in early twentieth century avant garde and modernist literature.
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