THE LIMITS OF SYMPATHY: PROFESSIONAL PHILANTHROPY AND DETACHMENT IN NARRATIVE, 1869-1914

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

English—Doctor of Philosophy

2017

ABSTRACT

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The Limits of Sympathy intervenes in the scholarly conversation surrounding the relationship between philanthropic reform and the novel as well as the role of women in philanthropic work during late Victorian England. Importantly, this project brings archival texts, such as the philanthropic case reports of the Charity Organisation Society, into the conversation in order to demonstrate how the professionalization of philanthropy eliminated the role of sympathy in philanthropic work and narrative. Where philanthropic texts created new narrative forms to grapple with the New Poor Laws and the changing urban environment of late Victorian London, novels by George Eliot, Walter Besant, H. G. Wells, Edith Johnstone, and Isabella Ford considered how the adoption of professionalized, distanced discourse affected women's perception of and participation in philanthropic work. These novels demonstrate how our current critical reliance on sympathy as a way to mediate the relationship between philanthropic and poor characters, as well as between reader and novel, no longer works within the context of professionalized philanthropy.

To Scott

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to many people who have been alongside me during this intense personal and academic journey. My life is richer and more interesting because of this process.

Many thanks go to the College of Arts and Letters at Michigan State University for their financial support through the Summer College Research Abroad Monies (SCRAM) grant, which allowed me to spend a very enjoyable month in London in the archives, and the Dissertation Completion Fellowship. Thanks also to the London Metropolitan Archives and the Salvation Army International Heritage Centre for access to their archives, as well as Family Action for permission to access the case reports of Charity Organisation Society.

A great deal of thanks goes to my dissertation committee. Dr. Judith Stoddart was wonderfully supportive, and I enjoyed our discussions. I'm grateful for her constant guidance, detailed reading, and understanding of my project. Dr. Natalie Phillips was enthusiastic and incredibly generous with her time, and her advice was spot-on. Dr. Zarena Aslami and Dr. Justus Nieland always offered helpful insight on my research and writing.

I am eternally grateful to Dr. Emily Walker Heady, who introduced me to Victorian literature. Her profound academic and personal support inspired me to begin this process and guided me through a transformative period in my life.

I will always fondly remember the encouragement and collegiality of the Victorian Reading Group. Thank you, Shannon Sears and Stephen Grandchamp, for reading over many drafts of this project in its early stages and for showing me the best parts of graduate school life.

I am grateful to my family for being supportive through the ups and downs. Mom, your

strength is inspirational. Dad, thanks for being there when I needed you. Brian and Rita, your heartfelt positivity and encouragement was essential.

Finally, I am grateful for my partner, Scott, whose belief in me was invaluable. Thank you for sharing this project with me and for encouraging me when I needed it the most. We did it.

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INTRODUCTION

The Limits of Sympathy

In the July-December 1897 edition of the *Charity Organisation Review*, one Hilda Mace narrated her perspective on the methodology of philanthropy by telling a story about a benefactor and helper of the poor who she did not at all admire:

> In these latter days of enlightenment with regard to philanthropy we are apt to look back with faces full of scorn towards those good old philanthropists who lived in the darker ages, and to pass judgments stern and decisive upon them and their methods. We pay a visit perchance to some country parish, and in an out-of-the-way corner of the vicarage or vestry we find an old yellowish board covered with black letters, before which we stand with hearts of wondering anger, and read the sad tale those black letters have to tell us. Josiah Bell, we learn, was a gentleman who, before dying, saw fit, like many another gentleman, to make a last will and testament. In this last will and testament he ordered the yearly rent of certain lands, which amounted to some forty shillings, to be distributed to poor and impotent people in the parish, and the discretion of the minster and churchwardens. We read it. We think of the numbers like it we have read. We think of the numbers like it we have never read. And we cry aloud in our despair, 'Oh foolish and short-sighted Josiah Bell! If you only knew of the evil temptations you have brought to those said poor and impotent people. If you only knew the hard words you have caused to be heaped upon that unfortunate minister. If you only knew of the bitter feelings and jealousies which have arisen

> in the hearts of those people not considered poor and impotent enough for a share in your forty shillings!'" (22)

Remarkably, although Josiah Bell was caring enough to distribute some of his estate to the poor, Hilda Mace can only heap scorn upon his legacy. Even more strangely, Mace imbues her narrative in a report about the current world of philanthropy, not with gratitude and sentimental stories of the poor who Josiah Bell helped, but with a tone of misery, jealousy, stupidity, and even evil. Yet Mace's narrative was deemed fit to publish in the important periodical of a major philanthropic organization of the late nineteenth century. This periodical contained the latest developments in the dominant field of professional philanthropy, of which Mace herself was a proponent. She marks out the territory between old and new philanthropy by casting the local parish as an inefficient and deeply dismaying waste of resources and calls it "apt." Josiah Bell's shortsightedness did not help the poor but did the exact opposite: his gift made miserable the lives of the minister and his parishioners. Bell's major character flaw was his lack of discernment, and the major problem with the method of distributing philanthropic gifts in this way was its subjectivity: the injustice of choosing some poor over others to give to without judgment caused a societal rift that affected each member of the parish.

Yet Mace's outlook on philanthropy followed the trend of professionalized philanthropy in the late nineteenth century, which from the founding of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) in 1869, became the dominant mode of giving in Britain and expanded worldwide. The problem that mace sets up in her narrative, that of old philanthropy's indiscriminate giving, required reforming. As philanthropy professionalized, philanthropists worked with the goal of eliminating this subjective and indiscriminate giving by initiating an organized, objective system for determining which poor would receive help. No longer would Josiah Bell write an

amendment on his will, these new philanthropists hoped, but would instead give his money to an organization who could put it to good use and distribute it systematically. The Charity Organisation Society aimed to move from one man giving his money to the minister, who would then determine, using his own judgment, who would receive the money, to a highly mediated and bureaucratic charitable machine that employed hundreds of agents and board members who would use an elaborate schema to gather masses of information about each person who asked for help, money, or material goods. Josiah Bell may have been moved to give to the poor based on an emotional response, but the philanthropists of the COS could rest upon a much more scientific way of determining who would receive its money. By introducing bureaucratic machinery into the methodology of charitable giving, the Charity Organisation Society also changed the way that philanthropic work mediated relationships between philanthropists and the poor, as well as other philanthropists.

This dissertation compares the use of objectivity in philanthropic texts, such as annual reports, case reports, and periodical publications, to that of the novels of George Eliot, Walter Besant, H. G. Wells, Edith Johnstone, and Isabella Ford in order to examine how professionalized methodologies changed the way that philanthropists understood their relationships with the poor and with each other. The archives of the Charity Organisation Society, of which Hilda Mace's essay was a part, as well as those of other minor philanthropic organizations, provide an extensive and detailed definition of the way that professionalism changed the way that narratives about the poor were structured as well as a record of a bureaucratic response to changing economic and social conditions with the ultimate goal of solving poverty on a large scale. As philanthropy professionalized and moved away from an emphasis on sympathy with the poor, relationships within the philanthropic encounter began to

take on a different form. The philanthropic texts and novels read in this dissertation illustrate how sympathy was not the way by which philanthropic reformers trained readers how to relate to the poor. Critically, each reading of the texts in this dissertation frames the relationships between the poor and the rich as no longer characterized by subjective fellow-feeling or sympathy. Importantly, philanthropists trained readers within the context of increasingly professionalized and bureaucratic ways of mediating relationships; their motivations for the rejection of sympathy arose out of the recognition that large-scale philanthropy could not be accomplished via small-scale personal encounters and narratives about individual people.

Philanthropic reform in the mid- to late-nineteenth century became necessary because of important cultural and economic changes. First, in order to understand why philanthropic organizations wanted to reform philanthropic methodology, it is necessary to discuss the changing economic and social conditions that necessitated philanthropic reform. Changes to the Poor Laws[1] in the early nineteenth century, increased urban anonymity, and the dissolution of the parish system changed the ways that the poor interacted with the rich and the ways that relationships could be described in narrative terms. As rural, close-knit communities were no longer the primary way that the poor could seek help when they needed it, and as cities and large industrial centers drew more and more people way from the country, it became more difficult for philanthropists to know first-hand those that they intended to help. Friedrich Engels documents such conditions in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*[2]: his impression of London

[1] For more on the New Poor Law of 1834, particularly as it relates to the Charity Organisation Society, see: Robert Humphreys, *Poor Relief and Charity 1869-1945*; Charles Loch Mowat, *The Charity Organisation Society 1869-1913: Its Ideas and Work*; Steve Hindle, *On the Parish?: The Micro Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c. 1550-1750*; Jane Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain: The Charity Organisation Society/Family Welfare Association since 1869*; Helen Bosanquet, *Social Work in London 1869-1912*; Anthony Brundage, *The English Poor Laws, 1700-1930*.

[2] Particularly the chapter "The Great Towns."

was that great masses of isolated people did not appear to care about anyone else, a condition exacerbated by the hideous living and working conditions and the uncertainty of well being that the working classes experienced each day and on a mass scale: "The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest becomes the more repellant and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together, within a limited space" (24). For Engels, crowding only served to amplify the urban individual's indifference to those around him, making isolation a "fundamental principle of our society" (24). Philanthropists, recognizing this troubling condition, understood that sympathy could only succeed in reforming philanthropic practices if it happened in the context of a close-knit social environment. Realizing this was no longer possible under the urban conditions such as those that Engel describes, reformers sought to alleviate poverty through philanthropy that focused on gathering information rather than engendering sympathy, as this introduction will explain.

Additionally, as the Poor Laws changed and the state was no longer a major source of funding for philanthropy, private charities had to step in to fill the deficit in funding. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, or the New Poor Law, completely changed the landscape by which the poor received charity. Importantly, the New Poor Law made two major changes that led to the philanthropic reform that this dissertation discusses. The law restructured the administration of charity from the parish system of the Old Poor Law to Poor Law Unions, which centered around workhouses. It also encouraged outdoor relief (donations of goods or money) from private parties as the primary means of charitable giving by making indoor relief (shelter and work at workhouses) under the New Poor Law only accessible to the most destitute of the poor. These structural changes, meant to reduce the tax rate of land-owning parties in Great Britain, led to a problem that philanthropic organizations were left to deal with on their

own: that of a large gap in resources for those who needed assistance but were not destitute enough to qualify for assistance from the state. The old parish system, while sometimes lacking enough resources to assist those under local purview, had the benefit of localized knowledge and acquaintance with the poor within the parish. While each parish interpreted the Old Poor Law differently, the Settlement Act of 1662 dictated that each parish was responsible for its residents only. This meant that the details of poor residents could be better known by parishes, as they had an established presence within the administrative area. Since residency was established by birth, marriage, or apprenticeship, migrants were not eligible for help under the Old Poor Law. The New Poor Law established larger administrative areas by grouping parishes together and making those areas responsible for determining the eligibility of the poor for residence in a workhouse. Eligibility standards were not necessarily based on residency but on willingness to endure the conditions of a workhouse, which were criticized by reformers as demeaning and only for those so destitute that they had no other options. This new, very low standard of eligibility for state assistance was meant to encourage the poor not to seek help from the state, but it had the effect of leaving a large portion of the population with no source of public assistance. Private charitable organizations were left to step in to help the population of the poor who were not able to work or who found themselves in difficulty but were not destitute enough for the workhouse.

These gaps in assistance created by the New Poor Law created an environment for the reform of charitable practice. First, charities could no longer rely on personal knowledge of the poor that was more likely in a small, local setting like the parish. As charities stepped in to help the poor whom the state would not help, they needed to create systems that would allow them to understand individual living conditions of the poor, their history, and their character. Second, charities called for a move away from the outdoor relief that the New Poor Laws encouraged,

arguing that it created more dependence on help from either the state or from private parties. In the era of self-help, charities began to focus on giving the poor the kind of assistance that would set them up for prolonged future success rather than giving them material goods or monetary assistance that would, in their view, only serve as a stop-gap for an immediate problem rather than a solution to the larger problem of poverty.

In this spirit of reform, organizations such as the Charity Organisation Society (COS), which is central to this dissertation, stepped in to help those who were not eligible for assistance under the New Poor Law. They focused on solving the larger problem of poverty rather than simply helping the poor in temporary ways. In order to use resources wisely and solve poverty more efficiently, organizations such as the COS focused on helping only the poor who showed potential to lift themselves out of poverty. They could demonstrate this potential by having good character, thus proving that they were already responsible people who had only fallen on hard times; they simply needed some guidance. They could also prove the ability to lift themselves out of poverty with letters of recommendation from a trusted source who knew that the poor individual in question was not simply asking for money or lying about her situation in order to get help or resources that she did not necessarily need. In order to determine the character of a poor individual, the COS created an elaborate system to gather and record information about the individual and to organize resources by which the poor could be pulled out of poverty. The organization's primary goal was to quickly move the poor through the system in such a way that they would never need its help again. The COS also avoided giving outdoor relief as much as possible. Rather than giving money or goods to the poor, agents of the COS referred them to work, insurance organizations, or other private parties. To the COS, this kind of help would not create more poverty by making the poor reliant on assistance of any kind.

The Charity Organisation Society was a prominent example of the larger trend of professionalized philanthropy. One of the largest such organizations of its kind in terms of geographical reach and influence[3], the COS had a strong influence on domestic policy and was globally recognized as offering the best solution for increasing poverty.[4] As implied by its name, the COS intended to become a clearing house for all charities, which would expand its philosophical scope as well. Philanthropies like the Charity Organisation Society were the result of an increasingly professionalized, bureaucratic environment. Philanthropies were organized at the same time that professionalism as a term was increasingly associated with bureaucracy, as Magali Sarfatti Larson argues in *The Rise of Professionalism*. Larson argues that professionalization is "the process by which producers of special services sought to constitute *and control* a market for their expertise" (xvi). In this case, the "market" for the COS was charity work, charitable agencies, and the public, as well as governmental policy: The COS "hope[d] *to bring about the improvement in the relations between the rich and the poor which they aim at by obtaining the frank co-operation of the various relief agencies, and by enlisting the* [. . .] *active help*, in person as well as in money, or a large section of the public" (5, emphasis original). In this way, the COS aimed to become an authority on the methodology of solving poverty by disseminating its methods through the proliferation of chapters and by influencing government policy.

[3] The COS had chapters throughout England as well as in the United States, Europe, and the British Empire. By 1882, there were 125 Charity Organization Societies throughout the world, particularly in Europe and the greater British Empire, and by 1896, there were 125 chapters in the United States. (familyaction.org.uk)

[4] Robert Humphreys says that the COS "commanded a position of omnipotence on all social matters" (2) in *Poor Relief and Charity, 1869-1945*. He also mentions that the COS's influence was even more prominent in the United States, where "No USA city was without a Society claiming to practice the principles originating from London COS" (2). The COS kept a list of all organizations in Great Britain and the United States that operated using its methodology.

The Charity Organisation Society's professionalized methodology arose out of a nineteenth-century trend towards empirical, fact-based knowledge production. In *History of the Modern Fact*, Mary Poovey traces the tension in the way that "fact" creates knowledge. In particular, this tension centers around the way that the fact represents its object: the "epistemological unit of the fact has registered the tension between the richness and variety embodied in concrete phenomena and the uniform, rule-governed order of humanly contrived systems" (1). Fact represents its object as part of a predictable and observable system. By relying on data gathering and recording information about the poor, the COS sought to make the poor units in an observable system. Their interactions with the poor were thus mediated by fact-based systemic knowledge rather than emotional knowledge or sympathy. She notes that this tension results in two interpretations of fact: "incontrovertible data that simply demonstrate what is true" and data that are "manufactured and informed by all the social and personal factors that go into every act of human creation" (1). These two interpretations register particularly strongly in the COS's argument about numbers being representative of the complicated lives of the poor, which is discussed in chapter two. The COS, in its desire to remove sympathy from philanthropic work, recognized the tension between treating a person like a unit of data and understanding the personal needs of that person. Poovey's argument that the modern fact is a "battleground" (2) for the production of knowledge, I argue, is one reason why the COS, even as it sought to reform philanthropic methodology from sympathy to data gathering, still mentions sympathy as a way to raise funds. This tension underlies the way that this introduction explains how removing sympathy from philanthropic work was central to the professionalization of philanthropy in the late nineteenth century. Emotionally based, relational ways of building knowledge about the poor were replaced by empirical, fact-based ways of building knowledge.

The Charity Organisation Society's reliance on fact and on data gathering meant that the success of philanthropy would be heretofore measured by statistical data rather than understanding the poor as individuals. Upon the establishment of the COS in 1869, sympathy, that is, understanding the individual needs of the poor or cultivating sympathetic attachment in philanthropists, was no longer the desired outcome of philanthropic work. While the COS used the term "sympathy" frequently, it was a meaningless term as it did not have any bearing on the COS's practice of philanthropy. As philanthropic reform happened, data replaced relationships, as chapter two will discuss in depth. But, as the word "reform" implies, the reshaping process is never smooth, and tension between data and relationships remained. Philanthropic reform is a concrete example of Poovey's argument about the tension within the epistemological unit of the fact. Even as philanthropists sought to create fact-based data about the poor, they had to contend with the "richness and variety" of first-person accounts, the kind that could bend philanthropic judgment away from a "rule-governed order of humanly contrived systems" (Poovey 1). Where philanthropists strived to make fact-based, concrete claims about both poverty and the way that the individual poor suffered, exercising sympathy could look too much like the older way of doing philanthropy. At the same time, this reliance on fact-based knowledge required that the COS call into question the usefulness of sympathy in the philanthropic encounter. Where once sympathy might have seemed to be a necessary part of charitable work, in that one could exercise sympathy in the parish system because of close personal contact with the poor, sympathy was becoming beside the point in a new environment where gathering statistical knowledge was the primary goal. Sympathy required a personal connection to the poor in an environment where larger administrative areas and increasing poverty placed small-scale sympathy at odds with large-scale problems. Even more importantly to the COS, sympathy

could be a distraction from solving the larger problem of poverty, because it encouraged small, reactionary solutions, such as giving money to a beggar on the street when immediately confronted with both the suffering of the poor and the emotional reaction that one would have in response to such suffering. In short, sympathy could no longer be the standard of measurement for the philanthropic encounter when collecting data about large-scale poverty was a more pressing concern.

This shift away from sympathy can even be traced, not only through the way that philanthropists desired to reform how they gathered knowledge about the poor, but through the word "philanthropy" itself. "Philanthropy" underwent a notable connotative shift in the mid-nineteenth century. Where, prior to the 1850s "philanthropy" primarily connoted an emotional attachment between the rich and the poor, based on its Latin roots (love for humanity), the term became a more concrete noun in the latter half of the nineteenth century, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, connoting an actual organization that gained authority from its empirical methodology. This shift in usage of the term reflects the shift in methodology traced above. It illustrates the way that philanthropy was redefined away from creating knowledge of the poor through personal connections that sympathy enabled and towards a professionalized, organized way of creating large-scale statistical knowledge through the schema of fact.

Philanthropic organizations played an important role in shaping the narrative style that enabled them to train their agents to "read" the poor. As philanthropy moved towards the professional and empirical, with the goal of solving large-scale poverty, and away from small-scale, sympathetic interactions with individuals, this shift had direct effects on the methods that philanthropists could use to train its agents to relate to the poor. This training was based in large-scale, systematized, literally "formal" narrative strategies that devalued personalized, first-

person, face-to-face encounters. Organizational methodology that prioritized statistical data was the primary way that philanthropic organizations enacted reform by training "readers" of the poor to imagine their relationships with them as data-gathering interactions or character evaluations. Because of this, personal interactions based in emotional connection or reading situations based in first-person narratives were no longer effective, because they operated with the goal of creating sympathetic relationships rather than gathering verifiable information.

Training agents to read the poor was a way for the COS to counteract the dangers of too many readers of the poor. The ubiquity of poverty made it so that one had opportunities to read the poor on the street, in novels, and when making decisions about whether or not to make philanthropic gifts, from giving money to a beggar on the street to subscribing to a charitable organization. At first, the COS was called "Society for Organizing Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicity," because its initial goal was to move beggars from the street and thus remove the temptation for people on the street to pity the poor and give indiscriminately. Therefore, it was necessary to train agents to read the poor in a way that was acceptable by the COS, which considered itself better equipped to solve poverty than the general public. The methodology of training, outlined in chapter two, revolved around changing conceptions of how sympathy worked in narrative and between the public and the poor. Readers were trained to distrust emotional reaction and to trust the scientific, factual methodology that the COS used. On a more professional level, the COS trained philanthropic agents in its own method. These agents worked for the organization, and they recorded information about the poor and made judgments about who was deserving of help. These are the most obvious methods of training by the organization, but this dissertation also argues that the COS's creation of a new narrative style reached beyond its own publications to novels. Philanthropies participated in a broader cultural

tradition of didacticism, and the narrative style of the COS influenced novels in their representations of philanthropy. In this way, the training of philanthropic organizations extended to the readers of novels about philanthropy.

As a result, this shift in the methodology of training readers bled over into representations of philanthropy. The ways that philanthropic organizations used empirical techniques to train readers to read the poor changed the way that novels thought about how characters related to each other when they were giving or receiving philanthropy. Within professionalized philanthropy, this encounter involved a variety of different mediators: relationships were mediated through the organizational structure of professional philanthropy, with its forms and personnel; through the values of professionalized philanthropy, which included an emphasis on objectivity rather than sympathetic attachment; and through personal interactions between the philanthropist or agent and the poor. The immediacy of an encounter with a poor character, such as in a Dickens novel, and the way it encouraged an immediate response to the poor on their own terms, was no longer an "efficient" way of thinking about solving the problems of poverty. Narrative techniques, such as characterization and its engendering of sympathy, of the novels in this dissertation, which are characterized by their willingness to grapple with the changing methodology of philanthropy, became complicated in the wake of a philanthropic environment where bureaucratic distance and efficiency was considered to be a better way of structuring the philanthropist's relationships with the poor. However, the critical conversation around the social problem novel has not yet registered this shift, since its focus is upon sympathy as *the* way by which the Victorian novel trained readers to interact with the poor. This dissertation argues that much of our current criticism about the social problem novel hinges on sympathy as a way of teaching its readers how to interact with the poor. However, as some novels dealt with changes

in philanthropic method, they also recognized the limits of sympathy to engender understanding between characters, as well as between the characters and the reader.

Scholarship around Victorian literature has long noted the centrality of reading to Victorian culture, personal development, and as a way to mediate experience. This dissertation builds upon such work by recognizing the centrality of the relationship between text and reader as a way to disseminate cultural values, or to "train" a reader using the protocols of narrative. Rachel Ablow's collection of essays, *The Feeling of Reading: Affective Experience and Victorian Literature*, performs an important intervention in the way that we understand how Victorians experienced reading. Beginning with the premise that "reading was commonly regarded as at least as valuable as an affective experience as it was as a way to convey information or increase understanding" (2), Ablow counters D. A. Miller's assertion that readerly absorption is "an insidious means by which we are interpellated into a social order" (1). Ablow also notes that the nineteenth century was a time of "massive growth" in both literacy and available texts (4), making the reading experience more central to the daily life of Victorians generally. While the essay collection focuses on the "issues of physical and emotional feeling" (4) in reading, it also acknowledges that protocols of reading can vary, that "feeling with" is not always a given way of reading a text:

> Like the Victorians, we are witnessing a vast shift in popular practices and conceptions of reading. In an age of the Web, text-messaging, Twitter, and Kindle, many have asked how changing protocols of reading will affect our culture more generally. The essays in this collection [. . .] begin to suggest the nature and the range of practices against which new developments need to be evaluated. [. . .] Perhaps most important, they indicate how we might begin to

> move beyond the rather limited range of terms in which reading all too often described. In broadening our conceptual vocabulary, the essays in this collection help us begin to reconceive the variety of ways in which texts work. Texts in these essays serve not just as sources of information or even as objects of identification. Instead, they function as barriers, windows, screens; [. . .] Reading emerges from these essays as one of the most intriguing and mysterious of practices not just because of its apparent privacy or individuality, but also because of the significance of its consequences, and because those consequences—affective, cognitive, social, and political—can never be fully determined in advance. (9-10)

Ablow's assertion here provides an interpretive opening for the work of this dissertation, which is to examine how changing protocols of reading the poor affected the reader's relationship with the poor or how it affected their own understanding of their roles as philanthropist. "Feeling" is a rather broad term that can certainly refer to sympathetic identification, but Ablow also draws our attention to other forms of feeling and indeed calls for a look beyond the "rather limited range of terms," namely, sympathetic identification that scholars examine frequently. Indeed, chapter two lays out the new protocols of reading for philanthropists, and the novels in this dissertation are all examples of protocols other than sympathy. The protocols of reading in these works are highly mediated, multi-layered, and even frustrating or alienating. Some of them reject sympathy outright by showing its failures, and others institute a protocol of detachment by using motifs of disguise, narrative claustrophobia, and professionalism. This dissertation aims to look the protocols of philanthropic reading in a new way.

Kate Flint's *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914* is a touchstone text for understanding how female readers were perceived in Victorian culture. It is also a good example of the reliance upon sympathetic identification as the primary form of reading experience for Victorians, noting as it does the "ability to venture with sympathetic identification into the lives of others, [which] guaranteed that that women's susceptibility to identificatory modes of reading was perceived to be related to the inescapable facts about the way in which her biological make-up influenced the operations of her mind" (31). Flint's argument revolves around an evaluation of whether or not this identification was dangerous for women or not. While Victorians believed that the passivity and introspection of identificatory reading could be dangerous for women and negatively affect their ability to perform the tasks necessary to running a household or being social, Flint argues that such a reading method could create a space for resistance to the "pressure of liv[ing] up to [feminine] values" (32) or could "[provide] a reader with vicarious means of experiencing empowerment" (190) or that "acknowledging and regretting the effects on a fictional character is the first step [. . .] in the readers's [*sic*] own critical examination of their own position within society" (297) or could provide a site for sociality and shared subjectivity between women (299). On one hand, Flint's argument accounts for the prevalence of the belief during the Victorian era that sympathy as a reading method could be harmful for the functioning of society, something that philanthropic reformers also believed and sought to eliminate from their reading protocol. The historical belief in the danger of sympathy was phenomenon that led philanthropic reformers to find new ways of training readers. In this way, Flint's historical work provides context for the reason why philanthropists would want to move away from sympathy as a reading protocol. On the other hand, Flint's argument also redeems the value of sympathetic identification for women as a site of resistance to traditional femininity, an argument that parallels much of the scholarship

on female philanthropy, which also cites sympathy as the way by which female philanthropists could both avoid the dangerous passivity of sympathetic identification (since philanthropy provided a unique venue in which sympathy could become active) and could resist traditional feminine gender roles by working in the public sphere. Chapters three and four, however, demonstrate how using female philanthropy as both traditionally feminine and resistant to traditional values became more complicated as a result of the professionalization of philanthropy. This dissertation begins from the foundational work of these scholars on the primacy of reading experience in Victorian culture and its influence on Victorians' moral sense. From there, it looks at the specific techniques used by philanthropists to influence the ethics of sympathizing with the poor. Because novel reading was so central to Victorians' affective relationship with the poor and their understanding of what should be done about it, philanthropists could easily use novelistic style and narrative sympathy to influence the public to rally around their reformist methodologies.

However, this dissertation departs from the current conversation around didactic uses of the novel where it focuses on sympathy as *the* way of training readers. The protocol for training readers has long been based in sympathetic identification, but the training methods of the COS are a prominent example of where sympathy had been rejected as a central training protocol. A recent example of the dominant theme of sympathy in Victorian scholarship is in Rae Greiner's *Sympathetic Realism in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction*, which argues that the realist novel and sympathy are nearly identical, or at the most, mutually structurally dependent: "By depicting social reality as a product of fellow-feeling, the realist novel portrays the real as both fictive and sympathetic" (10). For Greiner, sympathy is central to the way that the realist novel trains readers, because sympathy's protocols are found in both the realist novel and social interactions.

Greiner's major intervention is focused around redefining sympathy from affective to cognitive rather than questioning its viability, and as such she preserves sympathy as the primary training protocol of the novel. This carries over into her reading of Dickens where she shows us a new way of considering Dickensian sympathy, which "meant dwelling in [the poor's] sentences rather than in their skins" (89). Greiner's reading identifies the way that Dickens used language in order to confront the discord between individuals in an urban environment, a discord that both Engels and the COS identified in their understanding of urban anonymity. Greiner's reading of Dickens follows with the traditional understanding of the way that a social problem novel trained readers where she says that "we might say that estrangement is the underlying condition and sympathy a way to combat it" (88). Dickens's political idealism, as Greiner points out here, relied on sympathy to solve the dystopia of mid nineteenth-century London. It was certainly influential on mid-century understandings of ways of relating to the poor, yet even as the COS recognized Dickens's influence, the organization could not put it into practice. But in the case of the COS, its organizational apparatus and large scale necessitated a different combat strategy. The solution was not to create more individual interaction but to collect vast data sets that could be used to solve the larger problem of poverty. As a result, we cannot rely on readings of Dickensian sympathy, or the training techniques of the social problem novel, to understand how the COS tried to relate to the poor. Where Greiner preserves sympathy as central to the reform work of the social problem novel, she also overlooks a social context where sympathy was no longer accepted as a way of facilitating reform work. This dissertation considers this social context as central to an understanding of why some social problem novels do not fit the critical mold of sympathy as a training readers to interact with the poor.

This dissertation does not contest the centrality of didacticism as a mediator in the reading experience of Victorians. Instead, this dissertation considers the ways that philanthropic organizations adapted didacticism for their own use. Dickens was influential, and the COS used his influence to gradually shift philanthropic methodology from that of the personal encounters of the early century before the New Poor Law to that of data gathering and character verification of later philanthropic reform. This dissertation does, however, question the centrality of sympathy in contemporary criticism as a way understanding the reader's relationship to the text and as a way of constituting relationships between philanthropist and poor characters. The role of sympathy in narrative in the social problem novels of Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens are good examples of the old way of structuring a philanthropist's relationship with the poor. In Dickens's *Bleak House* and Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, the conflict of the plot centers around the ability of sympathy to correct the problems of philanthropy and to have a major role in creating the kind of knowledge about the poor that leads to action on their behalf.

Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* makes it clear that the social problem novel's anxiety focused around the ability of sympathy and documentation, for which Gaskell is famous, to train readers to feel for unlikable characters that they would otherwise dismiss as irresponsible. In *Mary Barton*, the novel's namesake working-class character and her father hold radical viewpoints about the divide between factory workers and those who run the factories. Mary becomes a woman of active conviction after she believes that Jem Wilson, another working-class factory employee, has been wrongly accused of murder. At the same time, Mary believes that she may have inadvertently caused the murder, for which she feels melodramatically guilty. In a pivotal scene, Mary discusses her guilt with her prostitute aunt Esther, whose realistic assessment of Mary's good fortune corrects her tendency to overreact to misfortune. The scene

trains readers to sympathize with characters, even those who are misguided, by using Esther's realistic outlook on the world to correct Esther's overreaction and by documenting the faces of the characters in close detail.[5] The novel's ethical investment in the fellow-feeling of sympathy is illustrated by its anxiety about the transparency of faces and the specific conditions under which sympathy can occur: "The candle was placed right between them, and Esther moved it in order to have a clearer view of Mary's face, so that she might read her emotions, and ascertain her interests" (Gaskell 307). The reading of emotions requires specific conditions for its success: Esther must be able to see Mary's face so that she can discover, and thereby know, the way that Mary is feeling. Reading the emotions of another person first requires proximity; the scene of sympathy here is an intimate conversation between two people. Furthermore, there are only two people in the room, which removes distractions from the two women's personal interaction that large numbers of people might cause. The way that Mary "longed to open her wretched, wretched heart" to Esther, even while she "refrained, from dread of the averted eye, the altered voice, the internal loathing, which she feared such disclosure might create" (307), demonstrates that the central anxiety of the scene centers around sympathy's success. In other words, the novel is invested in a character's ability to use sympathy to reveal the emotions of another person even while she demonstrates anxiety about its failure. Here, the moment of sympathy, because it is based in a realistic outlook as well as realist description, illustrates the most ethical way of feeling for the poor and acting on one's feeling.

[5] Catherine Gallagher, in *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction*, also notices the ambivalence regarding moral obligation to the poor other in *Mary Barton*. Recognizing that the social change that both Mary Barton and her father desire "enter the narrative as the distorted literary viewpoints of a few characters" (68), Gallagher argues that Gaskell aims to present these moral viewpoints as limited by the experience and circumstances of the character, therefore training the reader to have sympathy even for wrong decisions in that they were "designed to keep the . . . readers' own opinions from interfering with their ability to follow Barton's tragedy" (73). Gallagher focuses on the scene between Mary and Esther because Esther's realism allows readers to "get an entirely different perspective on Mary's reality" (80) at the same time that it shows readers that Esther's realism is morally superior to Mary's melodrama as a motivator for her moral obligations to Jem and the working class more generally.

Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* is a famous examination of the shortcomings of philanthropic methodology in the mid-nineteenth century, where sympathy is offered as a solution to the overly mechanical, cold, and distant ways that philanthropists in the novel operate. Mrs. Jellyby's and Mrs. Pardiggle's disastrous attempts at philanthropy do not necessarily equate to a full critique of philanthropy itself; instead these caricatures of philanthropists demonstrate fixable flaws in philanthropic method while the sweet, sympathetic examples of Esther and Ada offer an alternative way of performing philanthropy that is judged by their focus on being sympathetic interlocutors with the poor. Mrs. Jellyby's "telescopic philanthropy" illustrates her inability to see the suffering of those immediately around her while her gaze rests on far-off Borrioboola-Gha, which her constant letter-writing fails to improve. Dickens offers up Esther and Ada as counterexamples to Mrs. Jellyby's and Mrs. Pardiggle's hapless district visiting. While Mrs. Pardiggle is a "vortex" (Dickens 133) of tone-deafness, Esther takes the time to observe and narrate the emotions and situations of each person in the house she visits, even while feeling "intrusive and out of place" (132). The girls "approached the woman sitting by the fire, to ask if her baby were ill" (133), demonstrating a gentle sympathy that seeks to know more about the people whom Mrs. Pardiggle ignores by having a personal conversation with them. They observe the situation and are moved by the suffering they see (134), which inspires a proportionate response in them. Here, Ada's and Esther's sympathetic observation offers a corrective to Mrs. Pardiggle's "mechanical way of taking possession of people" (133). If only philanthropists would not impose their own standards onto the poor, Dickens asks, and would instead take the time to get to know individual poor through sympathy, philanthropy might improve for the better.

Further, Dickens illustrates the mediation of sympathy through the first-person narrative of Esther. Throughout the novel, Esther narrates her observations of other characters in the novel, and she is offered up as a careful reader of the poor and of other suffering characters. In multiple chapters entitled "Esther's Narrative," Esther carefully observes other characters and evaluates their motives. She also expresses wishes for their success and happiness. In this way, Esther is held up as a model of sympathetic judgment and kindness, where her careful observation guides the reader in evaluation of characters and events in the novel. Her first-person narration is essential to the reader's getting to know other characters in the novel and to their training in being able to evaluate the characters. Her observant narrative voice is an example of how direct observation and narration of that observation acts to solve problems of insensitivity to other people; in this case, Esther's observation creates understanding between herself and other characters, thus illustrating the way that this narrative style can create fellow-feeling.

The goal of this dissertation is neither to argue with the general landscape of contemporary interpretations of Dickens' didacticism nor Greiner's interpretation of Dickens's use of sympathy. Rather, the goal is to demonstrate how many other novels of the late-Victorian era registered philanthropic reform and its effects on the methodology of training readers, essentially opening up the canon to other understandings of the function of the novel in reform work in the nineteenth century. As a result, this dissertation mostly examines novels that have not dominated the critical discussion around sympathy and philanthropy in the nineteenth century. Focusing on the social problem novels by Dickens and Gaskell has directed scholarship around sympathy to discuss how such novels trained readers to become more altruistic, socially active, or even to become philanthropists themselves. Additionally, the COS's different

approach to sympathy and the problem of urban anonymity requires a different canon. The novels that this dissertation examines register philanthropic reform in a different way than a Dickens or Gaskell novel, and they become more legible in scholarship on Victorian literature and culture when sympathy is not the primary critical lens by which they are viewed.

It is important to look away from Dickens's and Gaskell's social problem novels, because their focus on sympathy, as the engine of social change or the solution to problems with philanthropy, was increasingly irrelevant to the way that social reformers thought about their work in the environment of professionalization. While the Charity Organization Society borrowed from Dickens to make their professionalized methodology of reading the poor more accessible to the public, the way that they structured their case reports demonstrates that sympathy was more of a talking point; philanthropists of the COS were neither concerned with using sympathy in their work nor interested in cultivating sympathy as part of their reformist goals. Where the narratives of social problem novels created exceptional, individual characters as objects of sympathy, in that the voice of the individual was a focal point, philanthropic narratives mediated multiple voices of the poor, their referees, and organizational agents and unify their voices into a coherent whole that did not contradict their own methodological goals. In so doing, individual voices of the poor were erased and no longer provided readers with an individualized object with whom to sympathize. The archives of philanthropic organizations reveal a more complicated methodology in which philanthropists became increasingly distanced from the poor they were observing. Direct observation and pure experience, reminiscent of Mayhew, are not features of the case reports of organizations such as the Charity Organisation Society. Instead, the COS puts a highly mediated and distanced methodology into place. There is no single narrator or point of view that accounts for the poor through direct observation;

rather, each account of the poor is filtered through a highly bureaucratic system. Each agent of the COS mediates multiple narratives from many sources and makes decisions that are not fully based in his own observations. While this narrative is made to look directly observational, as if only one agent observed the poor and reached conclusions based only on that observation, the archives reveal a process of information gathering that is much different from pure investigation.

One of this dissertation's major interventions is to unlink reform work from sympathy. As discussed previously, the social problem novel has been framed as a social incubator for sympathetic relationships between readers and the poor: this genre aimed to create the kind of sympathetic relationships that would lead to better philanthropic methodologies. In other words, we have framed the realist social problem novel and philanthropic methodologies as always moving parallel to one another. An example of this way of framing the novel's relationship to philanthropy is Frank Christianson's *Philanthropy in British and American Fiction*, which offers an argument for how the mid-century realist novel and modern philanthropy emerged congruently due to the way that each mediated class relations through a capitalistic version of social sensibility. His model focuses on the ways that both the realist novel and philanthropic methodology rely on observation and investigatory techniques to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor. According to Christianson, the act of reading a realist novel was similar to the act of performing philanthropy; one simply observed the lives of the poor and recorded what one observed as a way to understand the experience of the poor. Such an argument relies on causality: the investigatory techniques of philanthropy influenced the development of the realist novel as a genre. However, as chapter two discusses in detail and as this introduction mentions above, "investigatory" is not an accurate term to use to describe the bureaucratic methodology of the COS, in that it was heavily mediated and synthesized multiple, competing voices.

This dissertation's understanding of sympathy's role in philanthropic practice and reform requires a new way of framing philanthropy, which this dissertation achieves by considering philanthropic texts as narratives themselves. Importantly, these narratives were the texts by which philanthropic agents were trained to read the poor systematically rather than sympathetically. This new system of philanthropic observation, which is discussed in detail in chapter two, is rather unlike other, more well-known models of observation and philanthropic record-keeping. One such model, as used by Christianson, is that of Henry Mayhew. Christianson argues that realist novels were modeled after a "Mayhew-like narrative mediation," which uses an investigative and taxonomic methodology "to delineate sharp boundaries for the benefit of a middle-class readership for whom social assignation could be notoriously indeterminate and unstable" (4). The difference between Christianson's characterization of the philanthropic imagination and that of the highly bureaucratic Charity Organization Society is subtle but important. Where Christianson focuses on the single observer, who records and classifies the poor, mediating them through his own point of view to make the poor suitable for consumption by the middle class imagination, this dissertation's reading of the archives of the COS reveals a mediatory technique that cannot be characterized as filtered through the mind of a single, distanced observer. The narrative mediation of the COS is increasingly distanced, and through multiple points of view of members of all classes. In this way, Christianson bases his argument that philanthropic reform and the novel evolved together on the foundation of a single observer rather than the bureaucratic machinery that characterized the COS.

The records of the COS reveal the process by which its narrative is constructed, and what appears to be a single, unified narrative coming from the organization and consumed by the public is, finally, composed of an endless process of testimony, verification, observation, and

judgment calls. Classification breaks down into multi-voiced chaos. While Christianson argues that "Mayhew-like narrative mediation" owes its existence to an increasingly professionalized society, the pinnacle of professionalization and bureaucratization that the COS represents actually creates a multi-layered and nearly baroque narrative that is ultimately unsuitable for middle-class consumption. In this way, Christianson misses the qualities of professionalized philanthropy. This narrative structure is not something the COS publicized, which is why it is so important to examine the case reports and archives of the COS in order to understand its narrative methodology. These archival materials offer a glimpse at the level where reform work actually took place, as they give us a look at how agents were primarily trained in the COS's methodologies of data gathering rather than in learning to sympathize with the poor.

These archives, then, are key to understanding what a professionalized and bureaucratized narrative looks like. This dissertation frames the archival records of the Charity Organisation Society as a collection of narratives in its own right, one that trained readers in its own techniques. Unlike Mayhew, the goal was not to imagine the poor in a suitable way for middle-class consumption, but to convince the middle class that imagining the poor was a job better suited for professional organizations such as the COS. These techniques are not easily mapped onto novels in a causal way; the novels discussed in this dissertation both use these techniques and draw out their flaws. In this way, this dissertation argues that these new techniques require us to look at the relationship between philanthropy and the novel in a way that does not focus on how novelistic sympathy creates more philanthropists or philanthropic action; these narratives certainly trained readers to regard the poor differently, but they did not train readers to act upon what they read or, for example, to become philanthropists themselves. Rather, the new philanthropic methodology, developed in the case reports and other

organizational material of the COS, focuses on creating more readers who were sympathetic with the organization's strategies rather than the poor that were featured in its narratives.

Carolyn Betensky's *Feeling for the Poor* offers just such a redefinition of what it meant to feel along with a narrative. Answering the argument that social problem novels were meant to inspire social action outside of themselves, Betensky instead argues that "Victorian social problem novels volunteer the experience of their own reading as a viable response to conflicts that seem daunting or irreconcilable. Encoded at multiple levels within the novels themselves, reading becomes *something to do* about the pain of the other" (1). In this way, the event of reading itself becomes the end goal of the social problem novel. Political action is beside the point, since "Social problem novels teach us to read our own reading, know our own knowledge, and feel our own feeling about the poor and working classes as important . . ." (6). Didacticism is still a central feature, but the lesson has changed. Readers learn less about the world around them or what the poor were "really" like and more about their own understanding of the poor. This kind of training in reading directed action inward instead of outward.

This dissertation moves beyond Betensky by examining the implications of this shift in didacticism. It makes two important moves in its critical understanding of how relationships between philanthropists and the poor operated in professionalized philanthropy: first, it displaces the centrality of sympathy as an interpretive lens in current scholarship on the Victorian social problem novel; and second, it examines how other, lesser-known novels trained readers to read their own relationships with the poor. Each chapter traces the ways that novels attempt to move between objective and subjective modes of reading the poor along with the complications that such oscillation creates. Characters in each text negotiate the boundaries between the self and other within the context of philanthropic work to varying effect. The story of this dissertation is

not one of progressive social change brought about by a novel's sympathetic characterization or by representations of philanthropic ambition. Rather, its story is that representations of philanthropy, by both philanthropists themselves and novelists, trained readers to doubt the effectiveness of sympathy and its use in philanthropic endeavor as a vehicle of social change. It begins with an examination of an old way of reading the poor with *Middlemarch*, a novel that offers a retrospective understanding of sympathy at the beginning of the New Poor Law. It ends with a look at how the absence of sympathy in philanthropic work caused progressive socialists in the late nineteenth century to look outside of philanthropy for both alternative forms of attachment and social change.

Chapter one begins with George Eliot's *Middlemarch* in order to frame the way that we talk about sympathy and the social problem novel now. While the rest of the dissertation focuses on seldom-read Victorian novels and texts about philanthropy, chapter one sets the tone for the rest of dissertation by offering a different perspective on a paradigmatic example of Victorian sympathy and an old way of reading the poor. Several scholars have read Eliot through the theoretical lens of Adam Smith and the way that he explains sympathetic relationships in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. This chapter departs from Audrey Jaffe's and Rae Greiner's readings of Eliot by arguing that Eliot formulated an alternative understanding of the novel-reader relationship through a doubting narrative voice. As Eliot looked fifty years into the past, she had the benefit of a perspective that came from the changes to sympathy and philanthropy as a result of the New Poor Laws, the social context of which this introduction describes. In this way, chapter one moves away from a model that treats Eliot as a guide for reading other Victorian social problem novels. Instead, this different perspective on Eliot's use of sympathy

opens up the dissertation to varied understandings of sympathy and the way that it was destabilized in the novel as result of the professionalization of philanthropy.

This chapter offers a different model of understanding the relationship between sympathy and philanthropy by demonstrating the ways that they did not operate parallel to each other. Eliot herself was suspicious of the idea that training readers to be sympathetic could lead to reform work, yet her use of omniscient narration has long been the focus for scholars who make the argument that her novels were primarily concerned with creating sympathy. Her narrator's omniscient impartiality has been invoked as the method by which Eliot attempts to create Smithian fellow-feeling between readers and characters because of the way that it structures the novel's realist impulses. Instead of interpreting Eliot's efforts as a way of creating a reality structured by sympathy, this chapter argues that Eliot understands the work of realism to be structured by moments where sympathy cannot be achieved or when there are limits to the exchange of feeling. This chapter provides a reading of "The Natural History of German Life" as well as a reading of the contrast of feeling and knowing in *Middlemarch* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* to support this argument. More specifically, Eliot focuses on the lack of access to the emotional experiences of others and constructs scenes about sympathy that are much different than the social problem novels of Dickens and Gaskell that are discussed earlier in this introduction. Eliot's narrator doubts her own omniscience rather than trusts its ability to control the way that the reader perceives characters. *Middlemarch*, then, trains readers to recognize these limits and question their own motives in understanding others before rushing out to change the world, like Dorothea does throughout the novel. A deeper meditation on the limits of sympathy's claims to objectivity, rather than the ways that it works well, complicates a simple idea that sympathy created better relationality between the philanthropist and the poor.

Chapter two highlights the ways that sympathy and philanthropy became detached as a result of the professionalization of philanthropy. It focuses on the Charity Organisation Society (COS), which was the leading philanthropic organization in London in the late nineteenth century and influenced charitable methodology outside of Britain, especially in the United States. The chapter focuses on close readings of archival materials such as case reports (including record forms, letters, observational notes by agents, and other miscellaneous documents), annual reports, and periodical publications, beginning with the assumption that these documents participate in the revision of sympathy in narrative in the same way that the novels in this dissertation do. The COS responded to increasing urban anonymity and a zeitgeist of professionalization, explained earlier in the chapter, by creating new philanthropic methodologies. The primary vehicle for their philanthropic reform was narrative; the COS changed the way that they gathered and recorded information about the poor, focusing on facts and multi-voiced observation rather than first-person narratives and first-hand encounters with the poor.

Chapter two makes important interventions in our understanding of philanthropy and philanthropic texts. It frames the archival texts of the COS as narratives with literary style and features rather than documents that can be placed alongside novels as context to them. Because of that, this dissertation does not map the methods and style of these documents onto novels in order to create a line of causality between them. Instead, this dissertation understands both philanthropic texts and novels as taking part of a larger tradition of didacticism in the nineteenth century, and chapter two contributes to this approach by indicating the ways that philanthropic texts trained readers in methods of objectivity, which for the COS amounted to a complicated negotiation between attachment and detachment. This chapter departs from the idea that

philanthropy always involved sympathy for the poor, arguing that new techniques of training readers in the ways of professionalized philanthropy resulted in the separation of sympathy from philanthropic practice. As a result, sympathy was replaced with systems, and the narrative of the COS was tightly regulated in a way that focused on filling out forms rather than on preserving individuality through the creation of portraits of the poor constructed through first-person narrative. This has important implications for the way that we critique the ethics of philanthropic practice now. Individual agency of the poor was not affected by philanthropists' tendency to label the poor as deserving or undeserving; instead, philanthropists limited individual agency because of the way that they tightly controlled their use of first-person narrative while claiming that they preserved the first-hand stories of the poor. This argument in chapter two necessitates a revision of the way that we think about the possibilities and limitations of philanthropy's role in social change, which is taken up in chapters three and four.

While sympathy with the poor remains a strong feature in the writing of the COS and is often invoked to garner more subscriptions (donations), it is not linked to increased philanthropic action. Instead, the COS vilified sympathy as merely a reaction to scenes of suffering; importantly, for the COS, sympathy is actually harmful to philanthropic practice. This change in understanding of the use of sympathy is demonstrated in the case reports of the COS, where first-person accounts of the suffering of the poor are not to be trusted. Instead, the COS gathered together many different voices during a highly bureaucratized process in order to verify the claims of the poor and determine if they were deserving of help from the COS. When philanthropic agents recorded case reports, they had to unify multiple and disparate voices, facts, and opinions (from referees, the poor themselves, relatives, and public records) through their own authority as agent-as-narrator. What resulted were narratives that appeared to preserve the

perspectives of the clients who were the subject of the case, but which actually narratively structured their stories and effectively erased their perspective and ability to speak for themselves. What resulted was a narrative that appeared to be sympathetic, observational, and direct from the poor subject, but that did not rely on sympathy for its operation.

Chapter two operates as an important hinge in the dissertation, in that it describes the displacement of sympathy in the practice of philanthropy. The archival materials of the Charity Organisation Society provide a look at an important turning point in philanthropic practice in the nineteenth century by providing a concrete understanding of one way that readers were trained to understand the limits of sympathy. These materials served as actual manuals that trained philanthropically-minded readers to understand the complications of sympathizing with the poor and the ways that such sympathy was detrimental to successful philanthropy. They also implicitly trained readers to distrust first-person narratives and trust the organization's methodology as a filtering process that did the work of sympathy for them. In this way, readers no longer needed to sympathize with the poor to do philanthropic work. As the limits of sympathy became more understood and changed readers' perspectives about the poor, sympathy and the way it could be deployed in the novel also changed. Chapters three and four examine the implications of this shift when we focus on the female reader. Women were trained to be just as objective as men were, yet literature aimed directly at female philanthropists addresses the concern that women were more prone to sympathetic response to the poor since such a response was a cultural expectation: women could comfortably interact with the poor as caregivers. Such an anxiety about women is missing from the critical conversation surrounding female philanthropists when critics argue that women could use their accepted gender role as sympathetic in order to become professional philanthropists. By ignoring this crucial aspect of

female philanthropy, critics often reach a conclusion that this dissertation aims to challenge by arguing that philanthropic reform in the late nineteenth century made it difficult for women to be both femininely sympathetic and professional.

Chapter three considers the implications of increasingly professionalized philanthropic practice on current critical expectations around the possibilities of philanthropy for women. These conversations characterize female philanthropists as able to achieve professional status while still being able to form sisterhoods where all women were equal to each other. To them, philanthropy was a unique kind of vocation that allowed women to exercise the traditionally "feminine" qualities of sympathy, altruism and sisterhood while working towards increased rights for women at the same time. Through readings of Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* and H. G. Well's *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman*, this chapter argues against the idea that philanthropic work provided a way for Victorian women to find agency in the public sphere. The agency granted to the philanthropist agent-narrator, as found in the archival records discussed in chapter two, was not extended to women. The protagonists of these novels were relegated to performing philanthropy as data collectors and inevitably fell back into roles as sympathetic readers of the poor. In this way, the ambiguity of their roles in Besant's and Wells's novels, as well as their oscillation between sympathetic reader of the poor and benevolent philanthropist, prevented female philanthropists from achieving the professionalism of the agent-narrator-bureaucrat that the COS valued so highly.

In this way, philanthropic work loses it ability to be a stable site of proto-feminist professional development, which is how it is framed in current scholarship. This chapter aims to push back against the redemption of philanthropy as a foundation of late-Victorian feminism, particularly when it comes to the role of literature in its professionalization. Broadly, scholars

such as Frank Christianson strongly link the professionalization of philanthropy with the novel's ability to create social change, where philanthropic ideology mirrors representations of philanthropy in the novel. Dorice Williams Elliott also sees such causality between novels about philanthropy and philanthropic practice within a female-centered context. Assuming that philanthropy is inherently feminist work since it moves women's labor from the private to the public sphere, she argues that representations of female philanthropists created "ambitious desire" that would cause women to become philanthropists. However, chapter three outlines two important ways that professionalized philanthropy did not have the capacity to achieve feminist redemption for women. First, it shows that the kind of training that was created for philanthropists by professionalized philanthropic societies such as the COS, that of the agent-as-narrator, was not accessible to women. In this way, philanthropic work did not facilitate the kinds of conditions for women that would allow it to be labeled inherently feminist work. Second, even if that were possible, representations of philanthropy in the novels discussed in this chapter did not create model female philanthropic characters who would facilitate the production of the kind of vocational desire that Elliott discusses. Instead, their philanthropy is framed as a means to an end, such as marriage, that precludes the development of an identity that prioritizes vocation as the ultimate calling for women. In other words, there is a contrast between the idealized philanthropic heroine, and the way she is depicted in novels, that precludes an argument that links the novel with philanthropic work.

This chapter looks at philanthropic training materials targeted at a female audience in order to contextualize how women, specifically, were trained to read the poor. "The Education of Philanthropy," a pamphlet written by a trainee of Octavia Hill, one of the most influential female philanthropists of the nineteenth century, is notably similar to the methodology of the

Charity Organisation Society. These materials emphasize the importance of emotional distance from the poor in a way that revises the idea that the female philanthropists must be self-sacrificing in order to solve poverty and fulfill their roles as feminine caregivers. At first glance, these materials appear to emphasize the professionalism of the female philanthropist so as to support the argument that philanthropy provides a way for women to find a professional identity in the public sphere. In "The Education of Philanthropy," we find a philanthropic heroine who is able to control her own emotional response to a scene of impoverished cacophony and ultimately control the chaos by gathering information that results in an actionable to-do list. She is admired and emulated by aspiring female philanthropists for her ability to maintain emotional distance from the scene in front of her, much as an artful narrator would. Yet, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* and *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* offer a different perspective on the idealized philanthropic heroine. In these novels, the professionalism of the well-trained female philanthropist only serves to co-opt her efforts back into a bureaucratic, ultimately patriarchal, system. Instead of achieving the narrative distance of the professionalized philanthropic agent and gaining an identity for themselves as a professional, the female philanthropists in these novels find that philanthropic data-gathering methods create the conditions that prevent women from achieving autonomy.

Chapter three argues that Wells's and Besant's novels unravel the idealization of the philanthropic heroine. The philanthropist protagonists, Angela (*All Sorts and Conditions of Men*) and Lady Harman (*The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman*), turn out to be the opposite of the professional philanthropist modeled by "The Education of Philanthropy." When faced with the cacophony of the conditions of poverty and the desires of the poor whom they seek to help, Angela and Lady Harman respond in ways that would make the Charity Organisation Society

strike them from their list of acceptable philanthropies. This is hardly out of ignorance, because the two women certainly strive to distance their professional identities as philanthropists from that of the poor whom they encounter. Instead, they dole out their philanthropy in personal ways that do not follow the COS's tenets of professionalism, as outlined in chapter two. Further, they only gain distance in ways that harm their work and identities as philanthropists. Angela can only accomplish her work by taking on a disguise, an act of gaining objectivity that precludes a professional identity as the philanthropist with capital. Lady Harman, who at first gives in to the demands of the women she is helping, gains distance from them at a cost to the purpose of her philanthropic work in the first place: she is required to hand over the daily operations of her philanthropic work to a manager who enacts assistance for women in a way with which Lady Harman disagrees. Because of these complications, Angela and Lady Harman can neither perform philanthropy in a professional, objective way, nor attain a public identity that comes directly from their philanthropic work. In this way, both novels present professional philanthropy and feminist autonomy as mutually exclusive.

The novels further undermine the creation of "ambitious desires" by treating philanthropy as a mere means to an end rather than the main focus. By interpolating philanthropic work into novels that function around conventional marriage plots, each novel treats philanthropy as the training ground for becoming a good wife. The tone around the marriage plot is different for each novel, as Besant seems to perform a sleight-of-hand trick that suddenly turns a novel about philanthropy into a grand wedding finale, while Wells is openly disdainful of both marriage and philanthropy, creating the impression that philanthropy is only for miserable, rich wives. Importantly, each novel, in its own way, depicts public identities for women as only possible for married women. Angela's final revelation of herself as philanthropist happens at her wedding,

where she subsequently hands off her enterprise to the people. Lady Harman's philanthropy is only possible because she is married to a wealthy man whose business provides the problem she seeks to solve. Neither novel, then, presents a protagonist who is worthy of women's ambitious desires being modelled after her.

Because these novels illustrate the failure to create "ambitious desires" in their readers, they certainly do not succeed in offering narratives that train readers to become philanthropists themselves. Instead, they offer examples of how training readers to become more objective and distanced in their philanthropic work, as the Charity Organisation Society does, does not succeed. This is particularly true for women, whose professional identities are tied to their ability to be autonomous, in control of their own work, and objective and distanced from the poor with whom they work. These novels work against the training manuals in objectivity offered by philanthropic organizations by presenting heroines who gain objectivity in a way that bars them from accomplishing their work. Further, they preclude interpretations that representations of philanthropy provide sites for female readers to train their own ambitious desires. Where this dissertation is about the ways that philanthropic texts trained readers in objectivity towards the poor, these novels demonstrate that there are additional obstacles to social reform for female philanthropists, who often had to sacrifice their objectivity (and thus their professional identities) for a public identity that was rooted in traditional marriage rather than professionalism.

Chapter four is an examination of how attachment and the philanthropic discourse of objectivity come into conflict with each other. This chapter extends chapter three's discussion of the effects of professionalization of philanthropy on women, but where chapter three examines female philanthropists and their public relationships with the poor, chapter four examines

women's intimate relationships with each other within philanthropic work. This chapter also examines how professionalization prevents philanthropy from becoming a platform for social change, particularly because it did not provide a platform for women's progress. In this chapter, I argue that, because professionalized philanthropy centered around detachment, it did not create the conditions where special kinds of equal relationships between women, such as sisterhood, could thrive. Edith Johnstone's *A Sunless Heart* and Isabella Ford's *On the Threshold* train readers to recognize the harms of professionalization, particularly when it limits personal desire and the ability to cultivate attachments to others. These novels struggle to portray idealized and equal female relationships because they are caught between the conflicting discourses of sympathetic sisterhood as a model for female philanthropy and the professionalized philanthropic discourse of the late nineteenth century.

Both *A Sunless Heart* and *On the Threshold* frame themselves as novels that represent women differently than novels that have come before them. Johnstone aims to represent female relationships as their own special category, separate from romantic relationships between men and women, and she chooses to do so within the context of philanthropy in the late nineteenth century. Ford argues in her essay "Women and Socialism" that Socialism could only succeed if it was closely linked with the women's movement and prioritized the transformation of gender relations. *On the Threshold* demonstrates how philanthropy for women has changed: women could no longer conform to the feminine expectations of sympathetic philanthropy if they were to achieve socialist aims. In other words, philanthropy and the women's movement were mutually exclusive.

Yet even while *A Sunless Heart* aims to represent the special nature of female relationships within philanthropic work, one of the major characters, Lotus, in the novel

explicitly rejects sisterhood as a model for female philanthropists. Chapter four examines the historical model for sisterhood in philanthropy and makes connections between its characterization of female relationships, which were constituted by a sense of shared suffering, and Lotus's rejection of such rhetoric. Additionally, Lotus adopts the cool detachment of professionalized philanthropy in her relationship with Gasparine, who receives her help. As Gasparine tries to become closer to Lotus, she finds that her efforts are constantly thwarted by Lotus's determined detachment and that she is never satisfied with the level of her attachment to Lotus. Gasparine is unable to find equality with Lotus, even while they exchange gifts with each other. Where *A Sunless Heart* fails to live up to Johnstone's ideals about female relationality, *On the Threshold* also demonstrates the impossibilities for women to form relationships with each other while performing sympathetic philanthropy. The protagonists of the novel, Lucretia and Kitty, find that forming sympathetic attachment to their maid is impossible when she rejects their help even when she falls on hard times. Additionally, Lucretia narrates the novel in a very claustrophobic, first-person style, which becomes most acute when she speaks of her distress about being unable to form a close relationship with Kitty. Each of these novels demonstrate the difficulty of performing sympathetic philanthropy while at the same time forming attachments to other women who are doing the same work.

The novels' struggle to reconcile their female characters' relationships as non-hierarchical and live up the ideals that they set forth calls into question our critical focus on sympathetic altruism and sisterhood as models for relationships between female philanthropists, especially when those ideals are touted as vehicles for feminist social change. Chapter four interacts with the work of Sharon Marcus, who frames philanthropy as sympathetic and altruistic, qualities that women are culturally well-suited for, and Jill Rappoport, who argues that

philanthropic work allowed women to form "horizontal" attachments that resisted the problems of hierarchical philanthropy. Yet each of these critics have not reckoned with the changes that professionalism brought to philanthropy. Instead, this dissertation demonstrates how professionalized detachment ultimately prevented philanthropic work among women in the late nineteenth century to be framed as a special arena that could remain separate from capitalism. By the late nineteenth century, detachment had to permeated philanthropic discourse as to make it impossible for women to develop sympathetic, altruistic, or sisterly relationships that Marcus and Rappoport argue for. Ultimately, these novels challenge critical views about the possibility for philanthropy, particularly professionalized philanthropy, to enable women's progress in the late nineteenth century. Chapter four argues that professionalized philanthropy is inherently unequal.

These chapters trace an important shift in philanthropic attachments and the role of literature in shaping philanthropic ways of reading the poor. As a result of changing social conditions that made traditional philanthropic methods of face-to-face interaction and sympathetic attachment difficult, as well as a rise in professionalization and bureaucratic systems, philanthropic reformers sought out new ways of distributing resources. As a result, philanthropy began to look more like a system than "love for humanity" and was no longer concerned with creating sweeping social change as it was with finding a more efficient way to do philanthropy. Since philanthropists focused their efforts on such a shift by creating more systematic narrative techniques, philanthropic reform also had a massive effect on the way that texts oriented themselves toward philanthropic social change. The texts discussed in this dissertation each shift away from the social problem novel in important ways. George Eliot, in *Middlemarch* and "The Natural History of German Life," was skeptical of using literature as a

tool for social change and tried to think of ways to confront difficult emotion rather than to create sympathetic characters who could be redeemed from their situation. The Charity Organisation Society, through its case papers, annual reports, pamphlets, periodicals, and other publications, trained readers to create increased distance between themselves and the poor, entrusting contact with the poor to philanthropies and their professionalized systems of verification of the poor's stories about themselves. *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* and *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* failed to train female readers and aspiring philanthropic heroines to go after their ambitious desires, instead training them to see philanthropy as a means to retaining traditional female identities in the private sphere, thus challenging a critical interpretation that posits philanthropy is a central area of social change for women. *On the Threshold* and *A Sunless Heart* trained readers to recognize that the detachment that characterized professionalized philanthropy limited its primacy as a central site for progressivism. This dissertation traces the effects of an increasing emphasis on professionalized detachment, both on the protocols that trained readers, or philanthropic agents, and on the ability for novels to depict developed female characters who attained professionalism or formed equal attachments with other women. Philanthropic reform, based in training readers in objectivity and efficiency, changed the way that Victorian readers understood attachment to the poor, and it also challenges the scholarly emphasis on sympathy as a progressive or resistant reading protocol. The readings of novels in the next four chapters aspire to open the critical conversation around sympathy and philanthropy in a way that acknowledges that changes in reading protocols brought on by professionalized philanthropy, and how that change was detrimental to women's development.

CHAPTER ONE

Ethical Forms of Feeling: Eliot's Rejection of Sympathy in *Middlemarch*

As this dissertation tracks the varying ways that novels trained readers to understand the limits of sympathy, I begin with Eliot's use of a doubting narrative voice and her removal of causality between sympathy and philanthropy. Dissatisfied with the idea that feeling had to be taxonomized and known before it could be sympathized with, or that relating to someone else sympathetically had to be limited by what we could know about her, Eliot did not use her narrator to create knowledge or reproduce the experience of another person. Instead, she created situations where the reader had to grapple with understanding another person even when their emotions could not be fully known. In this way, my reading of Eliot challenges our understanding of Smithian sympathy's role in training readers of the Victorian novel. Rather than propagating the kind of sympathy that Smith theorized in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Eliot experiments with the structure of individual characters' stories in order to cultivate new forms of sympathetic relationality. Her revision of sympathy also has important implications for the way that we understand sympathy's connection to philanthropic action in the late nineteenth century. This chapter aims to complicate the current conversation around sympathy and its role in the Victorian novel. A reading of *Middlemarch* will offer a way of looking at how novels trained their readers to be responsive to the characters and representations of suffering as an alternative to dominant readings of sympathy in the novel by Amanda Claybaugh, Rae Greiner, and Audrey Jaffe. This alternative reading takes place on two levels throughout the chapter.

The first level on which this chapter challenges our understanding of sympathy and its role in narrative is a novelistic one, in that it considers how George Eliot's use of novels to train

readers to reorient themselves towards the other. This chapter seeks to challenge the idea that readers were always trained to be more sympathetic, thus doing the "work of reform" as Amanda Claybaugh calls it in *The Novel of Purpose*. While Claybaugh concedes that Eliot "chafed against [the] role" (50) of the novelist as reformer, as this chapter does, she still relies upon mimetic representation as the tool by which sympathy achieves the work of reform. Claybaugh argues that realist representation allowed for recognition in readers that resulted in sympathy, which in turn led to reform: "Once these individuals come to feel sympathy, the systems themselves will whither away. [. . .] To feel sympathy with a slave or a worker is to recognize that he or she is a person in some way like oneself, and this makes his or her sufferings unacceptable (24). As discussed in the introduction, current conversation around sympathy tends to rely on such a model of causality to talk about how novels do social work. In other words, the only discussion we have about how novels trained readers to be responsive to the poor is also a discussion about sympathy and how it creates commonality. This chapter argues that George Eliot is an example of an alternative model, since she is suspicious that narrating the emotional experiences of others can successfully train readers to sympathize with them, much less to act upon that training. This chapter offers a different model for training readers by complicating the motives behind Eliot's omniscient narrator.

The second level on which this chapter challenges our understanding of sympathy and its role in narrative is a critical conversational one, in that it takes up the issue of how prominent scholars of Victorian sympathy, namely Rae Greiner and Audrey Jaffe, use Smith to make the argument that realist representation is the primary way that readers are trained to be more sympathetic. Rather than to offer an alternative way of reading Smith, this chapter complicates Greiner's and Jaffe's use of Smith to create protocols for how novels train readers to be more

sympathetic. Smith tends to be the final authority for the operation of sympathy in the Victorian novel. Instead, this chapter argues that the specificities of sympathy's protocol—its way of organizing emotion, taxonomizing emotion, and imagining emotion—were being continually contested and revised by novelists and philanthropists in the nineteenth century. Rather than mapping Smith onto Eliot via Greiner or Jaffe's reading of him, this chapter considers how Eliot was grappling with the question of creating sympathy on her own terms. Additionally, this chapter complicates the way that we read Smithian sympathy vis-à-vis the novel. Where Greiner and Jaffe seek to trace sympathy's influence on the Victorian novel, using Eliot as a centerpiece for their argument, this chapter points out where Eliot departs from Smithian sympathy and posits a different way to mediate social relationships between novels and readers, rich and poor.

The first way that this chapter intervenes in the critical discussion surrounding sympathy is to consider how novelists and philanthropists accounted for the failure of sympathy. Indeed, this dissertation, as the introduction lays out, looks at how novelists and philanthropists dealt with a changing social climate in which sympathy was increasingly difficult to use to mediate relationships between the rich and the poor. This social context contradicts what Rae Greiner argues about the centrality of sympathy in *Sympathetic Realism in the Nineteenth Century*: "By depicting social reality as a product of fellow-feeling, the realist novel portrays the real as both fictive and sympathetic" (10). This chapter focuses on the moments when Eliot considered fellow-feeling to be an artificial construction that could not be used to portray reality in the most accurate way possible. In the section about "The Natural History of German Life," I argue that Eliot considered the drive towards uniformity of feeling, or fellow-feeling, to be more detrimental to the creation of reality than how Greiner formulates such a connection above. Further, *Middlemarch* was written as a novel about the sea change in social relations brought

about by the New Poor Laws, using the insight gained by almost fifty years of experience with these new social conditions. In other words, *Middlemarch* was written by the time that philanthropists had already rejected sympathy as the organizing protocol for social relations; with this insight, Eliot could produce a more skeptical retrospective on the time when sympathy was just beginning to be questioned. From here, this chapter is more interested in Eliot's thinking about sympathy as something that could no longer structure reality.

Further, something that is implicit in both Greiner's understanding of sympathy and her reading of Smithian sympathy is the idea that sympathy should be prioritized as a way of overcoming the problem of accessing another's emotional experience. Greiner elevates sympathy as *the* structuring agent of the novel by arguing that "These writings form a tradition that portrays sympathy as a mental action involving the creation and exchange of imagined feeling, a way of sharing attitudes and modes of thought independent of the need to verify another's feeling . . ." (4). Here, I do not take issue with Greiner's redefinition of sympathy as "cognitive exercise" (1). Rather, Greiner implies in this quote that sympathy can be a way of sharing feeling successfully, that access to the emotions of others can be created, even imaginatively, in realist writing. She argues that novels can and do "employ forms designed to enact sympathetic habits of mind in readers" (15), a phrase that is indicative of sympathy's connection to training readers of novels. For Greiner, the way that a novel is formed around sympathy is the mechanism that trains readers ("enact[s . . .] habits of mind") to bridge the gap of difference between themselves and the novel, and in turn, between themselves and other people. Eliot is incredibly important to this conversation, since her body of work is a sustained conversation about the possibility of affinities between different people and the novel's role in creating such connections. However, this chapter seeks to do something different with Eliot's

writing: instead of establishing Eliot's work as entirely sympathetic or not, it looks for moments in Eliot's work when she entertains skepticism about this possibility. I approach Eliot's work from the premise that she imagines what social relations look like when we can't exchange or imagine the feelings of others successfully, whether positive or negative. As such, I look for failure of communication in Eliot's work, either in her narrative voice or when she imagines that Smithian sympathy is an inadequate vehicle for relating to others. Greiner attempts to reframe the problem of accessing the emotional experience of others (and the criticism of Smith that his formulation of sympathy is too much about categories) by arguing that Smith does not focus on the need to verify feeling. Eliot also takes issue with the idea that we must know emotion in order to access another person's emotion, as the discussion of Lydgate's microscope in this chapter demonstrates, but she does not overcome this problem in the same way that Greiner claims the novel does, by using realism as a vehicle to imaginatively exchange feeling. For Eliot, this is not a problem to be solved but to be dwelled upon. Eliot imagines another way of relating to people that accounts for conditions that prevent the exchange of feeling or for moments when we do not desire to exchange feeling. The issue at stake for Eliot is not *just* defining sympathy as feeling or knowing, but taking into account situations where finding affinity with other people is at an extreme level of difficulty. The goal of narrative can be to create affinity, but it also needs to account for discord and lack of connection, a condition that was an intensely real problem for philanthropists and novelists alike.

The idea that lack of access to the emotional experience of another person cannot always be overcome by reading a novel, or the idea that narrating experience does not necessarily enable full access, is best illustrated by the character of Dorothea in *Middlemarch*. Toward the end of the novel, Dorothea and Celia have a conversation about Dorothea's decision to marry Will

Ladislaw. Celia cannot understand why Dorothea would give up her philanthropic plans, her estate, and her wealth. To Celia, Dorothea is making another wrong decision, and the two can't seem to come to an agreement, either in their temperaments or in terms of the decision itself. Celia's anxious demeanor is in stark contrast with Dorothea's calm lightheartedness. Considering Dorothea's track record with marriage up until this point, it is tempting to agree with Celia's practical petitions to Dorothea's common sense. In the last portion of the conversation, Eliot denies the possibility for Dorothea to bring Celia into complete understanding of how this marriage came to be at all:

> Dorothea smiled, and Celia looked rather meditative. Presently she said, "I cannot think how it all came about." Celia thought it would be pleasant to hear the story.
>
> "I daresay not," said Dorothea, pinching her sister's chin. "If you knew how it came about, it would not seem wonderful to you."
>
> "Can't you tell me?" said Celia, settling her arms cozily.
>
> "No, dear, you would have to feel with me, else you would never know." (629)

Here, Eliot opens *Middlemarch* to questions about the relationship between feeling and knowing, particularly in the context of sympathetic exchange. While the conditions are right for sympathy, Dorothea refuses to give Celia the knowledge she asks for. At this point, the two sisters aren't in any more agreement about Dorothea's decision to marry Will than they were at the beginning of the conversation, and, as the chapter ends with Dorothea's response, we are left with Dorothea's refusal to tell her story, a rather ironic way to close a long novel about Dorothea's decision-making process. While the conversation seems to highlight how little Celia knows about Dorothea in comparison to the reader, it does not suggest that *knowing* more about Dorothea's

decision will allow Celia and Dorothea to reach sympathetic understanding of each other; nor does it privilege Dorothea's nod toward the emotional process she (and the readers, perhaps) have gone through to get to this moment. Dorothea's refusal to accept the conditions of sympathy have a similar effect on the reader, who might see Celia's desire to know as a similar situation to their own reading of *Middlemarch* and Dorothea's story itself. The point of this scene, then, is to train readers to look beyond sympathy as a form of knowledge that can solve problems of difference.

Eliot also undercuts Dorothea's understanding of narrative sympathy by the way that she frames the conversation. Dorothea's hesitation centers around the conflict between feeling and knowing in the sympathetic encounter. In the conversation with Celia, Dorothea struggles with the differences between the two. She starts by privileging emotion over knowledge, saying that '"If you knew how it came about, it would not seem wonderful to you.'" Dorothea prefers that Celia share in her happiness rather than dissect the reasons behind it. She goes on to elaborate upon that idea in her next statement, suggesting that one cannot simply know without first feeling something similar to the person one is trying to get to know better. For Dorothea, emotion is the foundation of knowledge. The problem with Dorothea's thesis is that she denies Celia the opportunity for either feeling or knowledge at all; she seems to think that Celia should simply match her emotional tenor without motivation or reason. Throughout the novel, Dorothea's flaw is not only that she assumes her particular kind of emotional response is universal, but also that she experiences the world through her own narrow emotional sphere. When Dorothea says that Celia would need to feel with her in order to know, she seems to acknowledge the basic requirement for fellow-feeling in the sympathetic encounter. But,

ironically, this is Dorothea's reason for ending the story rather than beginning it, thus denying any chance for Celia to sympathize.

On the surface, Dorothea's definition of narrative experience is a textbook definition of sympathy itself. Sympathy is "feeling with" the other, as Greiner has persuasively argued in *Sympathetic Realism*. At the same time that Dorothea invites sympathy from Celia, she denies the possibility for creating it. Through the process of storytelling, Dorothea could enable Celia to imagine her own point of view so that Celia might not be so troubled about the marriage; she might be able to displace her own feelings of anxiousness about her sister living so far away with Dorothea's calm trust in her own love for Will. Telling her story to Celia would offer a neat ending to a chapter with such uncertainty. Dorothea's response, though, does not suggest that telling her story would engender such sympathy. Instead, Dorothea suggests that Celia would actually need to *experience* Dorothea's emotions up until this point to reach complete understanding. In other words, Celia would need to *be* Dorothea. Of course, telling a story would never be able to achieve this end. Dorothea's ambivalence here suggests that storytelling neither satisfies Celia's need to know nor relates Dorothea's depth of feeling; Dorothea does not tell her story because doing so would never be able to achieve what Dorothea wants it to achieve. Because Eliot focuses on this conflict in her mapping of sympathetic exchange, the reader is able to understand this conversation as a complication of traditional sympathy rather than a promotion of it. This conversation between Dorothea and Celia further opens the conflict between feeling and knowing, between experience and imagination; it suggests that experience is something that narrative cannot quite achieve. In this chapter, I will argue that, as Eliot experiments with narrative, she highlights the need for a kind of relationality that gets beyond recreating or knowing the emotional experience of another and does not rely on fellow-feeling as the outcome.

In *Middlemarch*, characters continually mistake feeling as something that can be known and categorized, or they consider knowing and feeling to be mutually exclusive ways of relating to other people, as Dorothea does in her conversation with Celia. Lydgate is a prime example of the desire to know the mysterious inner workings of another's emotions:

> He for his part had tossed away all cheap inventions where ignorance finds itself able and at ease: he was enamoured of that arduous invention which is the very eye of research, provisionally framing its object and correcting it to more and more exactness of relation; he wanted to pierce the obscurity of those minute processes which prepare human misery and joy, those invisible thoroughfares which are the first lurking-places of anguish, mania, and crime, that delicate poise and transition which determine the growth of happy or unhappy consciousness. (Eliot 155)

Lydgate considers it the great work of his life to make others' lives better by understanding the emotional motivation behind a person's state of being. Eschewing the "diseased dream" of the anatomically incorrect drawing of old medicine, Lydgate favors the microscope because it is "capable of bathing even the ethereal atoms in its ideally illuminated space" (155). These secrets of science no longer hold mysterious, god-like power over anyone; instead, the new inventions make even the smallest and most mysterious substance known to the human eye. With such tools and vision at his disposal, Lydgate thinks that he could even see past the obscurity of consciousness itself, finally understanding what makes other people happy or miserable. With tragic irony, though, Lydgate cannot seem to understand his own wife; "Each lived in a world of which the other knew nothing" (155). Lydgate focuses on knowing emotion, yet he cannot grasp Rosamond's emotional life, further driving the two apart from each other. Lydgate fails to

recognize that the microscope, for all its powers of light and magnification, is incapable of extending his range of vision to that which is beyond the observable. He puts his faith in a tool that, by its very nature, is incapable of seeing anything beyond what can be framed by its lens.

While Lydgate desires to remove mysterious power from emotional consciousness by examining and codifying it, Dorothea gives her own emotional experiences so much power that she limits her vision to what is immediately in front of her. Dorothea knows almost entirely by feeling: "She was humiliated to find herself a mere victim of feeling, as if she could know nothing except through that medium: all her strength was scattered in fits of agitation, of struggle, of despondency, and then again in visions of more complete renunciation, transforming all hard conditions into duty" (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 184). In response to being a victim of feeling, Dorothea overreacts by renouncing it altogether; she thinks that her failure to act stems from her inability to channel her emotion into a more stream-lined duty. We can't entirely fault Dorothea for her desire to create a more purposeful direction for herself out of her complicated emotional life, but she chooses the wrong course of action. In other words, the problem is not emotion itself; the problem is that Dorothea targets emotion as the source of her trouble. Dorothea interprets her diffuse (yet rich) emotional life as agitation that is lacking direction, where elsewhere in the novel we can see that emotional life as such is not quite the problem.

Middlemarch hardly rejects feeling entirely as a mode of experiencing the world and relating to others. After all, both Lydgate's and Casaubon's greatest flaw is their inability to be responsive to the feelings of others, and the narrator tells us that "Our good depends on the quality and breadth of our emotion" (Eliot 431). Where Dorothea interprets her emotional life as the problem and attempts to channel it into dutiful action, the narrator tells us that she is lacking the breadth of emotion upon which her good depends. After Casaubon's death, when Dorothea

is trying to decide what to do with her newly acquired fortune, she sorts through papers to help her make this decision:

> One morning, about eleven, Dorothea was seated in her boudoir with a map of the land attached to the manor and other papers before her, which were to help her in making an exact statement for herself of her income and affairs. She had not yet applied herself to her work, but was seated with her hands folded on her lap, looking out along the avenue of limes to the distant fields. Every leaf was at rest in the sunshine, the familiar scene was changeless, and seemed to represent the prospect of her life, full of motiveless ease—motiveless, if her own energy could not seek out reasons for ardent action. (431)

This scene is striking because it shows us the reason why Dorothea is unable to act. It is not because she is too emotional; it is because she gets too caught up in the details. Dorothea essentially has the tools she needs right in front of her in order to act: she has control of the estate, and she has the information she needs to make a plan. But instead of noticing the larger scheme of her life that is represented by the map of her property, she concentrates her energy on each individual leaf on the trees outside. When Dorothea does channel her consciousness in a particular direction, she chooses the wrong one, making her action unproductive and futile. Dorothea thinks she sees the big picture when she looks out onto her property, but she chooses to expend her energy on too many small things, failing to gain distance from her situation, which is provided by the map sitting directly in front of her.

Both Lydgate's and Dorothea's myopic, detail-oriented vision limit the way that they experience the world around them. Dorothea's exhortation to Celia is finally a problem within the context of *Middlemarch* because she asks Celia to sympathetically enter into the world of her

experience, dominated by her own myopic vision, in order to understand the way that Dorothea knows and builds her own knowledge base. In this way, sympathy's traditional relationship between the categories of feeling and knowing become the primary categories that Eliot explores in her departure from sympathy itself. Where Dorothea seems more certain about how one can *know* how another person feels and thus sympathize with them, Eliot takes a more cautious approach to sympathy and the way that it attempts to place emotional experience into knowledge categories.

The conflict that Eliot sees between feeling and knowing is central to her understanding of traditional sympathy and her departure from it. Importantly, Eliot set the terms for the shift in sympathy that took place over the nineteenth century. Many of the conflicts between feeling and knowing that she highlights in *Middlemarch* and "The Natural History of German Life" arise again and again in the discourse surrounding sympathy and how it should be deployed narratively. In addition, her discussion of the limits of sympathy takes place in the context of a discussion around philanthropic action, with which Dorothea struggles throughout *Middlemarch*. Eliot is asking, essentially, as many philanthropists in the nineteenth century did, what is key to creating ethical action, feeling an emotional connection and creating sympathy through imagination, or knowing about the other and thus having a solid foundation on which to judge them?

The methodology of traditional sympathy that *Middlemarch* quibbles with comes from Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, a text that very much concerns itself with the taxonomy of various emotions and their suitability for idealized sympathy. For Greiner, this protocol comes from Adam Smith, with his focus on the imagination and the impartial spectator. Indeed, "Such a sympathy is grounded in the pursuit of narrative effects rather than

epistemological certainty. It rests entirely on our ability to reconstruct imaginatively another's 'situation,' to simulate his point of view", and sympathy does this so effectively that the other needn't feel anything at all in order for us to sympathize with her or him (Greiner 17). Yet George Eliot, in her concern with confronting the most difficult feelings, has another goal in mind for her own realist project. Rather than mimetically simulate another's point of view, she is concerned with creating forms of feeling when the perspective that comes from emotional experience cannot be replicated through narrative or when sympathy is not as successful at mediating repulsive emotions or people. Art, when it "amplifies experience" does not substitute one point of view for another. Most importantly, in the words of Eliot, it "extend[s] our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot" ("Natural History" 110). We come in contact with the Other, but, where a new point of view suggests an embodied experience replacing our current one, Eliot's emphasis on going "beyond the bounds of our personal lot" suggests that art stretches the limits of point of view and forces us to reflect upon the emotions of another even when we can't quite imaginatively approximate them. For both Smith and Eliot, sympathy begins with a problem: the reader or observer does not have access to the emotional experiences of the other. Dorothea and Lydgate seek to access the emotional experiences of others by building new knowledge, as if more of it will push out the problems of adequately relating to others. The problem though, is that neither Lydgate nor Dorothea sees the costs of building this knowledge, as it makes them less able to relate to others by limiting their sphere of experience even further.

Yet, where Eliot is skeptical about the methodology of taxonomizing one's emotions, Smith values it as a method of creating sympathy. The problem with feeling and knowing becomes acute when one person tries to relate to another person: of course we cannot actually

mirror the feelings of another person perfectly, so sympathy attempts to build a knowledge base for relating to another person in order to solve this problem somewhat. In this way, Smith creates conflict between feeling and knowing: feeling is the problem, since we cannot directly experience it, so it is necessary to create a knowledge base in order to overcome this problem. As I work through Eliot's narrative methodology in this chapter, I will draw out the ways that Eliot resisted sympathy (as defined by Smith) as a way of creating ethical relationships between people.

Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is based upon a problem: how can we properly judge the emotional conduct of another person if we can't actually experience that emotion for ourselves? This is a problem that traditional sympathy attempts to overcome by creating fellow-feeling. This becomes even more of a problem when the emotion expressed by another person is inherently difficult to sympathize with:

> Upon some occasions sympathy may seem to arise merely from the view of a certain emotion in another person. The passions, upon some occasions, may seem to be transfused from one man to another, instantaneously, and antecedent to any knowledge of what excited them in the person principally concerned. Grief and joy, for example, strongly expressed in the look and gestures of any one, at once affect the spectator with some degree of a like painful or agreeable emotion. [. . .] This, however, does not hold universally, or with regard to every passion. There are some passions of which the expressions excite no sort of sympathy, but before we are acquainted with what gave occasion to them, serve rather to disgust and provoke us against them. (11)

Smith points out that the "passions . . . seem to be transfused," but that other passions can just as easily be misunderstood, causing confusion or disgust rather than sympathetic understanding. Because not all emotions can be easily visually transferred, Smith relies upon constructing a narrative around the emotion, rather than the viewing of emotion, in order to create sympathy: "Sympathy, therefore, does not arise so much from the view of the passion, as from that of the situation which excites it" (12). Traditional sympathy, then, is the creation of knowledge of emotion by explaining the situation that caused the emotion in the first place. This understanding of the workings of sympathy creates a justification for what follows in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*: the careful categorizing of various emotions and how easily one can sympathize with them. Where experience is impossible, knowledge of the experience is a reasonable stand-in. This basis for sympathy, however, in its emphasis on knowledge of the motivations for another person's emotion, makes sympathy nearly impossible if one knows nothing about the other person's situation. Smith attempts to solve this problem by conceding that sympathy is almost always an ideal that we strive for. Even if we cannot quite reach it, we can work hard to reach something that comes close. Smith calls this "concord."

The ideal outcome of sympathy is "fellow-feeling", or "concord." More than just judging the emotional conduct of the Other or even just responding to it properly (by giving the Other something, for example), sympathy involves judging how we orient ourselves toward the Other, and, even more importantly, cultivating a relationship that reins in or adjusts our own response to the appropriate level, thus reaching a certain level of self-control, or limiting the self. Basically, even though Smith concedes that we can never achieve exact similarity between ourselves and the Other down to actually experiencing what the Other experiences, he does advocate that the most ethical forms of sympathy come close.

Importantly, fellow-feeling is based in the imagination: "As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation" (Smith 9). While our senses "never can carry us beyond our own person", the imagination allows us to "form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them" (9). From the start, imagination is not, nor ever can be, an actual experience of the Other, and the imagination can't simply copy the feelings or experiences of the Other in the same way. What is more, the imaginative instance of sympathy prevents us from merely transferring our own experience onto what we imagine the Other to be feeling. Rather, it performs an important role in modulating our own conduct and experience:

> We begin, upon this account, to examine our own passion and conduct, and to consider how these must appear to them, by considering how they would appear to us if in their situation. We suppose ourselves the spectators of our own behaviour, and endeavour to imagine what effect it would, in this light, produce upon us. This is the only looking-glass by which we can, in some measure, with the eyes of other people, scrutinize the propriety of our own conduct. (112)

That is, when we identify, or consider "how they would appear to us if in their situation," with the Other, we are, at the same time, modulating our own behavior and emotions (what Smith calls "proportion"). Merely projecting our own experience onto the other would deny the Other's role as "looking-glass", and so sympathy would not occur.

In this way, Smith's modulation of the self means that the looking-glass of relationality is not a mimetic reproduction of the Other's experience. Mimesis, in this case, is impossible since even the spectator who identifies with the other only reaches concord, not similarity with the

Other's feelings. Smith says: "These two sentiments, however, may, it is evident, have such a correspondence with one another, as is sufficient for the harmony of society. Though they will never be unisons, they may be concords, and that is all that is wanted or required" (Smith 22). Importantly, Smith's formulation of concord implies that even the most ideal form of sympathy is not perfect fellow-feeling, as it still maintains difference. Even the spectator and agent within the self never reach complete alignment and always maintain a certain difference in feeling. Further, complete similarity is not the standard by which Smith judges the success of sympathy. In order for relationality to be ethical (proportionate, harmonious), we always need to entertain the imaginative possibility of sympathy, and we need to be open to the ways that the Other requires a modulation of our own "passions" and experiences. The primary work of sympathy, then, is to modulate our own experiences so that they can begin to align with the experiences of the other. Despite his acknowledgement of the impossibility of experiencing another's emotions in their original form, Smith's idea of sympathy still centers on creating a simulated experience of that emotion, albeit an imperfect one. Sympathy is still about what we can know about another's emotion and how we can know it. Sympathy doesn't mimetically *replace* experience with imagination; it creates experience with an imaginative entrance into another person's experience. Because of this, it becomes difficult to train readers to reach complete fellow-feeling with the characters in novels, let alone train them to transfer this standard to the poor outside of the novel.

Where Smith taxonomizes emotion in order to instruct his readers on how to approximate another's experience, Audrey Jaffe argues that the Victorian novel takes up this project by representing emotion:

> For feeling, of course, depends upon representation: in order to be known it must appear; insofar as it is known, it is constituted by representation. And though the ideological power of feeling relies on the idea of an essence or truth to which language and representation are said to remain inadequate, the specific nature of that power becomes visible in the terms of its representation. Feeling is inseparable from the scenes that may seem merely to provoke it and the signs by means of which it becomes known. (14-5)

For Jaffe, sympathy requires that emotion become knowledge for it to occur at all. In the scene of sympathy, feeling *is* knowledge; feeling "depends" on knowledge, because in order for feeling to exist at all, it must first be known. The image of a feeling, whether it occurs on the face or on the page, makes emotion identifiable and thus fit for sympathy, an argument that greatly simplifies Smith's notion of the imagination. For Jaffe, sympathy involves replacing the sufferer and the emotion of that sufferer with the "spectator's image of him or herself" (2). Thus, sympathy simply *is* the imagination, not Smith's more complicated process of a mediative, emotional oscillation between two people. For Smith, we must imagine the situation that caused the emotion, where for Jaffe, that emotion is just mirrored in the spectator's mind. Jaffe's understanding of the sympathetic imagination makes the signification of emotional states the occasion of sympathy itself and ignores Smith's argument that, because sympathy can now mediate any emotional state of being, we must also know the cause of the emotion in order to sympathize with it at all.

Because Jaffe simplifies Smith's notion of the imagination, she mistakenly expands Smith's idea of imagination to experience. Smith constructs a reality where it is possible to come to close to knowing the emotional experience of another person via the imagination; but

Jaffe takes the concept of imagination to the extreme by arguing that the only kind of knowledge sympathy creates is about our own experience: imagination is about self, not other. George Eliot, in a much different mode of inquiry from either Smith or Jaffe, takes up sympathy's problem of experience from a different angle by asking, not how we begin to approximate the other's experience by working hard to modulate our own feelings to reach concord with the other (particularly when it comes to the most difficult emotions), but instead asking how we are to co-exist, in practical terms, with another whose emotions we cannot begin to comprehend. In this case, the narrator does not work to create authoritative knowledge about emotional experiences but instead highlights incomprehension. In *Middlemarch* in particular, Eliot, with her narrative voice, formalizes the uncertainty that Smith attempted to theorize away; what results are forms of feeling that look very much different from sympathy. Because *Middlemarch* is suspicious of the idea that we can come close to knowing another's emotional experience, Eliot does not organize her mode of relationality around sympathy's goal of reaching concord with the other. Despite the narrative doubt that permeates *Middlemarch*, Eliot does not conclude that there is some kind of mystical barrier that prevents us from relating to the other; instead, she focuses her narrative energy on building new patterns of relationality without comprehension of emotion as a foundation for this relationality. In what follows, I will show how Eliot begins to move realism away from sympathy as a structuring mode of relationality because she refuses to make emotion comprehensible in a way that would lay the foundation for our own sympathy with it. Eliot's primary narrative experiment in *Middlemarch* is to ask how we can ethically relate to the other when sympathy is removed as a structuring agent.

In Eliot's "The Natural History of German Life," the essay in which she lays out her own theory of realism, it is clear that our own experience should not enter into the sympathetic

equation: "Appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity; but a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment" (Eliot, "Natural History" 110). Here, Eliot distinguishes between "ready-made" sympathy, which relies on what we already know, and another kind of sympathy, which calls attention to difference. Most importantly, Eliot calls this alternative picture of human life the "raw material" of moral sentiment, which suggests that we must begin from a place that is altogether different from our own experiences. Because Eliot begins her discussion of moral sentiments by denying our own experiences as having currency in a realist mode of relating to others, she begins to move away from a traditional definition of sympathy. While Eliot uses the term sympathy, along with the Smithian "fellow feeling" throughout this essay, she also experiments with the way she uses these terms. At times, sympathy parallels knowing a certain group of people, as when Eliot says "Only a total absence of acquaintance and sympathy with our peasantry could give a moment's popularity to such a picture as 'Cross Purposes,'" (108), which she later contrasts with "cockney sentimentality," and then she quickly follows up that comparison by paralleling "sympathy" with "taste" (108). Eliot parallels sympathy with other terms as she experiments with sympathy's moral associations, but her use of modifiers is the most telling indication of how she begins to distinguish traditional sympathy from her own aesthetically mediated way of relating to other people. When Eliot uses the term "social sympathies" (111), she indicates that sympathy on its own is not an adequate mode of relating to other people, as it relies too much on our own experience; sympathy itself is not adequate for moving us beyond ourselves.

Eliot begins to elaborate on her move away from sympathy when she most clearly lays out the goal of realist writing: "The thing for mankind to know is, not what are the motives and influences which the moralist thinks *ought* to act on the laborer or the artisan, but what are the motives and influences which *do* act on him. We want to be taught to feel, not for the heroic artisan or the sentimental peasant, but for the peasant in all his coarse apathy, and the artisan in all his suspicious selfishness" ("Natural History" 111). The difference between "ought" and "do" here is key to understanding the methodology behind Eliot's move away from traditional sympathy to "the awakening of the social sympathies" that she tries to achieve with her own fiction. Ready-made sympathy relies upon the "ought": if a work of fiction represents emotion that is motivated by what the reader considers to be correct, then sympathy comes more easily. This is also Smith's way of relating to other people, where once we know the motive behind emotion, it is easier to put ourselves in their place if we find it agreeable. In other words, the taxonomies of emotion that Smith outlines also rely upon the ought, in that emotions *ought* to be felt, classified, and understood in such a way as to create the conditions for sympathy. In this way, ready-made sympathy appeals to what the reader thinks ought to be that motive. When the reader is presented with what *does* motivate a certain emotion, however, it may not be one that he or she finds agreeable or that exactly corresponds to previously established classifications. In contrast, the "social sympathies" remove us from our own experiences that are the foundation for what we think ought to motivate an emotion.

Rather than using art to cultivate sympathy, a mode of relationality that Eliot is not quite sure about, "The Natural History of German Life" is remarkable for positing a theory of realism that distinguishes itself from Smithian sympathy. As George Eliot relies less upon sympathy to mediate emotional relationality, she places primacy on the methods that art uses to create

distance from ourselves rather than relying on experience to create sympathy. If sympathy is founded mostly on one's own experience, then art offers us a different way of relating through its ability to take us beyond our own experience.

> Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot. All the more sacred is the task of the artist when he undertakes to paint the life of the People. Falsification here is far more pernicious than in the more artificial aspects of life. It is not so very serious that we should have false ideas about evanescent fashions—about the manners and conversation of beaux and duchesses; but it *is* serious that our sympathy with the perennial joys and struggles, the toil, the tragedy, and the humor in the life of our more heavily laden fellow-men, should be perverted, and turned toward a false object instead of the true one. (Eliot, "Natural History" 110-1)

Eliot argues that art doesn't simply replace our own experience with another, better one or add more experiences to our own. If that were true, then Eliot would not push so heavily upon a movement away from traditional sympathy. She instead claims that art "amplifies" experience; it extends or augments our own experience, making it larger and moving us beyond ourselves. In it, we encounter not only what is familiar to us but also what is strange, even unknowable. Realism, in its effort to move us beyond ourselves, should not simply reflect what we already see or think we ought to see. Traditional sympathy, in its reliance on the "ought", often falsifies the motivations behind the Other's emotion.

Defining sympathy as that which replaces our point of view, with its emphasis on experience, means that sympathy also risks becoming *too* limited or solipsistic; Eliot recognized

that mediating another's emotions through Smithian protocols of sympathy meant that our own experience could become all there is. It is no wonder then, that in grasping for a new term to describe the method by which realism could break these limitations, Eliot turns to the modifier "social." George Levine, in *The Realistic Imagination,* recognizes that realism was not structured around existing sympathetic protocols, but always strived to create a new way of mediating social feeling:

> Realism, as a literary method, can in these terms be defined as a self-conscious effort, usually in the name of some moral enterprise of truth telling and extending the limits of human sympathy, to make literature appear to be describing directly not some other language but reality itself (whatever that may be taken to be); in this effort, the writer must self-contradictorily dismiss previous conventions of representation while, in effect, establishing new ones. No major Victorian novelists were deluded into believing that they were in fact offering an unmediated reality; but all of them struggled to make contact with the world out there, and, even with their knowledge of their own subjectivity, to break from the threatening limits of solipsism, of convention, and of language. (8)

Considering the influence that Levine has had on how we understand realism, it is surprising that he has not had a similar influence on the way that we understand sympathy and its relationship to the realist novel. As George Eliot takes up this aesthetic experiment in her own writing by attempting to move beyond sympathy as an organizing paradigm for mediating the Other's feeling, we can see how, as Levine argues, Eliot did not have a simple faith in her ability as a narrator to just convey feeling in a different way than she could using the protocol of sympathy. After all, as Levine argues elsewhere, this experimentation always involves a certain amount of

doubt (20). As I move ahead with a discussion of *Middlemarch*'s particular experimentation with realist form, I hope to show how its narrator, rather than being the omniscient guide of the reader's sympathies as we often consider her to be, instead uses doubt to structure a narrative move away from sympathy.

Middlemarch's narrative voice most forcibly demonstrates Eliot's move away from sympathy. In what follows, I will demonstrate that the narrator's own doubt in her ability to successfully help the reader come to definite conclusions about characters in the novel, in addition to her own commentary on what it means to take on the point of view of another person (and whether or not it is possible), is the main mechanism by which George Eliot challenges the primacy of sympathy as a way of relating to another person, particularly in the context of reading about or imagining what that person is feeling. Many critics have interpreted Eliot's ability to achieve multiple points of view throughout the novel as evidence of her omniscience or a naïve desire to make the realist novel do something that could not be done in life. J. Hillis Miller notes that "The clairvoyance of the narrator, according to this alternative model of the human condition, can be obtained only because he, she, or it is able to share the points of view of all the characters, thereby transcending the limited vision of any single person" (*Reading for our Time* 63). Yet, there are multiple examples of the narrator's hesitation in making conclusive judgments at all in *Middlemarch*. In fact, when the narrator is telling us something about a character, it is often that everything we know about him or her should indicate to us that we know less than we think we do. In one example of this, the narrator directly calls into question the idea that multiple points of view give us the necessary information to make judgments about a character:

> If to Dorothea Mr Casaubon had been the mere occasion which had set alight the fine inflammable material of her youthful illusions, does it follow that he was fairly represented in the minds of those less impassioned personages who have hitherto delivered their judgments concerning him? I protest against any absolute conclusion, any prejudice derived from Mrs Cadwallader's contempt for a neighbouring clergyman's alleged greatness of soul, or Sir James Chettam's poor opinion of his rival's legs,—from Mr Brooke's failure to elicit a companion's ideas, or from Celia's criticism of a middle-aged scholar's personal appearance. (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 93)

The most obvious way that narrative doubt manifests itself in this passage is through the way that the narrator asks us not to come to any conclusions about Mr. Casaubon. But more subtly, the narrator also calls into question the multiple points of view we have benefitted from so far as a reader. Here, she rounds up different opinions from different characters, a seeming transcendence of the "limited vision of any single person", as J. Hillis Miller puts it, and tells us to ignore any influence they've had on our opinion of Mr. Casaubon. All of these points of view do not add up to omniscience; rather, having many different points of view calls into question the validity of any conclusions we can come to based on them.

Elsewhere, the narrator reveals her own partiality:

> For my part I am very sorry for him. It is an uneasy lot at best, to be what we call highly taught and yet not to enjoy: to be present at this great spectacle of life and never to be liberated from a small hungry shivering self—never to be fully possessed by the glory we behold, never to have our consciousness rapturously transformed into the vividness of a thought, and ardour of a passion, the energy to

> an action, but always to be scholarly and uninspired, ambitious and timid, scrupulous and dim-sighted. (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 243-4)

Here, the narrator is hardly the impartial spectator by which we should judge our own sympathy towards different characters in the novel; she is just as rooted in her own perspective as everyone else. At the very least, by proclaiming her own pity for Casaubon, she shows readers that they should recognize their own partiality; at the very most, the narrator is dismissing her own authority as the final arbiter of all *Middlemarch*'s characters. Even more so, the narrative voice reveals its partiality when it tells us things about a character that even the character herself doesn't know:

> She did not know then that it was Love who had come to her briefly, as in a dream before awaking, with the hues of morning on his wings—that it was Love to whom she was sobbing her farewell as his image was banished by the blameless rigour of irresistible day. She only felt that there was something irrevocably amiss and lost in her lot, and her thoughts about the future were the more readily sharpen into resolve. Ardent souls, ready to construct their coming lives, are apt to commit themselves to the fulfillment of their own visions. (436)

The narrator seems omniscient when she tells us something that even Dorothea herself does not know, but in doing so, the narrator also reveals that she is interpreting Dorothea's feelings the same as any other character in the novel. We should be careful to take the narrator's proclamations with a grain of salt, the same way we would with something Mrs. Cadwallader would say.

More importantly, the narrative voice is the main mechanism by which the novel itself questions its own methods of revealing the feelings of its characters. The narrative voice is self-

reflective in its meta-commentary on the way that the novel magnifies certain characters at the expense of others, on its success at zooming back out and gaining a more "impartial" perspective, and most especially on what is at stake in this project. At the same time it magnifies a certain character, it also discusses the limitations of doing so, as in this example of introducing Lydgate: "I at least have so much to do in unraveling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe" (Eliot 137). Far from being able to see all and know all, *Middlemarch*'s narrator can only focus on one thing at a time. Inherent in realism's worlding, then, are several problems: scope and focus. While she narrates the "universe" of Middlemarch, she cannot see all at once, and so she has to focus on one character long and intensely enough in order to get the reader to feel with the character. While she is doing this, she leaves out everyone else. In this moment, I would like to refocus our attention on how George Eliot is experimenting with the idea of "omniscience" in her narration and what that really means for realism and sympathy themselves. As J. Hillis Miller and others mention, omniscient narration is characterized by the ability of the narrator to be able to see and understand the inner feelings and motives of all the characters in a novel. What Miller and others do not mention, however, is that this rarely happens all at once. Narrative constrains the narrator into telling one story at a time. She might have the powers of insight, but she does not have the powers of infinite scope—she is constrained by time and by narrative itself. The aesthetic frame describes at the expense of *everything* else. Realism is not a sprawling expanse of description; it is a focused narration that necessarily erases everything outside of itself. The truly omniscient narrator does not exist; "all the light [she] can command" must be spent on one person at a time, rendering the narrator powerless in the face of the rest of

the universe, especially when the narrator does what she does best: engender the reader's feeling with a character. In other words, when the narrator is the most powerful in her ability to frame a scene, she also acknowledges her weak scope. Further, the narrator of *Middlemarch*, by her own admission, is hardly able to manage us. The narrator has to "make the new settler Lydgate better known to any one interested in him than he could possibly be even to those who had seen the most of him" (137), indicating the difficult job of narration itself, one which could fail at any time.

Indeed, the narrative voice in *Middlemarch* calls into question its own methods of creating point of view:

> Was there any ingenious split, any hide-and-seek course of action, which might be detected by a careful telescopic watch? Not at all: a telescope might have swept the parishes of Tipton and Freshitt, the whole area visited by Mrs Cadwallader in her phaeton, without witnessing any interview that could excite suspicion, or any scene from which she did not return with the same unperturbed keenness of eye and the same high natural colour. In fact, if that convenient vehicle had existed in the days of the Seven Sages, one of them would doubtless have remarked that you can know little of women by following them about in their pony-phaetons. Even with a microscope directed on a water-drop we find ourselves making interpretations which turn out to be rather coarse; for whereas under a weak lens you may seem to see a creature exhibiting an active voracity into which other smaller creatures actively play as if they were so many animated tax-pennies, a stronger lens reveals to you certain tiniest hairlets which make vortices for these victims while the swallower waits passively at his receipt of custom. In this way,

> metaphorically speaking, a strong lens applies to Mrs Cadwallader's match-making will show a play of minute causes producing what may be called thought and speech vortices to bring her the sort of food she needed. (Eliot 74-5)

In this passage, the narrative voice evaluates each metaphoric tool it uses to examine the lives of those in Middlemarch, and each tool has its own limitations as to what it reveals about the motives behind Mrs. Cadwallader's match making. Each tool, based on the kind of lens it provides, reveals a different story about the scene at hand; the telescope's lens, far removed from the situation, would not be able to tell us much about it, while the different lenses of the microscope can make Mrs. Cadwallader seem either like she is harmlessly playing at match making or like the director of a more complicated and destructive game. The narrator tries on different lenses in an experimental effort to think more self-consciously about the consequences of each choice and how her narrative choices could affect the judgment of the characters of *Middlemarch*.

These examples of the narrative voice of *Middlemarch* show not only that the narrator hardly considers herself to be an omniscient, impartial spectator that is able to guide the reader's sympathies, but it also shows that it is important for the reader to be aware of different narrative choices in the novel and how they affect the way that the character is read. Far from reaching any conclusions about each character that in turn would guide our sympathies as readers, the narrator relinquishes control over the characters in a way that requires the reader to reflect upon the narrative choices of *Middlemarch.* This trains the reader to understand that sympathy cannot account for the way that she relates to characters in a novel. The reader is instead trained to reflect upon their own narrative choices when they explain the emotional experience of another person or try to understand the situation that caused another person's emotional state.

Yet the narrative experimentation in *Middlemarch* is not simply a self-reflexive aesthetic exercise; Eliot is just as concerned with the results of her experimentation and its effects on the world that she strives to convey. Her rejection of sympathy as a standard for mediating relationships in the novel comes from a deep concern with the implications of *how* she conveys that world. This is something that she also makes clear in "The Natural History of German Life," where she argues that the lens of "ought" often distorts class relations and creates unrealistic expectations:

> But for the precious salt of his humor, which compels him to reproduce external traits that serve in some degree as a corrective to his frequently false psychology, his preternaturally virtuous poor children and artisans, his melodramatic boatmen and courtesans, would be as obnoxious as Eugène Sue's idealized proletaires, in encouraging the miserable fallacy that high morality and refined sentiment can grow out of harsh social relations, ignorance, and want; or that the working-classes are in a condition to enter at once into a millennial state of *altruism*, wherein every one is caring for everyone else, and no one for himself. (111).

Altruism, for Eliot, is the outcome of untruthful art, and it is her goal, particularly in *Middlemarch*, to train the reader to be able to discern between different kinds of lenses and to banish the expectation that art must result in altruism. This theme of discernment is especially important in philanthropic relationships, since the way that a philanthropist explains the situation of the poor can have immediate consequences on them. Eliot is suspicious of altruism because it not an explanation that arises naturally from harsh social conditions.

This need for discernment manifests itself in *Middlemarch* when Dorothea has a discussion about art with Will Ladislaw. In this conversation, Dorothea finally gets to explain

the seeming snobby terseness in her initial encounter with Will, where he asked her what she thought of the art she has been seeing in Rome. In this conversation, Dorothea reveals that she does not quite know how to evaluate art because of her lack of education, but there is another reason as well:

> "You seem not to care about cameos," said Will, seating himself at some distance from her, and observing her while she closed the cases.
>
> "No, frankly, I don't think them a great object in life," said Dorothea.
>
> "I fear you are a heretic about art generally. How is that? I should have expected you to be very sensitive to the beautiful everywhere."
>
> "I suppose I am dull about many things," said Dorothea, simply. "I should like to make life beautiful—I mean everybody's life. And then all this immense expense of art, that seems somehow to lie outside life and make it no better for the world, pains one. It spoils my enjoyment of anything when I am made to think that most people are shut out from it."
>
> "I call that the fanaticism of sympathy," said Will, impetuously. "You might say the same of landscape, of poetry, of all refinement. If you carried it out you ought to be miserable in your own goodness, and turn evil that you might have no advantage over others. The best piety is to enjoy—when you can. You are doing the most then to save the earth's character as an agreeable planet. And enjoyment radiates. It is of no use to try and take care of all the world; that is being taken care of when you feel delight—in art or in anything else. Would you turn all the youth of the world into a tragic chorus, wailing and moralizing over misery? I

> suspect that you have some false belief in the virtues of misery, and want to make your life a martyrdom." (Eliot 199-200)

By labeling Dorothea's hesitation to enjoy the "fanaticism of sympathy," Will comments on the ways that Dorothea's limitless sympathy, her martyr-like passion for the other, has no room for self-modulation. Her philanthropic desire to make everyone's life beautiful highlights Dorothea's own slightly egotistical overreach, a desire to do good that, ironically, makes her unable to act upon her desires. At this point in the novel, Dorothea is still unable to see beyond her own world; she is described as a "young ardent creature" (183) and "a mere victim of feeling" (184) who is "alive to anything that gave her an opportunity for active sympathy" (188). but who does not quite know how to wield that sympathy yet. It is evident that Dorothea's sympathy is conventional where her desire to "do good" through philanthropic endeavor is the strongest. Because Dorothea is unable to gain distance from her own marriage troubles and because she frequently allows her own feelings to overwhelm her, Dorothea cannot gain aesthetic distance from the art she views, either. In much the same way that Dorothea is unable to gain distance from her widowed state when she concentrates on each of the individual leaves on the trees of her estate, Dorothea is unable to reflect upon the lens she is using to look at art. If *Middlemarch*'s doubting narrative voice is successful, the reader should be able to recognize Dorothea's idealism as problematic. It is not ethically responsible philanthropic ambition, but an understanding of aesthetics that is distorted by two character flaws: an inability to gain distance from both art and herself and an unfortunate reliance on immediate experience to direct her interpretation of the situations she finds herself in. Where Ladislaw might be correct in pointing out the fanaticism of Dorothea's sympathy by reframing her attachment in aesthetic terms, he also misses the point by completely removing altruism from the equation. Will entreats

Dorothea to simply enjoy the beauty of what she sees, but this understanding of aesthetics also fails to be reflective on the methods by which a piece of art achieves certain ends or on how he is able to enjoy art at all. Instead, Eliot advocates a middle ground between aesthetic enjoyment and the kind of sympathy that must always be altruistic.

George Eliot's recognition of the limits of sympathy in favor of a more aesthetically influenced mediation of the Other's emotion is a critique of the way that novels are employed in philanthropic endeavor. Philanthropy, then, becomes an important theme that focuses a discussion of how to explain the poor. Eliot begins a conversation about the realist novel, and about genre's relation to sympathy more generally, that questions the causality between sympathy and philanthropy and that continues to be experimented with in novels through the end of the century. As I continue with this dissertation, I will more closely examine the relationship between several novels' techniques of training readers and philanthropic endeavor. In the next chapter, I focus on a different revision of sympathy, where philanthropy took up the problem of being able to know another person through emotional experience. Where Eliot cultivates a doubting narrative voice to train readers to focus on what they cannot or do not know about another person, philanthropic organizations develop an authoritative narrator who determines what is known or is worth knowing about other people, specifically the poor.

CHAPTER TWO

"The Vice of Charity": The Narrative Transformation of Sympathy in the Writing of the Charity Organisation Society

George Eliot's skepticism towards the possibility that sympathy in the novel could create social change opens up critical possibilities for our own understanding of how sympathy was revised outside of the social problem novel. *Middlemarch* trained readers to recognize multiple ways of seeing other people and to entertain about sympathy's possibilities outside of the novel. Where the first chapter asks us to turn our critical attention elsewhere from sympathy as social change, the second chapter provides important contemporary context for how this shift happened in the late nineteenth century. As George Eliot was imagining possibilities for the novel in the wake of a shift in a nineteenth understanding of the purpose of sympathy, the Charity Organisation Society was creating a new narrative style to train readers to trust in its own professionalized mediation between themselves and the poor. The Charity Organisation Society played a central role in the professionalization of philanthropy in the late-nineteenth century and relied on a formalized narrative style as the catalyst for changing understandings of the role of sympathy in philanthropic work. Philanthropists in the late-nineteenth century, shifted the outcome of their work from the creation of understanding of the poor through face-to-face encounters to the development of factual data about the poor. The narrative techniques of the COS can be found in their records, publications, and case reports, which are now contained in the London Metropolitan Archives. These archives have never been explored within the context of literature, yet they are uniquely suited for study alongside the novels of the late-nineteenth century. The writings of the Charity Organisation Society, in that they created their own

narrative style that changed sympathy's possibilities in the context of the novel, had a fear-reaching effect on novels that represented philanthropy in the late nineteenth century. These archives record a groundbreaking shift in the representation of the poor, demonstrating a different relationship between philanthropic labor and the novel in the Victorian era. They provide clear evidence that philanthropists went about their business as narrators and active readers of the poor. Novels may have influenced philanthropists; but, even more evidently, philanthropic narrative contributed to the separation of sympathy and benevolent action.

The scholarly discourse surrounding literature and philanthropy, as described in the introduction, focuses on the way that realism mimicked philanthropic investigatory techniques, or it focuses on the way that literature created new philanthropists by teaching them how to sympathize, as in the social problem novel. Yet, as the archive of the COS demonstrates, philanthropists shifted novelistic discourse around sympathy and philanthropy by inventing a new narrative style that added more layers of mediation between the public and the poor and attempted to train readers to use sympathy less in their relationships with the poor. This emotional management belies an understanding of representations of philanthropy in the novel as simple mimetic observations of social work. Frank Christianson, in *Philanthropy in British and American Fiction*, argues for a close relationship between literature and philanthropy in that the investigative methods of philanthropists, such as Henry Mayhew, mirror the representational methods of nineteenth-century realism:

> The investigatory apparatus which provides *London Labour*'s specific kind of social knowledge also structures many of the novels written during this period. […] These authors understood their own professional literary enterprise in terms parallel to those which Mayhew employs to define his project; that is, they narrate

> philanthropic investigation and do so in a way that highlights the limits and potentialities of a Mayhew-like narrative mediation. (4)

While I don't argue with the idea that the investigatory methodology of philanthropy permeates the philanthropic writing that I look at, I argue that novelists weren't merely imitating philanthropic methods; rather, philanthropists saw themselves as narrators who mediated benevolent relationships and used novelistic techniques to train the public to accept statistics as abstract representations of the poor and to become comfortable with narratives about the poor that are missing their first-person perspectives. In what follows, this chapter will examine the various writings of philanthropic organizations to describe these narrative strategies and to understand why traditional methods of sympathetic identification in the social problem novel were inadequate for philanthropists in a changing urban environment.

In 1901, Helen Bosanquet, a key figure in the organization and professionalization of philanthropic work in the late nineteenth century, asserted that "there is always something of the artist about the true philanthropist" ("Methods of Training" 7). In elevating the role of the philanthropist to that of the artist, Bosanquet defines both as "developing both the part and the whole without sacrificing either, in order to attain harmony" (7) and argues that a philanthropist's training should be along the same lines as that of the artist. In doing so, Bosanquet frames the central conflict between sympathy and philanthropy that was inherent within philanthropic practice as it professionalized, a conflict that is the focus of this chapter. If a philanthropist is an artist, the artistic process involves balancing individual portraits (the part) and the more abstract statistical information (the whole) to which the individual contributes. This "artistic" process was guided and managed by philanthropy's professionalized protocols: the case report and its standardized form. Bosanquet's vision of the "true philanthropist"

involves preserving harmony over contradiction, noting that "it is a difficulty which all artists have to solve" (7), a difficulty that was solved by the creation of a form that could, apparently, record individual voices while channeling their voices into standardized information that could then be easily converted into statistical information. Bosanquet's use of a metaphor of artistry is a significant perspective on the professionalization of philanthropy: rather than being influenced by representations of philanthropy in art, the philanthropist is creating a kind of art in which the form is central to a new vision of social interaction.

Bosanquet's statement also sheds new light on the literature of philanthropists: the writing, from case papers to publications, of philanthropic organizations took part in this creation of a new vision of the relationships between the rich and poor. The archives of the Charity Organisation Society[6] represent the mediation of a bureaucratic apparatus more than they do of an individual investigator such as Mayhew. Each case starts with the form that is filled out by multiple agents. Each agent would gather basic information (name, age, work history, family members, names of references) about the subject of the case along with a recorded narrative of the subject. The agent would then correspond with references through letters and sometimes in-person contact. Then, the agent would discuss further action with his district board based on his judgment after he had been able to confirm each story and synthesize these disparate narratives

[6] The archives of the Charity Organisation Society are contained in the London Metropolitan Archives in Islington. I spent June 2014 examining the collection for this chapter. The COS is also known by three other names: its founding name, The Society for Organising Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicity, The Family Welfare Association (1946-2008), and its current name, Family Action. The collection covers a time span of 1612 to 2006, the physical extent of which is 67.8 linear meters. The majority of the collection is dated after 1869, the year the COS was founded. Most records are also handwritten, with the exception of some printed publications from the organization. The collection is split into series, where each series contains the records of the central office and six of the original districts. Not all districts' records still exist. The majority of the research contained in this chapter comes from the Hammersmith and Fulham district records, which has the most extensive collection of case reports. Case reports are rare, because they were destroyed if the case was closed for more than 20 years. The archives also contain administrative records, such as minutes and budget reports. Not all district archives have minute reports, since much of the COS archive was destroyed by German bombing during World War Two. Annual reports are also contained in most district records. The London Metropolitan Archives restricts access to cases that are younger than sixty years. For more information on the history of the archives and their condition, see lma.gov.uk.

into a single narrative. In this way, the philanthropic agent is not so much an individual as he is a part of the apparatus, including the forms and publications. There was no single agent on each case; instead, multiple agents worked on a case and identified themselves in the case reports with their initials. As each interaction between the COS and the subject occurred, the agent would log it on a list following the form and initial his entry. The district board would also contribute to the evaluation through correspondence with district agents. The agents are almost anonymous, with initials only to serve the purpose of identifying themselves within the bureaucratic apparatus. In this way, the literally formal narrative method of the COS trains the case worker to focus on filling in the blanks. It also interpolates other readers into its pattern, training the reader to trust the scientific and authoritative form that has been approved by professional standards. This professionalization of philanthropy moves authority from the individual face-to-face encounter to the highly mediated form of the case report, so that the public and "amateur" philanthropists who read the COS's publications recognize that they lack training in such methods and therefore trust the professional authority of the COS to tell them how their money should be spent to help the poor. While several scholars of Victorian philanthropy in literature have focused on literature's influence on philanthropic practice, Bosanquet's understanding of philanthropic work allows an understanding of its writing as participatory in narrative tradition and practice on the same level as that of novelists. This chapter will argue for a deeper connection between philanthropy and literature than just representational influence; once we consider philanthropic writing to have its own self-conscious, literally formal style, the professionalized practices of philanthropic organizations becomes key to understanding the narrative transformation of sympathy in the late nineteenth century.

Philanthropists were also aware of the way that they participated in literary tradition.

They deliberately drew on a popular understanding of the social problem novel to garner attention for their work.[7] The organization of philanthropy was accompanied by stronger efforts to associate acts of imagination with the labor of philanthropy. Dickens seemed the most obvious choice for making a connection between artistry and philanthropy; in addition to the figure of Dickens himself, philanthropists frequently cited his novels as an inspiration for the improvement of philanthropy and the establishment of specific charities and housing. This connection between philanthropy and Dickens novels underscores the ways that philanthropists relied upon the narrative of the social problem novel for a culturally recognized way of relating their work to the public. In her essay "Working Guilds and Work Societies," Mrs. George Augustus Sala mentions holding a "Dickens Bazaar," in which Dickens novels' familiarity enabled public acceptance of charity work: "The first bazaar of any note was held long ago at York; and, if I mistake not, the ladies who took part in it were rather bitterly reproached for turning themselves into temporary shopkeepers, even for sweet charity's sake, and met with a good deal of opposition. A little time after, there was a Dickens Bazaar in London, at which all the fair stall-holders dressed as some Dickens' character; and from that time to this bazaars have

[7] Elsewhere, philanthropists turned to the literary tradition to bolster their own identities as philanthropists. The Countess Burdett-Coutts, an important figure in late-century philanthropy, prefaces her anthology of essays about philanthropy, *Woman's Mission*, by centralizing the role of language arts and literature in philanthropic work:

> One language unites us; one Bible, one literature. The poetry and prose of past centuries, and the first achievements of Englishmen in the dim twilight of scientific discovery, are a common heritage of both nations. In the past fifty years the genius of both, sometimes divided, sometimes intermingled, has kept the light burning. To the sacred lamp of literature American authors have added a peculiar radiance of their own, and the field of discovery and invention has been illuminated by the splendid achievements of American research. And as in these two great branches of progress we are at once coinheritors and fellow-workers, so the philanthropic work of English women, commingled by practice and example with the work of American women, must, I feel, have an absorbing interest for those who, like ourselves, have drawn their national being from the Anglo-Saxon race. (Burdett-Coutts xxi)

Here, Burdett-Coutts centralizes the role of literature by defining it as the language of philanthropy. As she explains that literature is the "common heritage" of both England and America, Burdett-Coutts extends this commonality out to all speakers of the language of literature other than just the philanthropists themselves. By naming literature as the language of philanthropy, she also adds an imperative, saying that philanthropy "must […] have an absorbing interest" for all others who identify with this literary heritage.

always held their own" (78). Initially, philanthropists were criticized for identifying themselves with a different class when they were acting as shopkeepers to raise money, but Dickens's novels provided a short hand for philanthropic work that was acceptable to the public. Performing as Dickens characters made charity work recognizable and relatable. In this way, philanthropists' performance of fiction made the association of philanthropy and the literary imagination commonplace and made the sympathetic identification popularized by Dickens a way of performing one's relationship to the poor in the public sphere. The mode of imagination inspired by the social problem novel made charity work approachable to the public.

However, as the introduction argues, the COS did not replicate the sentimentality and focus on sympathy of Dickens novels but instead relied on the authority of fact, which was also discussed in the introduction. The tension between fact and feeling marks the point at which the COS achieves a new way of representing the poor. Reliance on facts risked cancelling out the ethical basis for philanthropic work: recognition of the poor at the level of the individual. The COS notes such tension when it says:

> Tabulated, the returns of the Committees appear dull and official, but each case represents human interests, a crisis possibly in the history of a family, a strenuous attempt to save from misfortune, or an application for relief, regarding which charity had, in honesty, to confess that no relief could be of service. It is in this work of discrimination and still more in the endeavour to aid those in distress by personal devotion and persevering thoughtfulness, that as in former Reports, so again here, the Council must be importunate in asking all who sympathise in the work of the Society to take part." (*Tenth Annual Report* 11-2)

It is in the tension between factual knowledge and personal knowledge that the COS begins to

outline the way that their methodology ventures into new territory, even while it uses two authoritative discourses of the time: sympathetic exchange and scientific method.[8] Its reliance on sympathy is evident in the section about personal stories: family crises, individual endeavor, and misfortune. The shift in representation comes where the COS seems to overcome the tension between sympathy and fact by outwardly retaining sympathy as motivation for potential philanthropic workers, while undergirding its methodology with scientific authority. Yet, the COS discourages sympathy with suffering, creating a narrative opening for a different way of relating to the poor. Importantly, the COS asks workers to trust that they have already done the work of discrimination of cases and that a philanthropic worker can sympathize with figures that appear "dull and official" while knowing that they represent suffering. Because the COS replaces the unmediated narrative of immediate suffering with their own narrative of careful, systematic discrimination—a narrative form that doesn't provoke ready sympathy as easily as a picture of individual distress—it is necessary to train workers to be responsive to this new narrative. While dull facts and figures may not seem artful, the COS's insistence on its narrative artistry underscores both that the COS is creating a new kind of representation, equally as ethical as sympathy with the individual poor, and potentially even more so (according to the COS) because of its mediation through the authoritative discourse of the organization and its scientific

[8] Mary Poovey "pose[s] a historical question about the conventions of representation" (xi) of the fact in nineteenth-century Britain in her book, *History of the Modern Fact*. She says that the "epistemological unit of the fact has registered the tension between the richness and variety embodied in concrete phenomena and the the uniform, rule-governed order of humanly contrived system" (1). She also notes that this tension results in two interpretations of fact: "incontrovertible data that simply demonstrate what is true" and data that is "manufactured and informed by all the social and personal factors that go into every act of human creation" (1). These two interpretations register particularly strongly in the COS's argument about numbers being representative of the complicated lives of the poor, and Poovey's argument that the modern fact is a "battleground" (2) for the production of knowledge, I argue, create an interpretive opening for the COS and their representation of the poor. That the COS can both claim that their statistics say something concrete about the condition of poverty in the late-nineteenth century, while at the same time claiming that these statistics can also represent the suffering of individuals marks a shift in the representation of the poor towards systemic knowledge rather than personal, sympathetic knowledge.

method.

The most jarring shift in representation of the poor, however, is the fact that the poor are notably absent from the new narrative of the COS. Even as philanthropy claims its literariness in order to create an imperative for philanthropic work and make a common language for the public to participate in the work of benevolence, it does so at the cost of not preserving representations of the poor as individuals who speak for themselves and have complicated lives. Instead, the focus is on training philanthropists. Literature became a manual for philanthropy, with the goal of training readers to read the poor in a way approved by the COS. Moments of sympathy and commonality remain primarily in the space between philanthropists themselves. It is evident in both the discussion of Dickens Bazaars and "the sacred lamp of literature" that the people we typically consider to be the objects of sympathy in the philanthropic sphere, the poor, are nowhere to be found. The imaginative space of the Dickens Bazaar is reserved for philanthropic workers only. This notable absence, even while philanthropists invoke the language of the social problem novel to make their work recognizable to the public, marks professional philanthropy's major departure from the social problem novel: the lack of individual portraits and stories of the poor that are common in novels about philanthropy. In this way, the major revision of sympathy in philanthropic writing is turning it from something that engenders more "feeling with" the poor to something that achieves a mediatory function between philanthropies and the poor: the literary language of philanthropic organizations becomes the primary mechanism for managing the emotions of both philanthropic workers and the public in terms of how they "read" the poor.

Jim Chandler's *An Archaeology of Sympathy* provides an important history of the inherent tension in taking action based on sentiment and its connection to the novel. Chandler defines the sentimental case as "the situation in which one stands apprehended as an object of the

sort of imaginative projection that Smith terms 'sympathy'" (iv), and he argues that sympathy problematizes causality because "the dynamic of the sympathetic exchange leaves it unclear who is doing what to whom, and sometimes even whether we can safely say there is a 'who' to begin with" (205). Further, "sentimental probability [. . .] depends on an extraordinarily high degree of ambiguity" (216-7). The development of sentimental probability that Chandler traces through the eighteenth-century sentimental novel was a kind of probability that the COS was no longer willing to use in its calculations of the problem of poverty. Dickens, as *An Archaeology of Sympathy* notes several times, was the nineteenth century epitome of sentimental probability that Chandler defines as "part of the 'calculation' in a sentimental narrative has to do with the question of what is likely to interest and move the heart of the audience" (223). He even goes on to say that this problem takes on even more importance within "humanitarian sensibility," which is what this dissertation takes on: the problem of sentiment within philanthropic work.

Sympathy, in that it required face-to-face contact with poor, did not guarantee the probability that readers of the poor would act in a way that the COS wanted them to in order to solve poverty. Because of this, the COS had to reject calculations based on sentiment. In its tenth annual report, the COS expresses relief that there was not an emotional overreaction to a particularly trying year:

> They note with satisfaction that, notwithstanding the unusual severity of the season, there has been no panic among the benevolent, and that it has not been necessary to resort to such exceptional measures as have been thought indispensable under similar circumstances in past years. This seems to be the natural consequence of the increased knowledge of the facts dealt with by this Society, and of the increased strength of the organisation now at work in ordinary

times. (*Tenth Annual Report* 10)

In this way, the COS was able to counteract sentimental probability with its own, factually based, scientific method. The organization touted its role as purveyor of factual knowledge about poverty that could prevent a quick reaction to difficulty, arising out of excessive fear, by the benevolent. Importantly, the organization was also proud of its ability to create a situation where it was no longer necessary to rely upon the "question of what is likely to interest and move the heart of the audience," as Chandler defines sentimental probability, in order to get donations from the public. As this chapter moves forward in the next few pages, it examines how the COS had to come up with new terminology and a new narrative style, based on distanced scientific judgment rather than sentimental probability, in order to find a solution for poverty that did not rely on the unknowns and ambiguity of sympathy.

Formed in 1869, the Charity Organisation Society (COS)[9] led the transformation of Victorian philanthropy. The COS began as the Society for Organizing Charitable Relief and Repressing Mendicity, and its originally stated goal was to remove the temptation for ordinary middle-class urbanites to have their heartstrings tugged by an immediate and present request for help. This temptation, as the COS described it, of responding immediately to a beggar on the street and therefore wasting one's well-intentioned emotional response on a temporary solution that would not fix a larger problem, was considered to be extremely dangerous by the COS. Indeed, the COS defined a new methodology for charity work by calling this immediate emotional responsiveness a "vice" and working to deflect sympathy from the streets to the organization:

Large though it is in some ways, the Society is but a small body if it is to achieve

[9] Now Family Action: https://www.family-action.org.uk/

> such a purpose as this, and if its present members and those who succeed them are to make this vice of charity prevail. And to this end they must be trained for the work, as men and women train themselves who care very much for excellence in anything—in golf, or music, or scholarship, or the management of life—with the spontaneous and persistent earnestness that comes of a strong desire. It is for this work that personal and other help is asked—simply on the merits of the object and the goodness of the work itself; and indeed it is a thing worthy of all honourable effort and ambition, to draw together, be it ever so slowly, those who differ in creed and class, so that in their charity they may find a bond of common conviction and common activity. ("A Note on the 'Cautionary Card'" 5-6)

Charity work, according to the COS, could not succeed with simple good intentions; rather, a philanthropist needed training and practice in gathering information in order to contribute to the charitable goals of the society. By calling certain kinds of charity—particularly the amateur kind that only responded to beggars on the street—a vice, the COS lends moral urgency to their methodology. Moreover, they shift the focus of charity from emotional responsiveness to organizational apparatus, saying that philanthropists can only work together to be successful.

This marks a major shift from earlier narrative forms that concerned themselves with philanthropy, such as a Dickens novel. Dickens's descriptions of the individual poor in his novels were designed to mark the individual poor as remarkable and deserving of sympathy by careful description and characterization that elicited a sympathetic response from the reader. This model was so popular as to be common knowledge for a public already trained in the art of sentimentality. An example of this Dickensian approach is found in the Salvation Army's *Kingdom Makers in Shelter, Street, and Slum*, a part of the "Warrior's Library." That there is a

"Warrior's Library" denotes the importance of literature in the training of a philanthropic worker, and these books read like novels. Filled with descriptions of those in need of help, *Kingdom Makers* also describes in detail the poor living conditions and neighborhoods of their subjects. These descriptions are designed to elicit the sympathy of the reader, as they describe the person as in need of help but also as a person with unseen feelings and histories:

> To-morrow's breakfast is unearned, and Jean stands in the shadow and coughs, coughs, coughs, unbraced to her night's work by the usual glass of spirits, shivering through body and soul; for Jean is not without a brighter past, and knows well that treading this path is a quickstep to double death. Speak to her, and you will get a flood of tears, a quick appeal 'For God's sake, don't speak to me of the old days. I am dying as I stand here; but who in all this cruel world will help me now?' Ah, who will? *Will you*? (Allen 14-5)

As some philanthropic organizations drew people in with captivating individual portraits of individuals down on their luck but with a sense of their need for change, other organizations recognized that further involvement in philanthropic work would require retraining in how to read the poor. While organizations such as the COS made their work approachable by relying on such training to hold events like the Dickens Bazaars, they also understood that Dickensian sympathy's reliance on the immediacy and knowability of the individual poor was not feasible in an increasingly anonymous urban culture where one might not know one's neighbors, much less know about the person begging on the street. In such a context, the COS understood that an immediate response to an unknown person would inhibit the reform of philanthropic practice.

An essay called "A Note on the 'Cautionary Card'" offers more detailed context for the idea that the vice of charity was based in immediate sympathetic or emotional response to

unmediated narrative. This COS leaflet from 1900 warns against uninformed judgment when trying to decide whether or not to help a begging-letter writer. The "cautionary card" is a metaphor for a danger signal that alerts the trained charity worker to a false cry for help and, importantly, enables the worker to balance her own suspicion, to determine if the beggar can be trusted, and to avoid the adoption of cynicism so that the worker can continue to work without emotional fatigue. Most importantly, an independent charity worker, *as an individual*, is incapable of recognizing when the cautionary card should be used: "The moral seems to be, not to trust to one's own judgment only but to inquire, even when the letter does not suggest roguery. Rogues will thrive so long as honest people think that their own uninformed judgment of the unknown will enable them to decide on the merits of a begging letter whether and how much they should give" (2). Here is a clear moment of the revision of the sympathetic scene. This piece of the essay describes a moment of solitary reading that focuses on the charity worker reading a begging letter independent of any other knowledge than what is on the page immediately in front of her. This moment of reading also describes the conditions for traditional sympathy: it is an interaction between two individuals mediated by a representation of the object of sympathy. However, this essay rejects the conditions for traditional sympathy by saying that individual judgment causes more problems than it solves. Additionally, the representation of the object of sympathy, the begging letter, does not provide adequate knowledge upon which to base one's judgment because it also relies upon an individual's representation of herself; the beggar could be lying. Without clear knowledge of the beggar, the independent social worker has the potential to make a judgment that will benefit a dishonest person and, ultimately, increase the problem of poverty. This is where the COS needed to provide the additional mediatory layer of multiple voices with its professional methodology of verification: "Charity requires training as

much as warfare" (5). By introducing the concept of training into the methodology of philanthropy, the COS moves away from a metaphor of battle, shifting the focus of philanthropic work from the immediacy of a "front" (the immediacy of solitary reading) to the preparation that leads up to it. Thus, the COS establishes itself as the authoritative mediator between the narratives of the poor and the well-intentioned social worker by acting as both a trainer and a balance between the worker's desires to help and the larger social good, thus shifting the focus of philanthropy from sympathy to inquiry.

This new methodology involved balancing the social worker's emotional response. Indeed, the problem of poverty that the COS grappled with was not a lack of resources, but misdirected emotional response. Many people became involved in charity work because they were moved by a personal experience with the poor, but it was difficult to keep emotional momentum going long enough to create effective change. Or, another problem the COS highlighted was that someone was moved to give in a more reactionary way based on one experience, and without consistent emotional stimulus, would not be moved to give again. This essay highlights these problems and the difficulty they created for sustained, effective charitable work:

> Thus the Cautionary Card touches one side of charity organisation; and charity organisation will fulfil its task, only as the petty droppings of relief, the gifts of the people who pity but do not pity enough, grow less, and as the pity that pities enough possesses their hearts. Then out of their deeper sympathy they will feel discontented unless they are sharers in giving some completer help, or unless they prevent, as far as they can, the constant recurrence of sorrow in the same familiar forms, so inevitable that, as people say, you might have prophesied it, and,

> because you might have prophesied it, so preventable. Would not the deepest pity prevent distress if it could? Yet, strange to say, few would associate pity with thrift—pity for the ill-being of a class—with the thrift and good home life that might prevent it. Often indeed, our pity arises only when a picture of distress is before us, and when it springs up, often it is too late. Someone's pity should have been stirred thirty years before perhaps! Then the distress might have been prevented by self-support. (4)

Emotional sensitivity is valued here, but not in the form of traditional sympathy where an individual responds to a representative "picture of distress." In another revision of sympathy, the essay author modifies "sympathy" and "pity": people who have "enough" pity will give less materially as they develop a "deeper" sympathy that, instead, works to prevent sorrow and distress. The essay author also notes the difficulty of striking the right balance between an emotionally responsive person and long-term charity work that addresses the causes of poverty, not just its symptoms. The essay encourages the charity worker to move beyond superficial sympathy to a more sustained sympathy with the causes of poverty rather than the effects of it, justifying the organization's movement away from immediate sympathy based on representations of the conditions of poverty. Rather than responding immediately to the effects of poverty that create the picture of distress, the COS advocates for restraint in giving by turning one's judgment over to the organization that can prevent this picture in the first place. The author notes that the "cautionary card", or one's trained ability to judge and verify a request for help, is key to more systematic, or organized, philanthropic work. That training and mediation is a hallmark of organized philanthropy. In this way, the COS argues that ethical action means allowing one's sympathy to be mediated and restrained by the training and verification provided by the COS.

This, then, is the "vice of charity": emotion without judgment prevents good work.

The new methodology of the COS, in that it moves away from immediate sympathetic response between two individuals and offers a new form of mediatory judgment, is, essentially, a new method of reading the poor. The audience for "A Note on the 'Cautionary Card'" is those who have already felt sympathy for the poor and are interested in doing charity work. The problem, then, is not that they need to be convinced of the necessity of charity work but that they must be trained in order to make their work more effective. Implicit in the essay is a more careful and detailed definition of the kinds of narratives available to philanthropists: the unmediated narrative of the begging letter and the "picture of distress," which demand immediate sympathetic response, and the mediated narrative of professional training and record keeping, which requires distance and careful judgment. In this way, the COS considers the sympathy of Dickens and the social problem novel as a rudimentary form of sympathy; the organization instead recognizes the need to develop a body of writing that functions as a training manual for philanthropic workers, the features of which this chapter will describe closely. What we recognize as modern philanthropy, or the structured, mediated judgment about the proper ends of one's sympathy, was cultivated primarily through a narrative style that rewrote the rules of sympathy. Where the discourse of the social problem novel relied upon individuals as the actors in sympathetic exchange and focused on emotional response, the discourse of philanthropic narrative was based in anonymity, multiple actors (even organizations as actors), and a reliance on verifiable fact.

To examine philanthropic narrative in detail, I turned to the case records of the Charity Organisation Society. Previously in this chapter, I examined the publications of the COS in order to understand how the leaders of the organization perceived themselves and how they

chose to portray themselves to the public and subscription members. These texts included annual reports, monthlies, and pamphlets. The case reports that follow, however, were never published, as they contained the private information of the individuals and families who were referred to the COS by hospitals, parishes, and private parties interested in the organization's ethos. Each of these case reports began on forms and followed a similar pattern of information gathering through home visits by agents, referrals, and letters. The information gathered by the agent, who was usually only identified by his initials in the case reports, was then passed along to the district committee, which made the ultimate decision about the appropriate way to help (or not) the subject of the case. These case reports are unique in that they are the only documents in the COS collection that focus on and name the individual poor. While most of the discourse in the COS archives concerns the organization and other philanthropists, the case reports contain the multi-voiced, complicated information about the poor, aggregated by a COS agent, who recorded information, observations, and interpretation. These case reports contain the process of representing the poor becoming a narrative before transformation into representative facts and figures.

As the case papers are the written record of the methodology of the Charity Organisation Society, they represent the construction of a new way of relating to the poor as well as the agent-narrator's training in action. The cases are centered around forms that were filled out in the same way by each agent and include lists of the dates letters were sent and received, but they also contain written narratives that describe the agent's interactions with case subjects and referees, as well as the original copies of received letters and carbon copies of those sent. The forms show a careful, highly regimented process of information gathering, but the written descriptions of interactions show the decision-making process of the COS in action, in which agents use their

training to follow through on their hunches and sensitivities about each subject. In what follows, I will argue that agents paid attention to signals that are much like the features of novels—characterization, voice, and the like—in order to make decisions about how each case should be handled, demonstrating that these philanthropists regarded their work as art. Yet the forms and regimented process achieve different generic expectations from the social problem novel: each narrative had to be mediated through the methodology of the COS, represented by the form that each agent had to fill out.

The COS was very self-conscious of their narrative style, and they set out guidelines as to how each case should be handled. The first step of the process, after the referral, was to gather information about the client. On the top of each stack of case papers was a form that was filled out for each individual, including immediate family members. The form asked for basic information such as name, age, occupation, last work, any insurance, and a list of references. There was also space on the form for the agent to include notes on the first home visit and interview of the client. Following that form, the agent kept track of each letter that came in and each contact with the client. At this stage, the COS thought of the information-gathering process as completely neutral and unbiased, as demonstrated in this selection from B. H. Alford's[10] essay "Need of Thoughtfulness in Charitable Work" in the 1898 edition of *The Charity Organisation Review*:

> Another way of reconciling methods of charity with methods of the State has been provided—not quite recently, indeed, but within the limits of my own experience. A third person, as it were, has stopped in between the rival friends of the poor and offered arbitration. I mean the Charity Organisation Society. At their committee

[10] Alford was a board member of the Charity Organisation Society.

> table in every district meet the representatives of the Guardians and the representatives of the Clergy. Upon the bookshelves round the room are ranged volumes invaluable to anyone who understands how to handle them. They contain the life-history of the poor, not 'set down in malice,' but compiled with care and utmost endeavour to arrive at the naked facts. Interspersed with narrative in black ink, stand endorsements in red ink giving the judgments of Committee upon the case, recording any help rendered, any help refused; determining whether the circumstances demand reference to the Poor Law, or permit of private charity, or need yet further investigation by means of trained agents. It may be objected that this chronicle of antecedents is too private for perusal; that it is inquisitorial to consult it; that a clergyman and his workers had better not explore secrets, but go to the bestowal of help with kindly, unbiassed [*sic*] minds. That might be a possible excuse in the country, where residence is continuous, where general knowledge is large because population is sparse. It is no excuse in London, where flitting is habitual, where homes are mysterious, where many prey eagerly upon the innocence of others. Here almsgiving must be a science, if for no other reason, because mendicity is a science—practised within doors upon the naïve, the unguarded visitor" (Alford 130-1).

The first feature of philanthropic narrative that Alford outlines here is a movement away from the individual as the central figure of philanthropic narrative, or, in this case, a "novel-like" narrative. The central problem that defines the founding of the COS is that of urban anonymity. London is characterized by shifting populations, anonymous households, and people whom it is impossible to know. Therefore, charity workers in the city cannot respond in the same way to

the poor as charity workers in the country. Where rural charity workers could experience poverty alongside the poor, or at least observe the causes of poverty in their own community, urban charity workers interacted with people who they had never met or observed before. This also meant that the agent couldn't respond to the private needs of the individual since he is unknown. As a result, Alford describes a "scientific" methodology that looks similar to third-person narration: objective, distanced, guarded. The agent, or narrator, becomes the focus of the art of philanthropic narrative where the individual is so opaque as to be detrimental to the construction of the narrative. Further emphasizing the idea that the trained agent is to be a careful reader of the poor, Alford notes the life-histories, contained in books, that are available to the agent who has been trained in objectivity. Much as a third-person narrator does, the agent has to sort through multiple perspectives and make judgments about what deserves narration and what can be left out. This agent models the narrative training of the COS and intervenes "between the rival friends of the poor." His arbitration ultimately replaces the first-person, individual perspective of the poor; the third-person narrator becomes the central figure of philanthropic narrative.

Because of this conflict between a neutral narrator and inconsistent multiple perspectives, the process of the narrative's movement from private case papers to organization publications and statistics enacts the training of the philanthropic worker as reader of the poor. The philanthropic worker begins his task as a neutral observer, seeking out multiple first-person accounts about the client that may be conflicting or leave many unanswered questions. As he moves from filling out a basic form to summarizing the situation at hand and, finally, reporting his findings to the District Committee, the agent presents his reading of the client's story. Alford's discussion of the need to reveal the private life of clients outlines the process by which

the transition from private to public eliminates the first-person, individual point of view of the client even while the form in which it is set down gives the impression of preserving it.

At the first stage of the process, the individual client is motivated by a desire to keep as much about himself private as he can. His own first-person account, recorded by the philanthropic worker, presents his narrative in its most unmediated form: the client has chosen what to disclose and what to ask for. Because of this, the COS relies upon the multivocality of references to get as many points of view as possible in order to confirm what the client has chosen to reveal about himself. In this way, the narrative agency of the client is in constant conflict with the desire of the COS to mediate these multiple and possibly contradictory narratives: the client's ability to preserve his own telling of the story is always at risk. Yet, the way that the client remains the subject of the narrative all the way through case papers to the publication of his (anonymous) story in annual reports, gives the appearance that the client remains a sympathetic figure even as his voice is determined to be inherently untrustworthy by the agent. These claims of laying bare the "naked facts," of scientific neutrality, and of being an observer or recorder, makes it seem like the philanthropic worker and the COS are merely relaying the first-person account of the client so that they can get the best help possible, while the process of that account's transformation hides the ways by which the client's perspective is gradually lost.

A good example of this process of the conflict of competing narratives is the case of the Manley family in 1887. Mr. Manley, because he is the primary client in the Manley family case, is also the potential object of sympathy for the COS. Yet, the progression of this case demonstrates how the focus on the individual as an object of sympathy is disrupted by the COS's need to verify his story through the mediation of the agent-narrator. Eventually, because the

narrator's drive to verify becomes the focus of the case, Mr. Manley is eventually pushed aside in favor of other characters that the agent has not heard from yet. Mr. Manley, having pawned away most of his clothing and his family's possessions after a series of illnesses, asked for money for a new set of clothes so that he could take a promising job. The district office then sent out reference requests to several people: an acquaintance of Mr. Manley's, a parson, and a colleague in the insurance business. All letters in reply are positive; they know that Mr. Manley is in need and that he is an "able" insurance agent. These references are coherent enough to continue, and so the philanthropic worker makes a home visit in order to gather more information about Mr. Manley. As the case proceeds, however, Mr. Manley adds a complication that disrupts his own narrative and inhibits the sympathy he has so far received from the COS agent. Once he finds out that the COS has been inquiring about his situation to his landlord, he refuses to disclose any more potential references, saying that the "enquiries had gone quite far enough" (Document 21). He is especially worried about the COS asking his employer questions, as it could do damage to his reputation. Mr. Manley's reluctance to reveal more information than he already has underscores the tension between the narrator striving for neutrality and the individual voice of Mr. Manley, who desires to preserve his own point of view. True or not, Mr. Manley has constructed his own individual narrative, one that was designed to garner sympathy, and one that is threatened by the agent's desire to know. This tension puts the narrator in conflict with the point of view of the individual object of sympathy; Mr. Manley's story and the agent's controlling narrative are mutually exclusive in that the narrator, as aggregator of multiple points of view, cannot preserve points of view that conflict with his own.

In this way, the Manley case demonstrates how the COS, as it trained its agents to eliminate minority voices that clashed with the majority, rewrote the role of the narrator. Rather

than a guide who shows the reader around multiple points of view, the agent-as-narrator becomes the primary reader, enacting the decision-making process that places primacy on his own adjudication based on what he observes. The narrator, in this case, remains an observer, but the structure of COS information gathering lays bare the ways that the narrator-as-observer, despite any claims to objectivity, mediates all other points of view through his own. In what follows, the agent-as-narrator's overriding point of view ultimately displaces Mr. Manley's. In the agent's account of his home visit, he records many instances that made him uneasy:

> I visited Mrs. Manley but could not talk to her as her husband was there and talked all the time. He said ~~he thought~~ which Goodwin came the first time he thought he had been sent by a friend and it was not till he came again with a case paper and began to ask questions that he had any idea he was an agent of the COS. He was particularly anxious to know who had written to us about him—I could not tell him as I did not know—he talked so fast—he rather bewildered me—he will not have his uncle or brother written to or any further enquiries made from any relations as he says he would thereby risk any future benefits from his uncle—in fact he wishes no further enquiries made at all. […] He thinks now he has got one piece of work he shall "pull through" and cares very little whether we help him further or not—I suspect—if I could see his wife alone and win her confidence I should find she has had a great deal to endure—she is never, I think, allowed an opinion of her own but always agrees submissively to what he says. (Documents 19-20)

The most notable thing about this report is the way that the voices of Mr. Manley, Mrs. Manley, and the agent-as-narrator are in constant competition. Mrs. Manley's voice is completely shut

out by Mr. Manley's, while Mr. Manley also seems to overpower the agent as well. Yet, because of Mr. Manley's attempts to overcome the agent, the agent is unable to record Mr. Manley's full story due to its volume. What he does record, however, highlights the gaps in Mr. Manley's knowledge and his refusal to give the agent any more information. In this way, the agent's claim to neutrality actively shuts out Mr. Manley's ability to narrate his own point of view. Since the agent is merely an observer, he has no motivation to slow Mr. Manley down to make sure that he doesn't miss anything. He simply records what he sees. At this point, because Mr. Manley has denied the agent any further observations, the agent moves on to Mrs. Manley. Mrs. Manley offers the agent another opportunity for "reading" the situation, since Mr. Manley has denied him any further opportunity. The way that the agent moves from one to the other in this case report demonstrates that, in order to build a narrative in the first place, he can't be overwhelmed or shut out by those he is reading, further emphasizing the idea that a mediating narrator has to be in control of the direction of the story and can't allow an unmediated, first-person narrator to overwhelm his own.

The next case demonstrates the way that the structure of COS information gathering and narration ultimately changes readers' relationships with the poor. The Biggs cases, which stretch nearly 50 years, resist the idea that first-person narration, or reliance upon the stories based on individual perspectives, are the complete story. In a similar way to the Manley case, the initial client does not remain the only object of sympathy for very long. As the agent observes the situation and aggregates several voices in the Biggs cases, his object of sympathy shifts from Mrs. Biggs, who is initially the focus and whose narrative the case begins with, to her daughter Marian Biggs, whose voice barely enters in to the case at all. In this movement from a client's own story as the focus of sympathy to a second-hand story as the focus, the Biggs cases

demonstrate how the COS trains readers to focus on their own narrative mediations and decision-making process rather than focus on the voices that are contained within the narrative as a way of determining the object of sympathy, and thus, the reader's relationships to the poor. Ultimately, the narrative of the COS is defined by its focus on the narrator-reader's ability to mediate and aggregate multiple voices rather than the reader's ability to recognize multiple voices as unique individuals and to preserve their multiplicity.

The Biggs case file includes four separate cases opened by the COS in 1891, 1915, 1927, and 1937. The first case, in 1891, was opened and closed quickly, resulting in an outpatient letter for Mrs. Biggs and the fees paid for Mr. Biggs to enter a trade club, a kind of insurance organization that covers lost work when ill. The second case, opened in 1915, becomes more complicated. By this time, Mr. and Mrs. Biggs have four grown children, most of whom live outside the household; Marian, their daughter, has returned reluctantly due to lack of work. Mr. Biggs has left the family, and no one knows where he is. The case opens when a hospital refers Marian to the COS for convalescent treatment. The referral already precludes Marian's story from being purely first-person; it reaches the COS second-hand, and Marian is almost a minor character. Even while she is the center of the case, her voice, and especially her ability to state her own needs, is relegated to the background. The case is delayed when the hospital states that at least a month needs to pass between stays, the Fulham and Hammersmith Committee learns that Marian has just moved to their district and all references live in another district, and the agent learns that there is family trouble that "needs careful investigation" (Document 13). Again, Marian's need for convalescent treatment is relegated to the background once the COS finds another line of investigation that better fits the goals of the organization, which are to ameliorate situations that prevent someone from helping themselves rather than fixing an

immediate situation that will not solve a larger problem. In some ways, the COS is investigating the family situation in order to find a different problem rather than focusing their attention on the problem that was brought to their attention in the first place.

Further, the agents' descriptions of Marian and their sympathy for her changes according to the COS's need to construct their own narrative about what should be done for Marian. At first, Marian makes a good impression on the agent, who writes that she is "a nice looking girl with nice manners" and that "she is nicely dressed and of superior appearance" (Document 10). Further, when the agent visits both Marian and Mrs. Biggs at home, he discovers that Mr. Biggs "was in prison five years ago and when he came out was shipped off [to] Canada by his late employers. She promised them she would never go near them again to trouble them if only they helped to send her husband away. He used to beat and ill treat her whenever he was drunk, and she was thankful to be rid of him" (Document 17). At first, Marian and Mrs. Biggs are sympathetic characters due to the fact that they seem to be doing as well as they can despite the circumstances and that their situation has been further exacerbated by a formerly abusive, absent husband and father. Yet, as the case goes on and a different agent (indicated by different handwriting) meets Mrs. Biggs, he finds her to be a "very disagreeable woman who refused to give any information whatever and appeared to be very much annoyed at the Hospital's having applied for help to get her daughter away for the benefit of her health" (Document 17). Further, the reference letters oscillate between approval of Marian's convalescence and the opinion of not being "favourably impressed" (Documents 17 & 38). Rather than finding Marian's limitations to be a reason for sympathy for her situation, the agents of the COS see these limitations as gaps that need to be filled by their own goals for her. In other words, constructing a narrative that promotes sympathy for the poor is not the goal in the case papers of the COS. Rather, the COS's

narrative aims to construct further problems that cannot be solved through sympathy alone; the goal of the agent is to construct a character that needs to be changed rather than understood.

This goal is exemplified by the way that the case papers construct Marian as a figure in need of their agency's mediation, particularly as they have to deal with an increase in volume of reports about Marian that can't be reconciled. As the COS receives more reference letters, they become aware that Marian's character could be lacking, despite the earlier reports by their own agents that she seemed to be respectable. In a letter from the COS asking for help from a rescue worker, Miss Edsall[11], they say: "We hear the mother and daughter have bad character and that she should be taken away from her mother's influence. Doubts are expressed as to Marian's character, but we have nothing definite against her; only references all say she should be got away from her mother's influence. If you could see the girl you could more easily form an opinion of her than one of our visitors can. The c'tee [*sic*] would be willing to help her to get away to a home, if they felt that on her return, she would not be going back to her mother: we wondered if you could give her a shelter until she could get into a situation" (Documents 27-8). In this letter, it's clear that having sympathy for Marian is beside the point. The COS doesn't know enough about her to be able to say if she is a sympathetic figure or not, and that's not their goal. They ask Miss Edsall to see Marian, not to understand her better or make a decision about her character one way or the other, but to decide if they could help her in a way they've already determined. The case ends when Miss Edsall visits Marian at home and then receives a postcard from Marian saying that she does not wish to leave her home. As a result, "Miss Edsall can do nothing further" (Document 38). In this way, Marian's case report reveals the way that the

[11] Importantly, Miss Edsall is not an agent-narrator, as discussed above. She had no role in recording or adjudicating cases, but acted primarily as a data collector who added another perspective for the agent-narrator to mediate.

COS's formulaic narrative of self-help and verification changes relationships to the poor from ones characterized by sympathy to relationships characterized by only reporting those details that help them to carry out the methodology of the COS.

Marian's third case is entirely different from the second. Marian is more compliant with the COS and confirms their earlier suspicions that she had a bad influence; from there her bad character can be explained away by the COS's earlier ideas from the second case. The case opens in April of 1927 when the COS receives a letter from St. George's hospital asking if Marian could again be supported for a stay at a convalescent home. By this point, Marian is married and has the last name Beals. The COS notes that they have dealt with her before and begins to gather information and references. Marian is still having problems with her mother, who accuses her of being unfaithful and refuses to watch Marian's children while she goes for convalescent treatment. Marian even asks for the COS not to let her mother know that she has asked for help, since Mrs. Biggs has never forgiven her for asking for help the first time. At this point, here is a dispute about Marion's character, some saying that she has a bad reputation while others say that she has been better since her marriage and that any bad behavior happened before she was married. As the COS makes arrangements for her to convalesce and for her children to be cared for, the case continues until Marian receives convalescent treatment and final follow up. While it seems that the COS has had sympathy for Marian's hardship this time around, it is only because of the end result of their successful mediation; Marian has conformed to their ideas about her character and its causation rather than being written as a sympathetic character.

The fourth and final case for Marian Beal is opened in 1937 when Marian asks for dentures. She reports that the time since her past case have been hard for her because of ill treatment by her husband and anxiety and depression. Her husband had been living with another

woman, and when Marian tried to get a divorce, it was denied because of lack of evidence. As the COS works to find funding for her dentures over the course of a few months, they also construct a story about her family life. They find that Marian's children try to help her as they can, and they get a history from several sources about her husband's cruelty.

Both the Manley and the Biggs/Beals cases follow a formulaic pattern of observation, verification, and resolution. The agents in each case perform the role of the observer-narrator in the way that they have been trained by the COS, reading the poor in such a way that allows them fulfill the goals of the agency. The most important role for the agents is to be a neutral narrator-observer, a role outlined by the COS's training manuals and Alford's essay about the "scientific method" of the COS. While this role would seem to meet the conditions for sympathetic response, as observation and description of the individual poor is the formula for sympathy in the social problem novel, the formula that the COS lays out in its case forms and reports changes the primary condition for sympathy: a face-to-face encounter with an individual. Both cases demonstrate how COS agents are trained not to focus the stories of individual poor in order to cultivate sympathy, but to focus on their own mediation, asking if it follows the guidelines that the COS creates. If the philanthropist is an artist, these case reports demonstrate that the creation of philanthropy results not in portraits and preservation of individuality, but in the construction of repeatable narrative patterns through its use of a form. In doing so, the COS also changes readers' relationships with the poor; readers become acquainted with the compliance of the poor rather than the poor themselves.

Yet, even as the COS shifted the focus of philanthropy from sympathy to systems, the public still desired individual stories that would justify the COS's work and provide a reason for them to give. After the first few years of publishing annual reports with only statistical

accounting of the work that had been done that year, readers began to request more specific stories about individual cases. This, on its own, is interesting, considering that the COS's argument that statistics could be representative did not seem to be enough for those interested in philanthropic work. Yet, the organization's inclusion of individual stories to satisfy subscribers seemingly offers a more personal narrative while concealing the way that the COS has already done the interpretive work for readers. A good example of this is found in the following narrative from the Annual Report of 1872, in which the COS highlights the contrast between immediate distress designed to create sympathy and the verification and factual information of the COS:

> 2. Reported Unfavourably
>
> Case 667.—In the autumn of last year an account appeared in the papers, headed 'Death by Starvation,' of a coroner's inquest held on an infant of five months. The mother, a girl of 19, said that the deceased and another child of 2 ½ years old were her illegitimate children by a man who had left her and was earning £2 a week in America. She described herself as supporting herself, her two children and a sister (aged 12), by working at a lead factory at 9s. a week. She though she had been poisoned by the lead, that the milk had been affected by the same cause, and had thus caused the death of the child. Distressing details were given by the Coroner's officer at the inquest and by other who wrote to the papers of the state in which the family were found; the case excited considerable sympathy, subscriptions began to flow in, and an offer of employment was made by a clergyman. In the meantime, enquiries had been addressed to this Committee on the subject, in consequence of which our agent was directed to ascertain what he

> could about the family. His report was to the effect that the girl ought to have been prosecuted for causing the death of the child by neglect, inasmuch as she used to come home form work and go out shortly afterwards in company with other young girls of loose character—and, indeed, according to one account, that she had not been thoroughly sober since her child died; that the father of the child, instead of being in America, was earning good wages in Drury Lane, and had been in the mother's company within a week of the child's death; and that there was no foundation whatever for the suggestion as to lead-poisoning. These facts were made known to the benevolent persons who had inquired about it and to the journalists who had taken the matter up, with the result that no further subscriptions were solicited." (*Fourth Annual Report* 25)

This essay is a debate about narrative representation rather than the morality of the poor. This published case report outlines categories beyond simple deserving or undeserving; the essay argues for new narrative standards. The category of "reported unfavourably," even as it follows the more familiar categories of deserving and undeserving, implies that the way the story of the case was told by groups other than the COS was the problem, not necessarily the client herself. The case report above uses style to mark the contrast between the report of the papers and the verification by the COS. Before the COS enters the case, the sensationalized nature of the report is emphasized with words and phrases like "distressing details," "excited considerable sympathy," and "subscriptions began to flow." These evocative details mirror the warnings written in "A Note on the 'Cautionary Card'", where the danger lies in a focus on a picture of distress, followed by immediate emotional response and wasteful giving. What's more, this section of the report frames the story with a first-person narrative, where the mother is allowed to

speak about her situation herself and these details are merely recorded by the newspaper. The shift in the tone of the report comes when the COS steps in to investigate the situation: the focus is on a third-person narrative of the situation by the agent. Very few adjectives are used to modify the details of the report, but the agent's single use of emphatic language is telling: "no foundation whatever" focuses on the flaws in the narrative method rather than the character of the person whose report it contains. Other than that, the agent's response is measured and focuses on observable details rather than emotions. Further, these observable facts disqualify the first-person narrative of the mother from consideration and are used by the agent to correct the journalists' exaggerated response to the coroner's report and their naive trust of the mother. The publications of the COS offer not just a report, but a didactic illustration of the dangers of trusting the first-person narratives of the poor and emotionally cloying individual portraits of those poor. The above case report highlights the necessity of intervention by the COS not just in charity itself, but in the way cases are reported to the public. The mother's first-person account and the dangerous sympathy it inspires needs to be mediated by the COS in order to manage emotion and draw attention to the corrective narrative of the COS.

This has important implications for the way that we critique the ethics of philanthropic practice. While critics of Victorian philanthropy have tended to concentrate on the categories of deserving and undeserving set forth by the COS, the above report indicates that the moral character of the poor was less important as a category than the authority through which the story was mediated. This shifts the critique of philanthropy's removal of agency from the poor: it is no longer about removing agency through unfair categorization but about removing agency by placing primacy on narrative mediation even while claiming that the philanthropic reports preserved first-person immediacy. The Charity Organisation Society's revision of narrative

sympathy, in that the individual poor were no longer the focus, destabilized the poor's ability to represent themselves. The poor were considered to be inseparable from their class; yet, as sympathy lingered in philanthropic writing as a merely symbolic way of accessing the stories of the poor, this change destabilized the figure of the individual and its role in narrative. Metaphors of the part's place among the whole explain how the individual no longer symbolizes a discrete figure with a unique background and instead has become representative of a larger group. The following remark on COS procedure underscores the tension in this representation and the ambiguity as to whether the poor should be regarded as individuals or as a class:

> "That each case should be considered solely upon its merits," the council would remark as follows:
>
> 1. The suggestion, if interpreted generally, embodies the usual action of District Committees.
>
> 2. But it may mean that cases should be regarded as isolated and not as related to the larger problems of poverty and pauperism. If such be the right interpretation, it is clear that the Society could not acquiesce in such a view of its duties. The Society could not dissociate the individual from the class, pretend that its action could be limited to the person with whom alone it was dealing. It has to consider, in the individual case, what the more general effects of its action would be, if carried out on a large scale in similar cases; e.g. the gift of boots to enable children to attend school if frequently made and widely known, would tend to make parents neglect to send their children to school in order to get the boots. Thus the object of the School Board would be in a measure defeated. (*Tenth Annual Report* 36)

Responding to the criticism that the COS was measuring the "deserving" poor through the lens of their own methodology instead of to each case independently from all others, the COS offers a procedure that preserves the appearance of considering each case objectively while still obscuring the individual poor as mere parts of the whole of their class. When the COS suggests that considering a case only upon its merits is their "usual action," they also give themselves leeway to ignore this practice.

In fact, the COS's plan of action highlights the way that individual poor are preserved only as symbols of philanthropic reformist ideology: "The Council believe that few can have any personal intercourse with the poor without coming to the conclusion, that it is almost better that Charity should not act at all, than that it should so act as to increase and perpetuate the causes of distress among the wage-earning classes, and tend to undermine their independence" (*Tenth Annual Report* 35-6). The COS wishes to preserve the independence of the poor, but only up to a point. In a further twist of irony, this statement demonstrates how even face-to-face, individual contact with the poor increases the philanthropist's belief that the poor cannot be separated from their class. Independence remains as a descriptor not of personal autonomy, but of the separation of classes. Even though the individual poor might be initially isolated from the rest of her class, the COS understands its actions as always affecting the entire class. In this case, potential effects of charitable action cancel out the consideration of an individual's background, circumstances, and need. In this hypothetical case, even if one child needs boots to go to school, it might encourage the class of which the child is a member to manipulate the system in order to get boots. In such an example, the COS demonstrates how it, in fact, does not consider individual cases, since it concedes that it cannot "pretend that its action could be limited to the person with

whom alone it was dealing." In this way, the COS's procedure preserves the symbol of the individual object of sympathy while acting as if each person is representative of their entire class.

This way of representing the poor leaves no room for the individual to represent himself as such; it even makes self-representation appear deviant. One example of this incongruity seems completely out of place in the COS's collection of texts, yet it was curiously preserved in its archive: that of Frank Foster, who requested assistance from the COS and was denied because of his income. In his leaflet "A Vital Question," Foster claimed that the denial of his request for a few hundred pounds to pay off a debt resulted in greater debt to the bank at the time of the leaflet's publication. Of note on the title page of his leaflet, Foster addresses the COS saying that the way that they exchange information on the individual scale is suspect: "For the supporters of the Charity Organisation Society, to some of the chief among whom a copy of this document will be sent, as the writer does not adopt the charitable mode of making accusations against others through 'private' or privileged communications" (1). Here, Foster accuses the COS of hypocrisy: while they claim to focus on individual cases, they make their judgments about each individual private and thus completely mediated by the COS's standards. By making his grievances public, Foster facilitates public debate. While at first glance it may appear that Foster is only taking issue with the final judgment of the COS on his case, framing his argument in this way indicates that his larger grievance is with the narrative construction and methodology of the organization as a whole.

Foster expands his grievance with the methodology of the COS, saying that the reader's attention shouldn't necessarily be on him alone but on his case as exemplary of a larger problem:

> Notwithstanding the irreparable injury and gross injustice I have suffered at the hands of the Society in question, God forbid that I should assail it, as I now do,

> did I for one moment suppose my case to be an exceptional one, and that the Institution conferred a benefit on the community at large. But this is the exact opposite of my belief. Ready, as I am, to admit that hiring Inquisitors have effected some good in suppressing professional beggars, I am at the same time convinced that the detection of each real impostor has been followed by the cruel oppression of a dozen that are not imposters. (4-5)

While Foster might not have a problem with a personal sacrifice for the greater good, as the COS claimed in their denial of his request, he doesn't believe this is the case. Instead, Foster argues that the individual investigators or character references that the COS relies upon is the equivalent to personal assassination, that the COS "stab[s] their victims in the dark with weapons sharpened by the foes of the fallen one" (Foster 4). While Foster's language may be hyperbolic, his argument that character attacks on the individual do not in fact benefit the whole responds to the rhetorical tension between the individual and the group in philanthropic debate at the time. He would accept personal sacrifice on behalf of the whole, but the COS's methodology denies this possibility. That Foster went so far as to publish his own leaflet demonstrates how much he felt the need to represent himself. Foster's ultimate argument here is that, because the COS denies individuals the opportunity to represent themselves, it works against its stated goal of making the poor more self-sufficient.

Foster takes specific aim at the organized methodology of the COS when he explains how the COS intervened in his situation and the process that took place afterwards. Having first appealed to private parties for help in getting him out of debt, Foster was referred to the COS at some point without his knowledge. Six months after his initial contact with agents, "the invalid [Foster] wrote to ask on what legal or moral ground the Charity Organization Society claimed a

right to enter—without solicitation or appeal to them for aid—a private dwelling and make every inquiry both within and without, relating to the affairs of a family, without making known the result of their inquiries to the chief person concerned?" (Foster 21). Foster's lack of agency in his own case meant that "the fountain of human sympathy was almost immediately cut off by the turncock of 'Organization'" (21). Foster's accusation against the COS makes an important point about how sympathy towards the individual is weakened when the individual is sacrificed to systematic organizations like the COS.[12] Foster's leaflet also implies a chaotic, disorganized system for the poor to navigate. Unknown to him, he had become a part of that system, and wasn't aware of the fact until his home was, as he describes, invaded. Not only does the methodology of the organization remove opportunities for sympathy and self-representation, but it also creates a chaotic system out of which the poor cannot emerge to represent themselves.

The COS's new narrative style that eliminates the need for sympathy in relationships with the poor has far-reaching implications on the way that we understand the relationship between philanthropic labor and the literary imagination. The result of the COS's changing narrative strategies and movement away from sympathy to statistics destabilizes the narrative field surrounding philanthropy in the late-nineteenth century. Even while individual stories remain as a way to garner support from the public, the systemic narrative change set in motion by the philanthropic techniques of the COS moves the field in a new direction and displaces sympathy as a way of judging the success of philanthropy. As a result, individual stories of the poor come into conflict with philanthropic practices instead of being seen as supportive to them.

[12] References to the machine-like nature of the Charity Organisation Society turns up elsewhere. The COS themselves recognized the tension between the personal and the organization when they said that "without much personal service, the mere machinery of the Society's organisation will prove of but little worth, and it is therefore to be hoped that an increasing number of persons in all classes of society will volunteer for the work in hand" (*Second Annual Report* 20).

chapter establishes the idea that philanthropic writing took part in literary tradition through its self-conscious reconstruction of narrative style from sympathy to data collection and the use of forms. As this dissertation continues, each chapter will examine how philanthropic novels engaged with the shift away from sympathy, as they could no longer rely on the methodology of sympathy to represent philanthropic relationships. Rather than simply representing philanthropy or imitating its investigatory techniques, these novels thought deeply about the narrative of data collection that circulated in writing about philanthropy and complicated the novel's ability to create social change by bridging the gap between readers and characters.

CHAPTER THREE

"I Sheltered Myself Behind Myself": The Paradox of Feminist Philanthropy in *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* and *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*

The latter half of this dissertation is an evaluation of whether or not philanthropic forms of individualization and attachment can be redeemed for feminist ends in the wake of professionalized philanthropy. Where chapter two establishes that late-Victorian philanthropy replaced sympathetic attachment in philanthropic relationships with objective detachment as a mandate for professionalization, chapter three considers how such a mandate changed how women participated in philanthropic work. Professionalization seemingly created the conditions for women to take on a vocational, autonomous identity as philanthropists. Paradoxically, however, it failed to provide the heroines of philanthropy the narrative agency that such a privileged position promised to their male counterparts. This chapter argues that, as the discourse surrounding female philanthropy suggested that a woman could improve herself through professionalization, philanthropic narrative only strengthened the conditions that made it difficult for women to gain autonomy.

Even as the figure of the singular feminist-philanthropists proliferated in literature and other representations of philanthropy, these women protagonists were not experiencing progress away from their roles as wives. This is evident in Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* and H. G. Wells's *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman*, where the female philanthropist-protagonists set out to create public, professional roles for themselves with their philanthropy, only to be interpolated back into a marriage plot. These novels reveal the contradictory aims of the new professionalized philanthropy, which claimed to be progressive and socially

transformative while denying such social progress to women. Even as the Charity Organisation Society (COS) focused on professionalizing its narrative strategies in such a way as to privilege the philanthropist's narrative voice above all others, such a professional identity was not extended, rhetorically, to women. Women were professionalized in such a way that the organization could co-opt their efforts back into the problematic system that focused on women's role in the private sphere. Both Besant's and Wells's novels point toward the dissonances this philanthropic storyline created for women by highlighting the fragmented identities of their female protagonists, rather than aggrandizing their status as philanthropic heroines. This chapter contributes to the larger argument of the dissertation about the shift from sympathetic philanthropy to professionalized philanthropy by arguing that philanthropic reform did not contribute to social change and that professionalized philanthropy could no longer be represented as transformative in the novel either. As demonstrated in chapter two, philanthropy prevented social change by marginalizing the poor; in chapter three that discussion was extended by a look at the ways that professionalized philanthropy marginalized women. Even while women were encouraged to become professional philanthropists, the discourse of philanthropy set limits on the way that they could exercise philanthropy—philanthropy itself was antithetical to female agency.

Women were certainly invited to become professional philanthropists by taking on an objective attitude in their work. As female philanthropists attempted to organize and solve the chaos of poverty, philanthropic discourse depicts them as singular, charitable heroines, who provide examples for other aspiring female philanthropists. An 1883 article "The Education of

Philanthropy" by an anonymous rent collector who was trained by Octavia Hill,[13] addresses the idea that sympathy with the poor is the chief aim of philanthropists: "If it be agreed that rent collecting offers to women one of the best and most useful means of direct personal sympathy and influence with the 'working' classes, it remains to see how its duties may be most successfully maintained" (58). Here, the author refers to the idea, common in discourse about female philanthropists during this time, that women's work in the public sphere was acceptable if it fulfilled their role as sympathetic caregivers. The if/then structure of this sentence, though, demonstrates how the author complicates this widespread opinion about women's work in the public sphere. She says that even if women are somehow sanctioned to do rent collection work because it allows them to be femininely sympathetic, the fulfillment of this role does nothing to assist them with doing the actual work. Again, as in chapter two, philanthropic discourse sets up a conflict between feminine sympathy and philanthropic action, where personal contact is detrimental to the practice of philanthropy and its overall goals.

However, this chapter moves beyond framing female philanthropy as a conflict between dutiful action and sympathetic caregiving. Rather than an attempt to argue which of these iterations of philanthropy is more feminist, the focus here becomes the ways that the discourse of professionalism functions through a kind of detachment that distorts women's attempts to professionalize. Women's participation in philanthropic work operates, then, not as an example of successful professionalization, or feminist transformation of women's roles, or of a woman's ability to individualize through her work; rather, it operates as a critique of the discourse of professional objectivity and professionalization that is so important to philanthropic reform. The

[13] Octavia Hill (1838-1912) was a social reformer who focused on housing conditions; she was also helped to found the Charity Organisation Society and was on its board. She became a landlord (rent collector) when she was unable to find housing for the poor in good condition. Rent collecting was later organized into a professional form of philanthropy that went along with self-help trends of late-century philanthropic reform.

idea that philanthropy is a form of vocational self-cultivation, or that women can overcome the stereotypes of their sympathetic femininity through philanthropic work, is one that has expanded along with feminist literary criticism. Dorice Williams Elliott's *The Angel out of the House* makes such an argument. She focuses on the "tensions and anxieties inherent in the figure of the philanthropic woman" (4), in that the female philanthropist was both praised for fulfilling feminine duty and scorned for leaving behind her domestic duty. Disappointed that "historians and literary critics, including feminists, have written off women's philanthropic work as do-gooding or patriarchal collusion without recognizing the crucial role it played in redefining both gender and class roles in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain" (5), Elliott aims to "document the cultural work" (6) of philanthropic representations and argues that these representations inspired an "inherent challenge that women's practice of philanthropy posed to the domestic ideology of separate spheres and to the ideal of harmonious class relations" (5). For Elliott, representations of philanthropy could create "mimetic desire" (7) or "ambitious desire" (8) in women. Elliott concentrates her argument on the idea that "by helping to rewrite the defining terms of the category of woman, specifically by acknowledging their ambitious desires, philanthropy did help to remove some of the limitations that the gendered division of labor placed on women in the nineteenth century" (11-2). These representations were everywhere, as Elliott points out: "it became commonplace in the 1860s for novelists to deploy the figure of the noble philanthropic woman" and "the 'philanthropic heroine' could be said to rival the traditional 'romantic heroine' as a literary convention" (161). Yet, later in the century, novels such as *Middlemarch* document the failure of the philanthropic heroine. Nonetheless, Elliott argues that even this failure marked "public acceptance of the figure of the philanthropic heroine [and] signaled an important shift in the definition of women's nature that paved the way

for more systemic changes in the future" (188). Indeed, even *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*'s protagonist, Angela, intends to change women's roles with her philanthropic work.

Elliott's scholarship documents the many, many examples of female philanthropists in the nineteenth-century novel and grapples with their paradoxical position as both traditionally feminine (sympathetic) and dangerously masculine (detached), yet, as the end of the book moves toward representations of the failed philanthropic heroine, it does not come to terms with how many late-century novels depicted the philanthropic heroine in such a way as to mark her inability to change women's roles in the public sphere. Philanthropic texts, such as "The Education of Philanthropy," discussed further on in this chapter, certainly privileged women's ambitious desires, but did so primarily by measuring the philanthropic heroine's ability to detach from the poor. The effect of such detachment on a woman's public image could be detrimental in other ways, as the readings of Besant's and Wells's novels demonstrate. Additionally, these novels call into question the contradictions of progressive narratives of philanthropy that use the figure of the feminist-philanthropist heroine to improve the social order by creating commonality between the rich and poor. Such a social imperative came into conflict with the professional requirement for objectivity. For the nineteenth-century philanthropist, vocational self-cultivation meant developing a strong position of detachment from the poor. In the readings of the novels that follow, this chapter argues that women, because of the way that their philanthropic work came in conflict with their marriages, were not able to achieve a "professional" level of objectivity. Women had to sacrifice either their marriages or their careers as philanthropists. Further, because these novels focus on the way that women could not achieve objectivity, and often had to resort to manipulations of their identities in their attempt to do so, the texts could not offer a philanthropic heroine after which the reader could mold her ambitious desires.

Professional objectivity, similar to the detachment examined in chapter two, is modelled in philanthropic literature targeted at female rent collectors. Rent collecting, advocated by a famous female philanthropist, Octavia Hill, was a popular way for women to participate in philanthropic endeavor and not venture too far outside of acceptable roles for women. In the article "The Education of Philanthropy," however, the Charity Organisation Society's (COS) training in professional objectivity begins to remold the expectations around feminine sympathy and caregiving that had dominated the field in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. Authored by an anonymous woman who gains her authority from her personal training by Octavia Hill, the article aims to pass on this new methodology to women in particular. This intended audience is indicated by the article's placement in *Work and Leisure: a magazine devoted to the interests of women*, as well as the way by which the magazine frames rent collecting, as work that "call[s] forth the power of English ladies" (58). The speaker of "The Education of Philanthropy" argues that a female rent collector should emerge as a strong beacon of dutiful action rather than a symbolic figure of feminine sympathy. She creates a vivid tableau in which the trained philanthropist puts aside her immediate responses to a chaotic scene of poverty in order to do her job:

> The candidate for training, on probation as it were, will probably be first taken round the beat by a senior collector, whose quick correctness and freedom from care as she jots down succeeding beats, receives and gives varying scenes of change, or casts a quick glance round washhouse and yard, noting here a stray window-pane or an increasing rat-hole, there a neglected staircase or an unwashed baby, while all the time there is an apparently uninterrupted attention ready for the quick-succeeding tales of children's weal and woe, [. . .] may well fill with

> wonder the inexperienced beginner, who of kitchens and garrets, of Smiths and Browns, of tragedies and comedies, as the seventy or eighty bits of different family life she has glimpsed at in the last two hours float in her brain in strange confusion, with only the clean room at the top of the street, or the dirty passage over the way, or the more than usually overpowering multitude of babies in the kitchen at No. 20, shining as landmarks in the waste of misty impressions; yet that wonder is increased tenfold as she finds her companion quietly striking off her rapid notes, giving minute orders for necessary repairs, peremptorily dismissing unwarranted demands, discussing which roofs shall be thoroughly set in order, which temporarily patched, with the proved plumber, who waits his weekly orders, ready to enter into honest but wordy explanation over each phrase of the incomprehensibly technical bill, and watching his opportunity to carry off his victim for a tedious inspection of half-cleared drains. (58-9)

This tableau, in addition to outlining the working conditions of a female rent collector, describes the difference between the rent collector-in-training and the experienced rent collector as a difference in ability to detach. While the collector-in-training can barely remember all she has seen and is left with only "misty impressions," the experienced collector can not only notice all the details about the conditions of her properties, but can move on to the next task with practiced speed, all the while avoiding having her time wasted by the loquacious plumber. Where the trainee is overwhelmed by the multitude of problems, people, and locations swirling around her, the trainer is marked by her "freedom from care." What is more, even while the trainer notices more than the trainee, the trainee's memory is overwhelmed with impressions "shining as landmarks," indicating that her concentration on a small amount of items allows them to linger

and become much larger in her mind than they actually are. The experienced rent collector gives her full attention to the problems of the poor she visits, but she remains distant from them as the surprises of her work become more routine.

The author of this piece depicts the rent collector as an efficient beacon, a professional worker who objectively turns the everyday details of rent collecting into a systematic plan to solve poverty. A plan of action only becomes clear when the rent collector "finds the details of the rent-entry and account-keeping, of general supervision and reporting, fit into their proper place, while day by day the great issues which all thorough knowledge of our fellow-creatures brings to light stand out more and more fully defined" ("The Education of Philanthropy," 60). The author's use of narrative metaphors throughout the piece, including the "more fully defined" of this passage, describe the fully-trained philanthropist as a mediator through whom all the mundane, disparate details of charity work coalesce into a picture of the human condition. She does not merely keep up with a to-do list or record information. The details, written out as a list even by the author, refuse to accumulate into a vivid picture of the poor in distress without her guidance and discrimination. The immediacy of the "overpowering multitude of babies in the kitchen at No. 20" (59) are not meant to "shin[e] as landmarks," lingering in the memory of the philanthropist as individual problems to be fixed one at a time; rather, these to-do items are relegated into the background of their "proper place" as they are mediated into a larger picture of the "great issues."

As "The Education of Philanthropy" describes the professionalized role of the philanthropist in narrative terms, it also elevates the well-trained philanthropist to a heroine who can be admired and emulated. The author asks, "Shall we not rather press into the ranks of those who would strike at least one blow in the gathering battle, who would strive for the honour of

working under her guidance, as her humble followers, [. . .]" (61). The philanthropist becomes a heroic figure in this narrative, fighting a battle while showing her followers how to win it. Sympathy is beside the point of philanthropy; rather than honing her emotional sensitivity to the minutiae of her job, the philanthropist must train herself to be objective and active rather than responsive to every surprise that inevitably appears. In this way, she emerges from the chaos of rent collecting as a professional with the powers of evaluation. Contact with the poor is not useful to get to know them better; instead, its purpose is to provide a platform for the heroine-philanthropist to do her work and fix the conditions that cause poverty. What results is that the philanthropist is expected to gain objectivity in such a way as to not only create a picture of the great issues to be solved, but also to stand out as an example of someone who can craft a coherent plan.

Continuing with the motif of professionalized objectivity, "The Education of Philanthropy" claims that it is important for the rent collector to preserve distance from her subjects. The essay hints at this detachment when it describes the fully trained rent collector as someone who "casts a quick glance around" and "quietly strik[es] off her rapid notes" rather than becoming emotionally involved like her trainee does. This priority of preserving distance—here, supposedly, for the best of the poor—is repeated in a pamphlet about philanthropy (1898) from the Ranyard Nurses:[14]

> There are probably few conscientious workers amongst the poor who have not made the painful discovery of the difficulty there is in bettering the lives of the

[14] The Ranyard Mission and Ranyard Nurses (also known as the London Bible and Domestic Female Mission) was founded by Ellen Ranyard in 1865. The mission began with the purpose of distributing Bibles and religious literature to the poor in Seven Dials and later expanded to include a nursing service. The Ranyard Nurses focused on sending women of a similar class status to the homes of the poor. They also focused on self-help, providing domestic instruction to make homes healthier.

> lower classes and relieving their distress, without at the same time sapping their self-reliance, and rendering them in the future more rather than less dependent upon others. Many movements alas! are started with the noblest of purposes, they yet have a demoralising tendency. The scheme here presented claims to be a means of helping the poor to help themselves, and of ministering to their true and permanent social welfare. On this ground it should enlist the co-operation and support of those who deplore the present system of indiscriminate relief, and believe that the truest benevolence consists in promoting habits of thrift and independence." (Hurry 85-6)

This pamphlet starts with the problem of self-preservation, saying that philanthropic workers often find that their labor makes the problem of poverty worse by creating dependence rather than independence. While philanthropists might start out with the "noblest purpose" of fixing the problems of the poor rather than facilitating ways for the poor to fix their own problems, the author argues that this attitude demoralizes the poor. Ultimately, the Ranyard Nurses are working against the kind of "indiscriminate relief" where philanthropic workers are so overcome by their own idealistic response to poverty that they make the situation worse. Instead, Ranyard Nurses are trained to transform their benevolent impulses into more discriminate, practical solutions to the problem of poverty. Trained in this way, philanthropic workers reach professionalization when they overcome the naïveté of their initial idealistic response to poverty. Generosity, characterized as emotional attachment, is contrasted with the professionalism of detached consideration of what would be "best" for the poor. This methodology echoes that of the COS outlined in chapter two, where the foremost cause of poverty was indiscriminate giving in reactive response to scenes of impoverished distress. Professionalized detachment enabled

philanthropic reform because it did not allow the poor to become too attached to the rich and, thus, dependent on them for relief.

The implications of such a contrast between generous benevolence and the development of a professional identity are explored in two novels that illustrate the interplay of identity and community in the process of becoming a professional female philanthropist. H. G. Well's *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* (1914) and Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882), demonstrate how the idealized (sympathetic, feminine) philanthropic heroine does not conform to the late nineteenth-century mandate of objective professionalism. Where professionalized philanthropy requires objectivity in order to solve poverty, women encounter more difficulty achieving professional success in a context where they come into close contact with the poor *and* are expected to fulfill traditional female roles. Additionally, the marriage plots of these novels, which interpolate philanthropic work into marriage as a means to an end, illustrate how philanthropy is unable to provide a lasting professional identity for women. Each woman is successful in reaching her philanthropic goals, but each finds that she must compromise such success for the good of her marriage, ensuring that the vocation of philanthropy reifies traditional roles for women of the late-Victorian era. Indeed, professionalism came at a price for women. Before the professional mandate for objectivity, women could successfully negotiate their roles by using feminine sympathy to gain a public role as a philanthropist. Under these conditions, the idealized philanthropic heroine, both sympathetic and the solver of social problems, could exist in representations of philanthropy, as she did in the social problem novel. However, the new social context of professionalism made it more difficult for women to move in and out of both roles and to be represented as such in novels. As a result, the professionalization of female

philanthropy unraveled the figure of the philanthropic heroine that women's ambitious desires were modelled after.

Each female character in *All Sorts of Conditions of Men* and *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* begins her philanthropic work with self-cultivation in mind. As the novels progress, however, the idea of the self is divided between the public, professional self and the private self. In *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, Angela Marsden Messenger wants to use her wealth and education to improve working conditions for the poor by starting a dress shop with better hours and wages. She also provides the women who work there with meals and recreational time. However, she does this while disguised as Miss Kennedy, a working-class (yet with suspiciously good manners) needlewoman who benefits from the patronage of Angela Messenger. Along the way, she meets Harry Goslett, who was born poor but raised in the aristocracy. When he learns of his origins, he decides to move to the East End and attempts to live the life of a working-class man. Both Harry and Angela share the goal of cultivating the East End, and they work together to build a "Palace of Delight"[15] that they open by the end of the novel. They also fall in love during this process and marry at the opening of the Palace, where Angela reveals her true identity to Harry and the needlewomen who work for her. At this point, she turns over the stewardship of the Palace of Delight to the people, and forsakes her professional identity as Miss Kennedy.

In *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman*, Lady Ellen Harman finds herself in a very unhappy marriage to Sir Isaac, who controls every aspect of her life and keeps her out of society. As she realizes her naiveté in marrying Sir Isaac in the first place, she rebels by joining the suffragist movement and is subsequently arrested and jailed. She makes a deal with Sir Isaac that she will save him from future embarrassment if he allows her to do philanthropy on her own terms. She

[15] The Palace of Delight in *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* directly inspired the People's Palace of London, which was completed in 1887.

takes up the project of building a hostel for the women who work in the factories of Sir Isaac's International Bread and Cake Stores. However, she finds along the way that she cannot run her building without her husband's oversight. She also works with George Brumley, who falls in love with her. After Sir Isaac dies, Mr. Brumley begs Ellen to marry him, even though she has already turned him down, so that they can continue to work together; he characterizes her philanthropic endeavors as successful only because they have made a good team. Thus both *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* and *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* represent philanthropy in a new way. Though resembling in many ways the traditional social problem novel, these texts represent the conflict, not harmony, between professional success and properly feminine personal relationships. By inserting philanthropy into a marriage plot, each novel demonstrates that professional philanthropy has created conditions where woman cannot have both.

The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman and *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* are two very different novels in terms of how they regard philanthropy. Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* champions philanthropy—it inspired the building of the People's Palace in London—especially the kind that involves forging personal relationships with the poor whom the philanthropist is helping. Yet, the novel's proto-feminist bildungsroman style and its prevalent motif of disguise sit uneasily alongside themes of philanthropy and sympathetic attachments. Ultimately, Besant's novel never quite unifies Angela's philanthropic work with the marriage plot that she is a part of, revealing the contradictions between feminist philanthropic work and the femininely sympathetic persona the novel tries to develop for Angela as the caregiver for her needlewomen employees. On the other end of the spectrum, Wells's *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* is more straightforwardly critical of Lady Ellen Harman's use of philanthropy to develop a mature, self-possessed identity. She begins a philanthropic project as a way of gaining agency in a deeply

patriarchal marriage but finds that her work always reifies the problems she hoped it would solve. Further, she finds that her attempts to create commonality and equality between herself and the women who benefit from her philanthropy always return to problematic power relationships. Where these novels differ in tone, they both reveal that a model of philanthropy that aims to be a mode of self-cultivation for the philanthropist is problematic. Besant unconsciously reveals its gaps, while Wells consciously points out the problem with using philanthropy as a feminist platform; yet each novelist concentrates on a model of philanthropy that focuses on the heroic feminist trailblazer who aims to become stronger, gain independence, and understand herself better through her benevolent work. Despite their difference in style and opinion of philanthropy, each novel's ending points out that, in fact, each female protagonist of the novel is prevented from retaining a professional identity without concealing personal desires.

Angela begins her philanthropic work with the purpose of changing women's roles and gaining personal and professional agency. Her Cambridge education has exposed her to feminism and social duty, imperatives that result in the paradoxical goals of self-cultivation and self-sacrifice. While philanthropy might have been seen as something obvious for a wealthy woman to do in order to enter the public sphere, Angela begins by framing her philanthropy not as a rich woman's duty, but as a woman's responsibility to herself. First, it is clear that Angela's philanthropic endeavor is motivated by feminist impulses. After the time of her graduation from Cambridge's Newnham College,[16] Angela has ambitions to do something great with her life, and her outlook on vocation has been heavily influenced by her education:

[16] Newnham College was founded in 1871, eleven years before *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* was published. Its expansion began with the building of Newnham Hall in 1875. Angela would have been among the first female students to take courses there, although she would not have been granted a degree. Different from Girton College of Cambridge, which focused on women taking the same college courses as men at the same time, Newnham focused on allowing students to work at their own pace. In that way, Newnham was less demanding and more pragmatic.

> A girl does not live at Newnham two years for nothing, mind you; when she leaves that seat of learning, she has changed her mind about the model, the perfect, the ideal woman. More than that, she will change the minds of her sisters and her cousins: and there are going to be a great many Newnhams; and the spread of this revolution will be rapid; and the shrinking, obedient, docile, man-reverencing, curate-worshipping maiden of our youth will shortly vanish and be no more seen. (Besant 21)

Angela is motivated by a desire to change women's roles, and she sees her revolutionary kind of philanthropy as something that would achieve this. However, the novel does not entirely endorse Angela's ambitions about changing women's roles, framing them as rather lofty and idealistic. While Angela formulates her plans to change women's roles, she also maintains correspondence with a friend from Newnham who thinks her ambitions are unattainable. She scoffs at the fervent tone that Angela uses in her letters, such as that above, and Angela reacts by breaking off their friendship. Additionally, Angela's ambition to change women's roles is rather abruptly dropped by the plot, and Angela herself drops it when she is faced with the realities of philanthropic work. Because of this, the novel treats feminist outcomes from philanthropic work as naïve and mutually exclusive from the social expectations of philanthropy.

In *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman*, Lady Ellen Harman's foray into philanthropy is also framed as feminist; it is a way for her to get out from under the oppressive authority of her husband, who imprisons her in the house and does not compromise until Lady Harman stages a rebellion that humiliates him in the public eye. Her marriage is described as one "where one is really tempted to be ultra-feminist" (Wells 18), while Lady Harman herself is described as the "last of the women in captivity" (19). After Lady Harman learns from a servant that her

husband's company, International Bread and Cake Stores, takes advantage of its employees, she decides that one way to achieve autonomy is to work to provide the waitresses hostels where they could live independently and cheaply. Alongside this decision, the novel frames Lady Harman's philanthropic work as of a piece with her own personal development: "And while Lady Harman was making these meritorious and industrious attempts to grasp the significance of life and to get some clear idea of her social duty, the developments of those Hostels she had started […] was going on" (109). Here the act of philanthropy is only a secondary consideration when compared to Lady Harman's desire to cultivate her own position as a philanthropist, because it begins as a way for her to understand who is she is independent of her husband. The novel defines "the significance of her life" as something Lady Harman had never thought about before her marriage to Sir Harman, whose ill treatment of Lady Harman causes her to question the purpose of marriage in the first place.

Yet, Angela and Lady Harman's desires for developing a professional identity sit uneasily alongside their philanthropy when it is actually put into action. Lady Harman's initial goals are unrealized, and her desire for independence from her husband is constantly thwarted by Sir Harman's schemes against her as well as by philanthropy's inevitable inability to be disconnected from capitalist, exploitative systems. While Lady Harman's philanthropic work is something she does to achieve autonomy from her husband, the results of her attempts only make her more bound to him. Her desire to build and manage the hostels is only attained with a compromise with her husband after a rebellion. Sir Isaac begs her to come back and be a good wife, to which she acquiesces:

> "And there were the children—such helpless little things. In the prison I worried about them. I thought of things for them. I've come to feel—they are left too

> much to nurses and strangers…. And then you see he has agreed to nearly everything I had wanted. It wasn't only the personal things—I was anxious about those silly girls—the strikers. I didn't want them to be badly treated. It distressed me to think of them. I don't think you know how it distressed me. And he—he gave way upon all that. He says I may talk to him about the business, about the way we do our business—the kindness of it I mean. And this is why I am back here. Where else could I be?" (Wells 96-7).

Far from achieving autonomy, Lady Harman's compromise with her husband is framed as self-sacrificial: her desire to care for her children and the striking waitresses motivates her to make the compromise. Yet another character, Mr. Brumley, recognizes that "Everything conspired to give Sir Isaac and his ownership the centre of the picture" (Wells 98). Lady Harman's achievement of a sense of duty and purpose, rather than allowing her to find the "significance of her life," is just another way to keep her under the authority of her husband. In this way, Lady Harman is unable to achieve the sense of professionalism that would enable her to find this sense of purpose within her philanthropic work.

As Lady Harman continues her work, she learns the reality of her situation as someone who is ill-equipped to do any kind of beneficial work rather than becoming strong and independent through her work as a philanthropist. Any agency she gains turns out to be a sham, such as when she tries to set more liberal rules for the women in her hostels, only to be overruled by the hostel manager who really works for her husband, as "she was convicted of an absurd self-importance, she discovered herself an ignorant woman availing herself of her husband's power and wealth to attempt presumptuous experiments" (Wells 127). Here, the very idea of an autonomous woman doing work in the public sphere is not a possibility at all—the only reasons

Lady Harman is able to build the hostels is that she has access to the International Bread and Cake Stores through her husband, and his wealth gives her both the means and the time to do such work. Additionally, rather than achieving any kind of change, Lady Harman finds "…more and more that it was not certainly that fine and humanizing thing she had presumed it would be. She began to feel more and more that it might be merely an extension of Harman methods to cheap boarding-houses for young people" (104) and that the hostels turn out to be a place where "over it all brooded the chill stillness of rules and regulations and methodical suppressions and tactful discouragement. It was an Institution, it had the empty orderliness of Institutions, Mrs. Pembrose had just called it an Institution, and so Susan Burnett had prophesied it would become five years or more ago. It was a dream subjugated to reality" (139). In the end, Lady Harman's understanding that her efforts just do more to support her husband's work means that her own endeavors to improve the lives of the waitresses only ends up reifying the harsh and unimaginative conditions of the International Bread and Cake Stores. Rather than gaining self-possession, Lady Harman comes to doubt herself more and more. The narrator confirms Lady Harman's unrealized autonomy in the public sphere by describing the outcome as entirely ambiguous: "We have traced thus far the emergence of Lady Harman from that state of dutiful subjection and social irresponsibility which was the lot of woman in the past to that limited, ill-defined and quite unsecured freedom which is her present condition" (104). While Lady Harman might not be as fully subject to her husband's whims anymore, at least in her own realization of an existence outside the home, her work has hardly achieved the self-possessed, professional identity and business reforms she hoped it would. Wells exposes the problems with the kind of philanthropy that aims for self-cultivation; while it may be a vehicle for increased power,

professionalized philanthropy creates conflicts for women that do not allow them to achieve their ambitious desires.

Angela's desires for philanthropic reforms and self-cultivation are unrealized in a less straightforward way. On the first count, Angela's rhetoric and identity as a benevolent heroine obscures the agency and independent identities of her needlewomen employees. The plot of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, as some critics of the novel have noted, is paradoxical in that the upper-class characters of the novel aim to enable the working-class to help themselves, but with limits. The novel "sings the praise of the respectable working class, but stops short of entrusting their own political activists with any capacity for responsible leadership" (Neetens 144). In the absence of working-class leadership, Angela is able to fill in as the heiress-cum-reformer. On the first count, Angela abandons her independent identity and vocation by the end of the novel in a way that is framed as the fulfillment of her work. In another paradox of the novel, Angela's entrance into philanthropy means that she has to leave her identity as a wealthy, educated heiress behind. She disguises herself as Miss Kennedy, a needlewoman with a wealthy patroness. Such paradoxes were not far from the revised narrative of the COS, which emphasized the values of the organization rather than sympathy with the poor. In a similar way, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* frames Angela's work as reformist. She wants to change how philanthropy is practiced, promoting the idea of self-help by avoiding "pauperising" (Besant 82) the poor and by starting a self-run dress shop, where "there was to be no mistress, but to be self-governed, and to share the proceeds among them all in due order and with regard to skill and industry, we might adjust our own hours for the general good. This kind of shop has been tried by men, but I think never succeeded, because they wanted the capital to start it with" (119). Angela can step in to play the role of both distant philanthropist and intimate head dressmaker, who works to build a female-

only, utopian work space that focuses on the personal needs of needlewomen. This conflict between the professional mandate for objectivity and the attachments that result from working closely with the poor require Angela to take on a disguise that allows her to develop her professional skills while avoiding true connection with the poor, thus maintaining objectivity. This conflict and its resulting disguise creates a setting in which Angela, as Miss Kennedy, can claim to understand disadvantaged women while still cultivating a sense of professional accomplishment: "knowledge of her benevolent intentions, gave Angela a better opinion of herself than she had ever known before" (88). In this way, Angela's self-development supplies both the plot of the novel and culminates in an ending that breaks ties with the needlewomen that populate the novel—Angela's sympathy for the needlewomen is at odds with the development of her professional identity.

Angela's disguise and the conflict between professionalism and sympathetic benevolence effectively creates a hierarchy between herself and the needlewomen. Problematically, the dress shop, while purporting to be a safe space for working class women who desire autonomy, becomes a confining space for the needlewomen, where they are confused about their relationship with Miss Messenger and feel beholden to her in a way that holds back their own autonomy. Angela perceives her own attachment to the needlewomen as benevolent and caring, while the needlewomen's experience is more about compliance and submission. Additionally, in these moments of attachment, the narrative itself cannot account for the two parties as individuals. We never learn the names of each of the workers in Angela's association; only two women are ever named: Nelly and Rebekah. The rest of the employees are named only as types: e.g., "the lame one" and "the stout one," which prevents the reader from seeing their individuality. These girls are very rarely important motivators of the plot, and they only seem to

act as placeholders in settings where many characters are necessary or serve to highlight Angela's benevolence. As a result, these characters cannot emerge from the narrative as objects of sympathy and are subsumed back into their class as a whole.

Additionally, Angela's attachments to the named characters, especially Nelly, do not function in a sympathetic way, where even named needlewomen have the opportunity to voice how they feel about the situation they find themselves in. Instead, named needlewomen relate to Miss Kennedy in a supplicatory way: "Nelly Sorenson stood beside the piano watching the player with the devotion which belongs to the disciple who loves the most. Whatever Miss Kennedy did was right and sweet and beautiful. Also, whatever she did filled poor Nelly with a sense of humiliation, because she herself felt so ignorant" (Besant 135). Nelly also "simply worshipped" Miss Kennedy and did not "ponder any more over that first difficulty of hers, why a lady, and such a lady, had come to Stepney Green to be a dressmaker" (156). Nelly's attitude of devotion towards Angela/Miss Kennedy makes her submit to Angela in a way that reinforces the secrecy between them. While Besant sets up this relationship as a performance of the kind of commonality and harmony that philanthropists sought when they worked in the East End, it actually serves to emphasize their distance from each other. Although Nelly is able to express her feelings in the narrative itself, her attitude of awe towards Angela prevents her from expressing her feelings of inadequacy and ignorance that could cause Angela or the reader to have sympathy for her. Besides the fact that Nelly and Angela are distant from each other in that Angela has a god-like presence while Nelly takes on the role of an acolyte, Nelly's wonderment sets up a boundary between them that Nelly feels she cannot cross. She recognizes that Angela somehow does not belong in the East End; her manners are out of place. But rather than trying to understand this phenomenon by asking Angela about it, she instead satisfies herself with her

ignorance. In this way, Angela's authority serves to preserve her secret, and Nelly's acquiescence keeps that boundary in place. Besant's novel unconsciously exposes how Angela's cultivation of a distanced professional identity harms the women she works with every day and prevents them from achieving a sense of autonomy.

Angela's treatment of the needlewomen reflects Besant's own political views around poverty, in which he framed the poor as lacking individuality in a way that can only be solved by admiration of the cultivation of the rich. Taking up the prevalent late nineteenth-century philanthropic goals of cultivating individuality and self-sufficiency among the poor, the narrator notes that the East End of London is the perfect place for philanthropy because of how the poor there have lost sight of their independence:

> Strange and wonderful result of the gathering of men in great cities! It is not a French, or an English, or a German, or an American result—it is universal; in every great city of the world, below a certain level, there is no religion—men have grown dead to their higher instincts; they no longer feel the possibilities of humanity; faith brings to them no more the evidence of things unseen. They are crowded together, so that they have ceased to feel their individuality. (Besant 138)

Besant's narrator draws out the difficulties that urban anonymity creates for philanthropic organization, saying that the urban environment is such that it denies people the possibility to know themselves, much less to know the others around them. The parallels between Besant's philanthropy and that of the COS are clear: each considered urban anonymity to be a problem that exacerbated the difficulties of solving poverty, but they both lack an understanding of the voices of the poor as independent of their own already. Besant's language enacts the narrative structures that chapter two discusses in detail; he claims to give the poor a voice through

philanthropy but simultaneously erases that voice in the process. Angela's understanding of her own benevolence while her needlewomen have a problematic worshipful attachment to her is mirrored in Besant's views of the people of the East End. Kevin Swafford describes this problematic affect of a sense of detached superiority to the poor when he says that "Besant argues that if only the West End could see the East End as something more than a place of meanness and working class *barbarism*, a city unto itself filled with a variety of people worthy of understanding, cultural colonization and concern, then maybe something constructive could be done to uplift the poor and the working class to an agreeable level of cleanliness and middle-class respectability (62, emphasis original). Yet, Swafford continues, the novel goes about this using a method antithetical to reciprocal understanding, since its style only supports middle-class ignorance of the East End: "As a 'working-class romance,' the novel was easily consumed by a middle-class reading public that was either ignorant about the East End or had become a bit too uneasy about the threatening implications of an increasingly visible and distraught working class" (63). Angela and Besant's attitude towards the poor demonstrates how a sense of professionalism and cultivated authority creates a sense of detachment that obfuscates the individuality of the poor. As we will see in *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman*, understanding how this professionalism can affect the poor creates identity crises for philanthropists.

The idea that the identity of philanthropist heroine prevents the working-class characters from finding their own agency in the novel continues in *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman*, where Lady Harman's relationships with the waitresses only serve to highlight her power over them rather than provide an avenue for common understanding. After frequent misunderstandings between the waitresses and the management, Lady Harman goes to the hostels herself to talk to the occupants. This results in "…Miss Babs Wheeler and quite a number of the other girls

present watched her face and fell in love with her" (Wells 124). Yet, this increased attachment only serves to reinforce Lady Harman's authority and further damage the chances for success of Lady Harman's scheme: "Their very loyalty to her expressed itself not so much in any sustained attempt to make the hostels successful as in cheering inconveniently, in embarrassing declaration of a preference, in an ingenious and systematic rudeness to anyone suspected of imperfect devotion to her" (125). When Lady Harman tears up the rules of the hostels in solidarity with the waitresses, she seems to make strides towards her goal of making the hostels a home for the women rather than an institution that takes advantage of them. Instead, this action makes Lady Harman realize that she needs to exercise some kind of authority over the hostels and its managers in order to make it run smoothly, reversing her goal of finding commonality with a different class.

The paradoxical nature of the philanthropic heroine's identity is highlighted by the way that Lady Harman's and Angela's positions of authority only serve to further fragment their sense of self and undermine their identities as philanthropists. Both novels complicate the idea that women could find an independent identity through their philanthropic work by examining each woman's doubts about her ability to achieve what she wants. For Lady Harman, her education in business makes her less sure of herself rather than giving her a solid identity:

> Through all these occupations and interruptions and immediacies she went trying to comprehend and at times almost believing she comprehended life, and then the whole spectacle of this modern world of which she was part would seem to break up again into a multitude of warring and discordant fragments having no conceivable common aim or solution. Those moments of unifying faith and confidence, that glowed so bravely and never endured, were at once tantalizing

> and sustaining. She could never believe but that ultimately she would not grasp and hold—something…. (Wells 106)

Lady Harman's comprehension of herself is constantly under threat of destruction due to external forces that she feels she cannot overcome—her feeling of complicity in her husband's capitalist exploitation of labor cannot be overcome by her own individual philanthropy. Wells uses metaphors of the part and the whole to demonstrate Lady Harman's inability to sort through the complications of her life and make progress as a philanthropist and independent woman: she cannot find her place through philanthropic work because "the modern world of which she was part" never coheres into a clear direction for her. Essentially, she is not part of a whole; she is just another fragment. Since her philanthropy is the source of her confusion and the context in which she comes to understand the world, it also cannot be the solution for her lack of independence.

Further, the fragmented perspective that Lady Harman describes above through free indirect discourse is mirrored throughout the novel. Characters come into and out of the narrative suddenly and seem to provide causation for Lady Harman's actions, such as Susan's revelation to Lady Harman of the way that the International Bread and Cake Stores destroy communities and abuse their workers. But, these motivations never take hold of Lady Harman in a way that makes her actions cohere into something that has a clear social effect on the world around her:

> And while Lady Harman was making these meritorious and industrious attempts to grasp the significance of life and to get some clear idea of her social duty, the developments of those Hostels she had started—she now felt so prematurely—was going on. There were times when she tried not to think of them, turned her

> back on them, fled from them, and times when they and what she ought to do about them and what they ought to be and what they ought not to be, filled her mind to the exclusion of every other topic. (Wells 109)

Lady Harman's realization that she has started this project too soon indicates that she only reacted to Susan's revelation to her because of personal guilt, which causes her to question her own motives in going into philanthropy. Outwardly, the work on the hostel is progressing; inwardly, Lady Harman's philanthropy provides the background for her own existential crisis. Lady Harman is, herself, fragmented, as she is unable to fully commit to her project and oscillates between complete denial and complete immersion. While she attempts to use her work as a chance for self-development, indicated by her desire to understand her place in both society and a larger understanding of her existence, her work only serves to make her identity less clear to her.

The theme of fragmentation continues in *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, where Angela's disguise works against the novel's plot of self-development. Her disguise begins as a desire to become a member of the class she has benefitted from all her life, saying, "I want to feel myself a part of this striving, eager, anxious humanity, on whose labours I live in comfort [. . .]" (Besant 27). Even further than simply becoming a member of a group, though, Angela also gives over control of her life to this group when she says "I belong to the people!" (27). This humility comes from Angela's belief that "would-be philanthropists and benefactors, and improvers of things have all along been working on a false assumption" (148), that the poor look up to the rich and want to be like them. Yet, Angela argues, "they do not look up to us at all; they do not want to copy our ways; they are perfectly satisfied with their own ways; [. . .]" (148). Working against the notion that philanthropists have something to give to the poor,

Angela instead gives up her way of life to become a philanthropist with a different goal. Arguing that people will only change through discontent, Angela will "work upon them by showing, practically, and by way of example, better things. This I can do because I am here as simply one of themselves—a workwoman among other workwomen" (148). In this way, Angela uses her disguise to avoid making any gifts in keeping with the philanthropic ideology of the time, that of helping the poor help themselves.

In taking this disguise, though, Angela also gives up the identity of philanthropist. Even though she uses the disguise to work towards her philanthropic goals, she is no longer in a position to provide capital for her project as herself. In fact, Angela admits in a conversation under her own identity that the kind of philanthropy she espouses, the kind that would actually enable the poor to help themselves, is impossible if she retains her identity as Angela Marsden Messenger:

> 'Oh! Lord Jocelyn!' she went on, after a pause, 'you do not know, you cannot know, the dreadful dangers which a rich woman has to encounter. If I had come in my own name, I should have been besieged by every plausible rogue who could catch my ear for half an hour. I should have had all the clergy round me imploring help for their schools and their churches; [. . .]
>
> 'I see. All this you have escaped by your assumption of the false name.'
>
> 'Yes. I am one of themselves, one of the people; I have got my girls together; I have made them understand my project; they have become my fast and faithful friends; the better to inspire confidence, I even sheltered myself behind myself; I said Miss Messenger was interested in our success; she sends us orders; I went to the West End with things made up for her. Thanks mainly to her, we are

> flourishing: we work for shorter hours and for greater pay than other girls…
>
> (Besant 347)

Angela assumes this identity in order to gain the trust of the needlewomen she works with in order to truly know that their needs are not motivated by greed. In some ways she does this for self-preservation: as Angela Messenger, she would be in danger of being taken advantage of. At the moment that Angela assumes the identity of a philanthropist, she can no longer do the work of a philanthropist. Yet, her excuses of self-preservation and her desire to remain anonymous do not hold up as well because of the way that she possesses her project. Her frequent use of "my" in the quote above undermines any claims to benevolence or to the project goal of empowering the women she employs. Further, in taking on the disguise, she becomes neither a philanthropist nor herself. Further, Angela's solution, sheltering herself behind herself, is a phrase that is difficult to pin down as a strategy. In order to do this, she has to disassociate her identity, becoming two figures at once. Lady Harman is both the objective professional and the sympathetic caregiver, but only because she is living two separate lives that cannot be combined. Rather than achieving a new identity for all women through her philanthropic work, Angela achieves neither philanthropic ambition nor a better understanding of her role as an heiress and businesswoman because of the fact that she cannot fully claim either as an identity. Ironically, Angela's desire to keep her identity a secret prevents social change because she has to perform her work privately.

If the idea of disparate fragments is extended into the structure of the novel itself, it is clear that the breakdown of traditional models of philanthropy also resulted in fragmented novels that refuse easy resolution. The endings of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* and *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* are dissatisfying in that they neither end with a fully autonomous woman nor a

woman who continues to engage in philanthropy as a vocation. Additionally, the relationships that each woman develops with the poor during the course of the novel seem to be beside the point; these characters are left behind and do not contribute to the ending of the novel. These failures suggest that philanthropy and feminism are mutually exclusive under capitalism—a social order shaped around the individual—and under the professionalized discourse of late nineteenth-century philanthropy. The female protagonists instead form romantic attachments with men, which suggests that the final outcome of the philanthropic bildungsroman is entrance back into traditional roles for women. Any individual growth that takes place during the novel drives the protagonist toward marriage, but each novel does not resolve the issue of whether this is through capitulation to a system that cannot be changed or out of the decision-making processes of a newly autonomous self.

The way that *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* frames Angela's marriage to Harry Goslett contradicts the novel's purpose several times: while Angela's desire to get married seems to come from its fulfillment of her new identity as a philanthropist, it also comes at the expense of her desire to change women's roles and to actually carry out her philanthropy as herself. When Angela finally reveals her identity, it is during her wedding that takes place at the opening of Palace of Delight, Angela's most important philanthropic project: "With this simple ceremony was the Palace of Delight thrown open to the world. What better beginning could it have than a wedding party? What better omen could there be than that the Palace, like the Garden of Eden, should begin with the happiness of a wedded pair?" (Besant 428). Angela has even kept her identity a secret until after the wedding ceremony, only revealing her identity to her new husband, Harry, at the reception at the Palace. The idea that Angela's philanthropic project becomes a wedding ceremony at the end of the novel, reverses Angela's plot to change the role

of women. Ironically, at the moment Angela reveals her identity and claims her work as her own, she renounces the title of philanthropist and reverts to a Victorian woman's traditional role of wife and helpmeet. In fact, Angela even allows Harry to speak for both of them, the narrator saying that Angela belongs to "the diminishing body of women who prefer to let men do all the public speaking" (428), suggesting that Angela really has not achieved anything new. Even though the comparison of the Palace to the prelapsarian Garden of Eden suggests a new beginning, the symbolism of the garden supports the traditional view not only that women were made to provide help to men, but that women's attempts at autonomy would result in punishment and banishment from paradise. In this case, the novel "punishes" Angela for revealing herself by banishing her from the Palace of Delight. Additionally, Angela is only able to claim her identity in relation to Harry: "'He loves me for myself,' she murmured. 'He does not know that I am rich. Think of that, and think of the terrible suspicions which grow up in every rich woman's heart when a man makes love to her'" (350). Ultimately, Angela's desire to be known not for her riches is not realized in the context of philanthropy, but in the context of marriage. Rather than realizing her "ambitious desires," becoming a philanthropist leads to Angela's realization of her romantic desires, contrary to Dorice Williams Elliott's argument that the figure of the philanthropist in the novel gave women permission to follow their ambitions independent of their love life. By the end of the novel, Angela has either been a fragment, unable to claim her own identity while doing her revolutionary work, or she is a wife and helper to her husband, no longer a philanthropist who desires to change the role of women.

The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman has a similarly ambivalent ending, with Lady Harman compromising the philanthropy she has finally gained free of her husband by giving in to Mr. Brumley's romantic desires. Far from offering a resolution that fulfills Lady Harman's initial

goals of autonomy through philanthropic work, the ending suggests that Lady Harman can only continue her work under her husband's supervision. Throughout the novel, Mr. Brumley pursues Lady Harman, and when Sir Isaac dies, he proposes marriage. Initially, Lady Harman rejects him, and he becomes desperate and pitiful. The reason Lady Harman rejects him is that she now has her own wealth and control of the hostels; she would rather have a working relationship with Mr. Brumley, who has been a major confidant throughout the building and management process. After Mr. Brumley runs away, hysterical at the thought of being rejected, Lady Harman inexplicably goes after him. Mr. Brumley seems to concede to Lady Harman's request for a platonic, working relationship, saying "'…we will go back to the house and talk … talk about our Hostels.' […] 'Of course,' he said, 'I'm yours—to do just as you will with. And we'll work——. I've been a bit of a stupid brute. We'll work. For all those people. It will be—oh! a big work, quite a big work. Big enough for us to thank God for. Only—'" (Wells 155). At this point Mr. Brumley requests a kiss, and the novel ends with Lady Harman fulfilling his wish: "She crouched down upon him and, taking his shoulder in her hand, upset him neatly backwards, and, doing nothing by halves, had kissed the astonished Mr. Brumley full upon his mouth" (Wells 156). Janice Harris comments on the ending in her article "Wifely Silence and Speech in the Three Marriage Novels by H. G. Wells." She argues that Lady Harman's "surprising reversal" is "neither a marriage nor an end to their long association, but an arrangement with multiple possibilities, a genuinely passionate friendship, an affair" (416). Yet, this consummation of Mr. Brumley's sexual desire by Lady Harman indicates at least a compromise of her earlier position or at most her consent to his marriage proposal. It certainly reverses Lady Harman's request for a working relationship *only*. Further, Harris's utopian interpretation of the novel's ending cannot be possible after Lady Harman initially refuses Mr. Brumley in a face-to-

face conversation and only runs after a pathetic Mr. Brumley out of pity. Not only does this scene suggest a repetition of Sir Isaac's proposal, in that Ellen initially rejected him but finally capitulated to his desperation out of pity, but it also eliminates the idea that this could be an equal relationship; Mr. Brumley's desperation is emotional manipulation rather than the basis for a partnership. Because of this ending, it would be difficult to interpret the novel as a feminist lesson in self-sufficiency and removing oneself from the prison of marriage, which Lady Harman has apparently been working towards all along.

The paradoxical and fragmented nature of each character's struggle to cultivate themselves and develop a professional identity as philanthropists could be seen as merely dismissive of feminism. After all, these two novels, written by men about female philanthropy, seem to dismiss the feminist ambitions of their protagonists as the naïve ambitions of women who are not exemplary models for feminism in the first place. Besant's rejection of Angela's feminist impulses takes on a conservative form, where he dismisses Angela's early Oxbridge feminism as the fervent idealism of a recent graduate who has yet to face the realities of the East End. In such an interpretation, it would also be easy to dismiss Besant's formulation of female philanthropy—of course Besant did not present a heroine with ambitious desires, because he dismissed such desires in the first place. Yet, Besant's conservativism serves to highlight the hypocrisy of late-Victorian philanthropy. The novel's motif of disguise demonstrates that Besant uses the language of objectivity that was so important to professionalized philanthropy. In this way, the novel's conservatism is the point: if Besant represents the vanguard of professionalized philanthropic methodology with his motif of disguise as the manifestation of the language of objectivity, then that is the cause for the dismissal of Angela's feminist ambitions. In other words, professionalized philanthropy creates the conditions that require women to abandon their

own desires when they attempt to do philanthropic work. If Besant is the epitome of late-Victorian philanthropy, that model has lost its ability to fulfill women's ambitious desires.

H.G. Wells's political leanings also demonstrate how he thinks feminism is incompatible with professionalized philanthropy. Wells's own socialist beliefs and interest in novelistic experimentation[17] are reflected in how he uses *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* to illustrate the problems of a capitalistic model of professionalized philanthropy to achieve social change. Where Besant had a conservative attitude about the purpose of philanthropy, Wells is cynical about the possibilities for capitalist philanthropy to achieve feminist ends, or at the very least, a professional identity for women. Whether or not Lady Harman acts as a model for feminism, Wells is clearly cynical about the view that feminism and philanthropy go well together. In *Wells and the Modern Novel*, J.R. Hammond uses Wells's own label to describe his set of early twentieth-century novels: "Then followed a phase he described as the 'Prig Novels'—novels in which a solipsistic hero (usually the narrator) comments extensively on political, social, and moral questions and in which the quest for a purpose in life is the predominant element. *Marriage* (1912), *The Passionate Friends* (1913), *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* (1914) and *The Research Magnificent* (1915) belong to this phase" (5). In line with this comment, it seems that Wells himself considered Lady Harman to be too focused on herself and her quest for purpose in life for her philanthropic schemes to have any success; but, it is not as if Wells considers Lady Harman to have a character flaw that prevents philanthropy's otherwise possible solution for poverty. Rather, Lady Harman's view of herself is of a piece with professionalized philanthropy. In that case, philanthropy itself is the problem. John Partington centers this political view as

[17] While this assertion is certainly debatable in the scholarship on Wells, J.R. Hammond (*Wells and the Modern Novel*) makes a case for why Wells, even though he often used a more traditional realist style, was interested in how different kinds of experimentation with style reflected a breakdown of the Victorian social order.

central to Well's novels, saying "he did attack liberal individualism and advocate a collectivist philosophy" (3). If we consider that the predominant argument about philanthropy's relation to women is that philanthropy provides a way for women to achieve their own ambitious desires, Wells's socialist point of view on the matter is that it decidedly does not, especially because of its focus on the individual philanthropist and his or her development of a professional identity. In this case, capitalism creates the conditions where both feminism and philanthropy are targets for Wells's cynicism. At the very least, the progression of women will not thrive under capitalism, much less a model of philanthropy that is based in building a professional identity.

The kind of personal and professional identities that Lady Harman and Angela develop over the course of each novel departs from the way that individualism in philanthropy has been described in other contexts. Different from the decadent model of individualism, where personal development and self-expression, even "ambitious desire" allowed for the individual to overcome the strictures of the late-Victorian social order, the model of individualism in *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* and *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* is decayed and fragmented. As discussed earlier in the chapter, each protagonist faces an identity crisis that is exacerbated by her participation in philanthropic work. Philanthropy prevents Angela and Lady Harman's own identity coherence by requiring them to live divided lives. Such a reality contrasts with other ways that the late nineteenth-century social order has been described, particularly that of individualism and its relation to the social. In *Individualism, Decadence, and Globalization,* Regina Gagnier outlines how the late nineteenth century was a time when individuality thrived against the social order. For Gagnier, philanthropy was of a piece with the triumph of the individual, since it "produced women's autonomy and beautiful Souls" (121). However, the models for individuality and relationality that Gagnier outlines in the introduction cannot be

applied to the kind of fragmented identity that Angela and Lady Harman personify. With what she calls "individuals-in-relation," Gagnier makes an argument for how this term reveals "relations of mutuality, when individuals-in-relation treat each other with attention and respect. This includes symmetric mutuality, or mutuality between similarly-situated persons, equals, as well as asymmetric mutuality, or mutuality in relations characterized by unequal power, status, ability, or resources" (4). Individuals-in-relation can gain distance from themselves so as to prevent solipsism when they understand themselves as part of an organic whole. The kind of productive detachment that Gagnier discusses here does not work productively for Angela or Lady Harman, who experience harmful attachments (in the case of Angela and her worshipful needlewomen) or solipsism (in the case of Lady Harman and her insular existence as a cloistered housewife). When Lady Harman is detached—when she sees herself as the part of a whole—she gains a perspective that makes her doubt herself and her place in the social sphere. Where Angela is detached, she is not even herself; she is disguised as a different person entirely. Indeed, Wells's pessimistic political outlook supports such an interpretation of his novels: "In place of a confident faith in social advance his early novels and stories are notable for their profound pessimism, their troubled sense of a society in process of fragmentation" (Hammond 12). Rather than seeing philanthropy as one of the primary catalysts for social change or solving poverty, Wells views philanthropy as a catalyst for societal fragmentation. Because of its use of a model of detached individualism that creates harmful attachments or solipsism rather than productive detachment that results in self-expression, philanthropy could not allow women to achieve ambitious desires as individuals-in-relation.

Wells further criticizes the focus on individualism of philanthropy when he discusses the purpose of the novel, and of *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* more specifically. Wells notes that

his telling of Lady Harman's philanthropy in his novel will most certainly differ from the way that a more conventional philanthropic genre, hagiographic biography, will tell her story. In keeping with the idea that philanthropic work would allow women to gain independence and, especially, achieve self-cultivation, Wells's narrator sardonically notes that Lady Harman's story will be recorded in the form of biography:

> It would be quite easy for anyone with the knack of reserve to go on from this point with a history of Lady Harman that would present her as practically a pure philanthropist. For from these beginnings she was destined to proceed to more and more knowledge and understanding and clear purpose and capable work in this interesting process of collective regrouping, this process which may even at least justify Mr. Brumley's courageous interpretations and prove to be an early experiment in the beginning of a new social order. Perhaps some day there will be an official biography, another addition to the inscrutable records of British public lives, in which all these things will be set out with tact and dignity. Horatio Blenker or Adolphus Blenker may survive to be entrusted with this congenial task. She will be represented as a tall inanimate person pursuing one clear benevolent purpose in life from her very beginning, and Sir Isaac and her relations with Sir Isaac will be rescued from reality. The book will be illustrated by a number of carefully posed photographer's photographs of her, studies of the Putney house and perhaps an unappetizing woodcut of her early home at Penge. The aim of all British biography is to conceal. A great deal of what we have already told will certainly not figure in any such biography, and still more certainly will the things we have yet to tell be missing. (Wells 127)

In this passage, the narrator cynically dismisses the Victorian love for philanthropic biographies, hypocrisy that he hopes to expose by explaining the regressive conditions of Lady Harman's life. Where the reader of *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman* has seen conflict, ambiguity, and thwarted goals, the reader of Lady Harman's biography will only see "one clear benevolent purpose in life from her very beginning." In order to propagate the idea of the philanthropic heroine, the narrator says that her story will be "set out with tact and dignity" in order to preserve her reputation. Further listing the familiar features of the form, the narrator predicts that photographs with a clear purpose and illustrations of her houses—without the sinister tone implied in the novel—will be included. By defining philanthropic biography as particularly hagiographic, Wells points out how biography conceals the problems of philanthropy by writing Lady Harman's story as a narrative with clear purpose.

In doing this, Wells points out the ways that philanthropists are often lauded as heroines who have reached the pinnacle of their professional development as a result of their sense of purpose. In much the same way that Besant erases the needlewomen, the hagiographic biography, which *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman*'s narrator predicts will be written, never mentions the poor with whom philanthropists come in contact. One could imagine the author of "The Education of Philanthropy" writing such a biography; in each text the philanthropic heroine has, through professional objectivity, conquered the chaos of the space around her in order to create her own career. In biography, Lady Harman would be allowed to develop into a stable and self-possessed philanthropist who has social influence. Instead, the novel presents Lady Harman's personal development as the main source of conflict in the plot, something that would not be presented in her biography. Lady Harman's thoughts and motivations, her self-doubt and sometimes shallow reflections on her place in the philanthropic system would be forgotten by the

biographer in favor of the idea that she is on the vanguard of a new social order. Through this lens of genre comparison, it becomes clear that Wells's ambiguous ending as to the fate of Lady Harman is meant to deny Lady Harman and the reader this clarity and thus to deny the vaunted individualism of professional philanthropy.

With his final discussion of form, where biography smooths over self-fragmentation and the contradictions of philanthropy that the novel form allows him to discuss, Wells makes an important intervention in the narrative form that dominated philanthropic work at the time. Where the organization and professionalization of philanthropy constructed a narrative with the purpose of unifying disparate voices by mediating them through the agent-narrator, Wells intervenes by adding complexity, self-doubt, and the fragmentation of Lady Harman's identity into the narrative surrounding philanthropy. In doing so, Wells uses his cynical novel to argue that the idea of the feminist philanthropic heroine rests on a narrative that has been mediated through the conventions of biography. In the same way that the COS removed multivocality from its representations of the poor mediated through the forms that followed the organization's system, biography would remove Lady Harman's complexity under the strictures of a tightly scripted narrative form. Wells commonly used meditation on genre in his novels to critique social structures such as marriage and philanthropy. Zoe Beenstock contextualizes his work by defining the social work of the novel as that which "pursue[s] a critique of social models and highlight[s] the tension between sociability and individualism" (59). Further, "Wells's ambitious writings put various genres and literary periods into critical play" (59), especially important during the late-Victorian era, when the boundaries between earlier depictions of the realistic individual and the modernist fragmented identity were beginning to blur, especially in terms of how they were presented in the biographical and fictional genres that Wells puts into

conversation in *The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman*. No longer able to fit the Victorian social model of individuals-in-relation, Well's fragmented characters also fit into a larger trend in late-Victorian characterization, where the fragmented identity acted as a critique of the individual upon which the notion of the philanthropic heroine was based.

Besant's conservatism and Wells's cynicism, as well as each author's use of the model of professionalized philanthropy that depends on detachment and an individualistic model of the self, demonstrate why philanthropy and feminism are incompatible with each other. These novels do not offer philanthropic heroines upon which readers can base their own ambitious desires, but even more than that, the naïveté of each protagonist, who models her own ambitions on the professionalism of late-Victorian philanthropy, is not an indictment of feminism but of the application of feminism within capitalist philanthropy. This proves that, when women take up the mandate of professional development and attempt to achieve feminist social change through it, they find only identity crises and self-fragmentation. Importantly, they cannot achieve the kind of detachment that produces productive self-expression. It is important then, not to value philanthropy for women because it gets them out of the house; rather, it becomes important to understand that philanthropy, through its use of objectivity and individualism, only replicated the kinds of conditions that restricted women in the first place. Late-Victorian philanthropy cannot be redeemed as a vehicle for women to gain agency in the public sphere; it is inherently conservative to its core.

CHAPTER FOUR

"As far off as ever": Female Sisterhood and Philanthropy in *A Sunless Heart* and *On the Threshold*

The latter half of this dissertation asks whether or not the conditions of late nineteenth-century, professionalized philanthropy creates the conditions for women's progress. Chapter three focuses on the individual woman and argues that the conditions of professionalized philanthropy, outlined in chapter two, did not allow for women to create a vocational, autonomous identity for themselves. Chapter three also begins to establish the hierarchies between women that were an inherent part of late nineteenth-century philanthropy. Chapter four continues the argument that philanthropy did not create the conditions for women's progress by focusing on alliances between women such as sisterhood, a term that is frequently used to describe female philanthropy, both in the nineteenth century and in critical scholarship now. This chapter looks at two fin-de-siècle novels that both claimed to offer a different view on female relationality within the context of philanthropy in order to demonstrate how redemptive critical lenses do not apply to late-nineteenth century views on women in philanthropy. This chapter argues that, by the late nineteenth-century, philanthropic work was mutually exclusive to women's progress rather than a special site for female attachment that transcended the hierarchies of capitalist philanthropic models.

Edith Johnstone's *A Sunless Heart* (1894) and Isabella Ford's *On the Threshold* (1893) haven't received much critical attention, yet they capture a critical moment in the late nineteenth century and illustrate how the detachment of philanthropy made it difficult for women to develop their relationships to each other. *On the Threshold* hasn't been republished since the 1890s, and

it is now only more widely available through the British Library's Historical Print Editions, and *A Sunless Heart* has only been recently republished by Broadview Critical Editions. Both novels frame themselves as unique from other novels in that they aim to show readers different kinds of female relationships. At the same time, they are difficult to reconcile with the critical lenses about female relationships and philanthropy that have been defined by Jill Rappoport and Sharon Marcus. In support of its larger argument that professionalized philanthropy had a negative effect on women's relationships with each other, this chapter reads the peculiarities of each novel as indicative of how philanthropy's language of detachment prevented the development of its female protagonists. We often think of progressive models of philanthropy and professionalization for women as an idealistic opportunity for women to create their own communities and move away from "traditional" women's roles as selfless and self-sacrificial, but these novels demonstrate how philanthropic work no longer allowed for such progression or elimination of hierarchy between women. The progression away from older models of philanthropy and each character's attempts to move away from altruistic models, much as the COS does in chapter two, mean that the novels do not fulfill their desire to represent more equal relationships between women. Each of these novels is framed around the idea that women's relationships need to be reconsidered in the wake of professionalized philanthropy, and they challenge traditional Victorian understandings of female relationships as sympathetic and as a way to form alliances.

Edith Johnstone's *A Sunless Heart* focuses its attention on the relationship between Gasparine and Lotus. In the first part of the novel, Gasparine lives in poverty with her brother, Gaspar. Their titled father has lost his income and left them, and Gasparine takes up teaching to support herself and her increasingly sick brother. To add to the misery, Gasparine's art teacher

plagiarizes one of her paintings and prospers as a result. Gaspar and Gasparine have an unusually close relationship: not only are they twins, but their connection is so deep that critics of the novel, such as Constance Harsh, have discussed whether or not it could be incestuous. Gaspar gets sick with tuberculosis, and after his death, Gasparine falls into despondency and a deep level of grief. Lotus, a local women's college professor, hears about Gasparine's grief and offers to take care of her until she recovers. Lotus invites Gasparine to stay with her and furnishes Gasparine's bare apartment. In the second half of the novel, Gasparine lives with Lotus, Lotus's mother, and a child who is Lotus's daughter but is not aware of that. Lotus has not told her daughter who she is, because she was born as the result of rape that has left Lotus extremely self-protective and detached from everyone else. Even while Lotus is taking care of Gasparine, she does not allow Gasparine to get close to her. Despite these broken relationships, Johnstone wishes to show the "truer, higher" relationships that women have with each other, which often result in difficulty understanding Lotus's motivations and outlook on the world. Lotus's detachment also confuses Gasparine, who tries in vain to show her love for Lotus.

Isabella Ford's political novel *On the Threshold* examines the relationship of two friends and art students, Kitty and Lucretia, as they move to London, where they become involved in a socialist political group. They idealistically try to change the world but are ultimately confronted with the realities of their everyday life. They live in a run-down apartment in Bloomsbury under the supervision of their landlady, Mrs. Mount, who employs a maid-of-all-work, Beatrice. As they get to know Beatrice and Mrs. Mount, they come to understand that she treats Beatrice poorly, and they offer her their understanding. When Mrs. Mount fires Beatrice and evicts her from the living quarters that were her payment for her work, Kitty and Lucretia try to find her and bring her back to their apartment so that she has somewhere to stay. Beatrice, however,

refuses, and she succumbs to the harsh living conditions of the working class environment of Bloomsbury. This encounter tests Lucretia's idealism, and she begins to wonder if the socialist change that she and Kitty believe in can really come to be. More importantly, however, the novel frames her understanding of socialist change within her relationship to Kitty. Lucretia narrates her misgivings and her infatuation with Kitty through a first-person narrative, resulting in a novel that presents Lucretia's connection to Kitty as one-sided and detached to the point of being claustrophobic rather than a presentation of attachment between two women as a progressive attempt at changing women's roles. While Lucretia narrates her infatuation, Kitty becomes involved with a man from her socialist circle, Mr. Estcourt. As they grow closer to each other and get engaged, Lucretia loses hope that she and Kitty can remain close friends, ultimately losing hope that socialism can provide a way for women to be more politically involved rather than just hypocritically performing philanthropic work in a traditionally middle-class manner. The novel ends with Lucretia focusing on her one-sided infatuation with Kitty and retreating further into her own ideals. Essentially, Lucretia loses Kitty to a traditionally middle-class marriage, preventing them from continuing their socialist work. This ending contrasts with Isabella Ford's assertion in her essay "Women and Socialism" that socialism relies on the transformation of traditional gender roles.

Each of these novels demonstrates a different, and less optimistic, depiction of seemingly progressive roles for women through their adoption of the detachment that characterized professional philanthropy. The novels struggle to present the fully developed female relationships that they initially set out to portray, but they are more successful in rejecting, or at least pointing out the flaws in, previous accepted models of female philanthropy, such as sympathetic sisterhood. The reason why they struggle with portraying the idealized

female relationships that they intend to do, I argue, is because they are caught between the conflicting discourses of sympathetic sisterhood as a model for female philanthropy and the professionalized philanthropic discourse of the late nineteenth century. This conflict cannot be explained by a more redemptive understanding of female philanthropy that critics employ today. The ending of each novel is an exception to our current critical understanding that professionalized philanthropy can provide progressive roles for women and more opportunities for political alliances that benefit women.

One such understanding of the redemption for women in professionalized philanthropy is in *Giving Women*. Jill Rappoport argues that women established attachments to each other using an alternative system of exchange that was based in neither selflessness nor sacrifice. She says "women took control of gift-giving to forge their own diverse alliances" (4). Rappoport's understanding of how gift-giving between women opposed the hierarchy of philanthropy does not demonstrate that she has taken its late nineteenth-century professionalization into account. While she concedes that she "shift[s] critical focus from the unequal exchanges of philanthropy and patriarchal marriage to the peer alliances women established with one another through gift-giving" (5), allowing for the argument that philanthropy is ultimately unequal and not conducive to the formation of female attachments, she allows that professionalized philanthropy increased the opportunities for women to form what she calls "horizontal" attachments with each other. She says: "The nineteenth century saw the rise of charity as an increasingly professional occupation that allowed middle-class women to expand the ideological and practical reach of their domestic sphere" (6). As discussed in chapter three, professionalized philanthropy, with its language of objective detachment, was not conducive to the establishment of the kind of horizontal exchanges that Rappoport argues for here. Because of that, this chapter considers

other forms of relationality between women that rely neither on sacrifice nor on creating horizontal exchanges.

Sharon Marcus, in *Between Women*, discusses the ambivalent relationship between capitalism and female attachment during the Victorian era. She says: "as an ideal, friendship was defined by altruism, generosity, mutual indebtedness, and a perfect balance of power. In a capitalist society deeply ambivalent about competition, female friendship offered a vision of perfect reciprocity for those who could afford not to worry about daily survival" (4). Here, Marcus establishes the idea that female friendship was a way to balance out the hierarchies of capitalism and was, by definition, based in altruism. Professionalized philanthropy, in many ways, was not conducive to such attachments since it relied on detachment and rejected altruism as a model for the way that it allowed the rich and poor to relate to each other. Elsewhere, Marcus says that "Victorians accepted friendship between women because they believed it cultivated the feminine virtues of sympathy and altruism that made women into good helpmates" (26), which brings up the implications of what it would mean for friendship if altruism was no longer an acceptable way of relating to other women. If altruism is the cornerstone of friendship, as Marcus argues in *Between Women*, then it follows that friendship within the philanthropic relationship, or the horizontality that Rappoport imagines, would need to be reimagined if late Victorians no longer valued altruism within that same philanthropic relationship.

Ultimately, this chapter centers its discussion of female relationships around professionalized philanthropy, arguing that its language of detachment requires us to look at redemptive female relationships differently. Here it is important to remember that this dissertation, in chapter two, has defined professionalized philanthropy as synonymous with detachment. A focus on the detachment of professionalized philanthropy no longer allows

philanthropic work among women in the late nineteenth century to be framed as a special arena, separate or resistant to capitalism, where women could form bonds among themselves, as Rappoport has argued, or to define philanthropy among women as inherently sympathetic and altruistic, as Marcus has argued. While these models for philanthropic work were dominant in the mid-nineteenth century, the rise of professionalized philanthropy made the development of female attachments within such work more difficult. Johnstone's and Ford's novels depict undeveloped relationships between women that are complicated, rather than deepened, by the characters' involvement in philanthropy. While the novels are on the fringes of the late-nineteenth century canon, they do attempt to make an intervention in the way that female attachments were represented, and they both attempt to imagine female relationships outside of philanthropic work as a motivating motif. Johnstone's and Ford's novels, in their own attempt to revise the way that female attachment was understood within philanthropic relationships, also require us to reconsider the possibilities for equality between women when those relationships begin to take shape because of a philanthropic encounter. They demonstrate that the language of detachment had so permeated philanthropic discourse that altruistic and balanced friendships were nearly impossible. In turn, a look at these novels also requires that we reconsider our claims that philanthropy could be redeemed as a mechanism that benefitted women or allowed them to resist capitalist hierarchies by creating horizontal exchanges or altruistic friendships. Ultimately, these novels demonstrate how philanthropic work and the development of female relationships were mutually exclusive as a result of the professionalization of philanthropy.

This chapter's examination of Johnstone's novel, *A Sunless Heart*, is primarily concerned with the idea of sisterhood and its place in female philanthropic work. Johnstone explicitly frames her novel as one that intervenes in representations of relationships between women. In an

authorial aside between the First and Second Books of the novel, Johnstone appeals: "Here indulgence is craved, for offering, as seemed to me necessary, though I am aware it is unusual, a second apologetic explanation" (90). She wishes to write a novel that is not about love between men and women: "It has been so far, the province of the novel to deal almost exclusively with lives only in their relation to the passion of love between man and woman, [. . .] But this is only one side of life. There are others. In many lives such love plays but a minor part, or enters not at all. Will no one voice them, or find beauty in them?" (90). Johnstone understands that female relationships are unique but have not been represented in quite the way she has in mind: "To all who feel that men and women will come to closer, and higher relationships, when they cease to wear masks each towards the other sex—removed when in the company of their own—to those I have tried to show, in all purity of intent, and belief in the best of humanity, what women may be, and often are, to one another" (90). Here, Johnstone suggests that female relationships hold special potential, not merely to show that men and women could develop their relationships if they removed artifice or as a way for women to learn how to relate to others before they get married, but as their own special category. While her language here is vague, it is clear that Johnstone wishes to start a new conversation about female attachments.

Johnstone's "what women may be, and often are, to one another" may not be as new or groundbreaking to a modern reader, but her intent becomes more complex when we consider her choice to represent such relationships within the context of professionalized philanthropy. In this context, it becomes clear that Johnstone is trying to redefine what sisterhood, as a form of "what women may be [. . .] to one another," means as philanthropy changed in the late nineteenth century. Early on in the Second Book, Lotus challenges the common discourse around female

philanthropy when she explains the reasons for taking care of Gasparine after her brother's death:

> Poor child! poor child! It doesn't do you any good either to know that others have suffered the same. No, no. *I* have suffered, too, poor dear; I hate the people, too. But listen. *Life must be lived.* Life must be lived. You now, poor soul, are friendless, a poor teacher, as I am, too, struck with a great blow. I saw you, the solitary mourner of your dead. *I, too, have a grave*. No, do not mistake me for a sister of charity, or a missionary visitor—I am none of them, but a lonely one like you…. (Johnstone 97)

Lotus rejects the idea of shared suffering, selflessness, and self-sacrifice as a way of forming alliances between women. If we take Johnstone at her word that her intent is to show "what women may be, and often are, to one other," it is clear that her depiction of a different understanding of female relationships involves rejecting the key themes that define those relationships within philanthropic work. Although Lotus acknowledges that she shares a sense of suffering with Gasparine, she refuses the idea that this suffering unites them. Lotus rejects philanthropy as a way of making her more equal with Gasparine and denies it as an opportunity to increase community with her declaration that she is not a "sister of charity, or a missionary visitor." By using the words "sister of charity," Lotus directly engages with the language that was common to female philanthropy and also begins to establish a more detached relationship with Gasparine.

The language about philanthropy that Lotus rejects comes from nineteenth-century models of female philanthropy that emphasized shared suffering as a way to create equality between women of different classes, even within philanthropic work. Its language, defining

sisterhood as shared suffering, mirrors the language that Lotus rejects in *A Sunless Heart*. The Ranyard Nurses, who are also discussed in chapter three, are a particularly important example of such a model. In a 1911 essay, "A Retrospect" from the "Report of the London Biblewomen and Nurses Mission," the anonymous author states:

> In those days there was little systematic care for the needs of the poorer part of the community. Public charities were chiefly dispensed in doles, and private charity was often more on the lines of that kindly condescension, which draws too much attention to the inequalities between the rich and the poor. Mrs. Ranyard looked deep into the heart of things, and by the aid of her "sanctified common sense," and sympathetic imagination, saw the ever-widening rift between those who needed help, and those who were willing to give it but did not know how, and by a stroke of Christian genius she forged what she called at first "the missing link"—her first method of help. This was to be a woman who had suffered, as these others were suffering, and who thus held the key to many of the trials and temptations of those she visited, a key which one who had lived in comfort all her days could never possess. (22)

Here, this description of the Ranyard Nurses equates philanthropy focused on shared suffering with equality. The author starts by arguing that philanthropists had paid little attention to the most needy members of the community, and when they did, their methods emphasized difference rather than community. Here, it is clear that women needed to have a sense of attachment through suffering in order to form communities that transcended class.

Currently, critics imagine female philanthropy as work that was able to transcend problematic female self-sacrifice because of philanthropy's focus on altruism and female networking. Jill Rappoport is the most prominent example of this view, as she argues that gift-

giving between women was a way for women to establish attachments that benefitted both parties rather than creating a situation where either woman was expected to be self-sacrificial. The female relationships that Rappoport discusses, however, while they sought to prevent unequal relationships such as dependence, were based in attachment and increasing community between the giver and recipient. She defines such relationships as the following: "Women entered into volatile and profitable economic negotiations of power and created diverse forms of community. Their personal gift transactions expanded kinship circles, served as the bases for larger civic coalitions, and established both the reach and the limits of these alliances" (5). These alliances avoided the language of self-sacrifice that dominated Victorian ideals of female relationships while at the same time avoiding the language of detachment that dominated the discourse of professionalized philanthropy. This idea of philanthropy also understands female relationships, defined as sisterhood, to be central to the redemptive role of philanthropy for women. The idea of "sisters of charity" that was common in the nineteenth century, is one that Jill Rappoport looks to as well. She also looks to the Ranyard Nurses to support her argument that women could create horizontal alliances or sisterhoods through this kind of relationship building. *Giving Women* focuses on professionalized philanthropy as the work that created a positive experience for women, as it increased non-hierarchical attachments between classes. Rappoport argues participation in the Ranyard Nurses "allow[ed] slum-goers to cross socially bounded spaces, and also to claim, through sisterhood, the ability to transcend and traverse class. Slum Sisters attempted to put themselves literally in others' places, speaking to as well as for them, and showing how readers could do so too" (111). With their shared sense of suffering, these sisterhoods, exemplified by organizations such as the Salvation Army Slum Sisters and the Ranyard Nurses, Rappoport argues, offered more equal alliances, and notes that "impoverished

families were often sustained for a time by working-class mutual aid, rather than top-down gifts of charity. This support reinforced neighborhood networks" (111, 114). Yet, Lotus's rejection of the theme of sisterhood in philanthropic work is the point at which *A Sunless Heart* begins to account for the late nineteenth-century development that philanthropic work was separated from female community. Lotus is a coolly distant professional who does not consider helping Gasparine to be an opportunity to speak for her, to claim sisterhood with her, or form bonds through shared suffering. In this way, *A Sunless Heart* illustrates a philanthropic relationship that does not operate in the redemptive way that Rappoport idealizes.

Lotus demonstrates her professional detachment elsewhere in the novel, particularly when she describes her relationships with her students. She makes it very clear that she can help her students by working hard rather than through emotional care:

> "Listen, then," said Lo impressively. "You say my girls love me. Yes. Why do they all come here, and *love* me? It is love? You want to say, I know, that they give me love, and that I give them contempt? Is it not rather this? I do not admire them; I see them as they are, contemptibly selfish animals. Do I ever deceive myself that it is for love of me they come? No, no; they know that when they come to me, however bored I am, I put my work aside, and help and listen. I win them by much toil and patience. I do not, by my mere presence, command love, as Mona, who wins by existing … I by toil, that I may live. Have you any idea how thoroughly people dislike and fear me until I compel them to do otherwise? I do not take my geese as swans, but while I give them what they want it's little they care—geese are not high-toned animals, you know. And then that foolish girl says I deceive people. I do not. I do not need to. They deceive themselves."

(Johnstone 136)

Here, Lotus identifies herself strongly with the discourse of professionalized detachment by redefining her students' admiration as merely results of her duty to her work. Where Lotus's students admire her and expect her to return that admiration, Lotus labels their request for a reciprocal relationship self-deception. She further detaches herself from her students by interpreting her students' love as self-motivated, because they understand that Lotus will sacrifice her time and energy for their success. Lotus thus centers her detachment as essential to her professionalism and mirrors the language of professionalized philanthropy while she is taking care of Gasparine and engaging in teaching, which has traditionally been understood as a caring profession. She prefers to maintain hierarchy in these relationships, and her professional life is marked by a mutual distrust.

At times, Lotus's identification as a distant, dutiful laborer works well, as her students seem not to be bothered by Lotus's cold distance. Gasparine, however, is troubled by Lotus's distance, and is confused that Lotus's seeming benevolence does not also lead to a closer relationship or equality between the two. Gasparine finds herself simultaneously drawn to Lotus and pushed away from her, which ultimately confuses her and prevents her from forming a stable relationship with Lotus. She says that she "was at once repelled and attracted by [Lotus's cruel and imperious expression]" (Johnstone 135), and Gasparine feels that "The strange being became always dearer and more distant. Day after day, week after week, new phases, aspects of character, appeared, to charm, pique, soothe, or tempt. But always Gasparine found herself as far off as ever" (139). Gasparine struggles with her understanding of the personal bonds of philanthropic work, where older models of female philanthropy created the expectation of equality and attachment. The idea of reciprocity, shared suffering, or even gratefulness

ultimately does not survive Lotus's emphasis on distanced professionalism: "After a long struggle against it she was forced to acknowledge that Lo received her worship with no other feeling than a gentle scorn, which yet trusted her completely" (139). While Gasparine is not harmed, she is also not able to realize "sisterhood" with Lotus. Lotus's benevolence towards Gasparine is a significant turning point for her life, yet her choice to separate giving from attachment means that she actively prevents any development of female community, "horizontal alliances," or equality. Even though Gasparine benefits from Lotus's provision, a closer bond with Lotus is not included in the gift.

As Gasparine and Lotus struggle with defining their work and their relationship with each other, the novel does not allow either character to develop fully. Lotus's detachment ultimately ends in tragedy, while Gasparine, even in her success as an artist, continues to try to understand Lotus's suffering as she had when Lotus was still alive. As the novel comes to its conclusion, Gasparine is frequently described as happy (Johnstone 176, 182), while Lotus continues to suffer and remains cold and distant. Lotus's relationships with each character in the novel are cut off by the end; she rejects two entreaties for love from both Mona, a student with whom she had a relationship, and Professor Raymond, who pursued her earlier but ended up proposing to Mona. Further, when she leaves her home at the end of the novel and promises to reveal that she is another character's mother,[18] she dies in a train accident along the way and is never able to develop her relationship with her daughter. Even one last chance with Mona is denied to Lotus: they die together in the train accident. These examples of Lotus's failure to develop her relationships with other characters come despite her philanthropic work. Professor Raymond

[18] This character in the novel, Ladybird, was told that she was adopted at birth although she is Lotus's biological child. Lotus hides her identity from Ladybird because she was conceived during the rape that Lotus alludes to elsewhere in the novel. Lotus planned to reveal to Ladybird that she is her mother after she comes back from a trip, but she dies in a train crash along the way.

describes her in the following way: "Your unmoved calm, for one so young, the depth of your despairing convictions, in contrast with your noble endeavours in every good cause [. . .]" (184), indicating that her work for others did not provide a space for her to find sisterhood or equality with those she helped. On the other hand, Gasparine desperately hangs on to Lotus's memory and achieves recognition as an artist with the painting of her masterpiece called "The Lotus-Flower." "Numberless offers came to the artist from all parts," yet Lotus still hangs on to her past in the same way that she struggled with getting closer to Lotus while she was still alive: "But she would not sell her treasure. It brought the lost back to her longing, aching eyes" (198). In this way, the inequality between the two women remains and demonstrates the inability for Lotus and Gasparine's benevolent relationship to translate into an attachment or alliance. The detachment that defined their relationship with each other fails to allow the two women to fully move past their suffering and develop as characters. The consequence is that Gasparine and Lotus fail to develop as characters or in their relationship with each other.

Isabella Ford also considers how philanthropy could no longer be considered a central endeavor to the women's movement by the end of the nineteenth century, and she complicates the ability for women to form political alliances by simply sharing suffering. The idea that sympathetic attachment could allow women to create alliances between themselves fails throughout the novel. Ford certainly imagined a better future for women, as discussed in what follows, but she did not think that philanthropy in any form would be the vehicle for it. Ford's essay "Women and Socialism," written around 1904, intervenes in discussions surrounding the socialist and feminist movements of the turn of the century, arguing that "unless the relation of the Labour movement—or perhaps it is better to use the wider term of the Socialist movement—to the Women's Movement, be clearly recognised, the real inner meaning of Socialism itself

cannot be understood, for the two movements have the same common origin and the same aims" (Ford, "Women and Socialism" 2). For Ford, the aims that the women's movement and labour movements share include the idea that both women and men must have an "equal share of service" (2). Importantly, to Ford, socialism meant more than just reforming labor practices or making the work force more efficient through professionalization. Although she advocated professional training, the achievement of her ideals meant that socialism, more than "merely import[ing] Socialistic institutions into our midst, such as free meals" could not succeed until gender relations were transformed: "[Socialism] insists on a moral regeneration of society of the most complete and searching kind in order to make a lasting foundation for the political and social changes many of us long to see" (2). Here Ford frames the women's movement, and its insistence on equality between the sexes, as foundational to political change; socialism could not succeed without the women's movement. As such she frames her politics with particular relationships between people, going so far as to say that "Socialism goes straight to the home" (3). Because of this focus on the particularities in personal relationships, Ford's novel aims to be different from a wider socialist movement, whose politics, as she points out, sometimes overpowered the personal. The novel itself examines how the large-scale political goals of socialism can either succeed or fail on a very small scale if relationships between the sexes aren't changed first. In turn, Ford demonstrates how the center for women's progress has moved from philanthropic work to Socialist work—Socialism and philanthropy are continually pitted against each other in *On the Threshold*—and she uses a more nuanced understanding of class relations to demonstrate how sympathetic understanding could no longer bring women together as allies.

On the Threshold focuses on philanthropic practice in large part because of the way that traditionally feminine philanthropy, where women formed a separate sisterhood of labor in the

absence of being able to participate in the male public sphere, did not allow for women to achieve the "equal share of service" that she advocates in "Women and Socialism." In an important scene in the novel, Ford makes it clear that philanthropy that focuses on women's self-sacrifice is antiquated and is a hindrance to socialism's call for equality. After Kitty is called away by her family, Lucretia moves in with her Aunt Henrietta, where she is miserable and begins to lose hope that she and Kitty will be able to contribute to political change. Her aunt's house is "full of large and hideous furniture, and hung with heavy maroon-coloured curtains" (Ford, *On the Threshold* 133), an indication that she is old-fashioned. Further, Aunt Henrietta regularly hosts her friends during her at-homes, where they organize teas for the poor. Aunt Henrietta airs her views on philanthropy during a discussion with Mr. Estcourt. Mr. Estcourt takes an anti-philanthropy view, saying that philanthropy "'generally means giving away what you don't want, to people who would be much better without it'" (177), where Aunt Henrietta takes a view not unlike that of the Sisters of Charity and other parodied mid-Victorian philanthropists, saying "'One ought to have poor people in to tea and talk to them'" (177). However, the most significant of Aunt Henrietta's opinions on the role of women is one that contrasts with Ford's own opinion on women's labor: "after dinner [Aunt Henrietta] asked me [Lucretia] to read aloud to her out of a little book on female education, a chapter describing the necessity for gentleness and submission on the part of women, and the beauty of complete self-sacrifice" (136-7). For Ford, Aunt Henrietta embodies the problems of the old way of thinking about women's labor. While she is somewhat clichéd, with her discussion of women's self-sacrifice, she represents the barriers to equality between men and women. Even more tellingly, she responds to Lucretia's doldrums, thinking that she has just overworked herself, by advising Lucretia to take up the same philanthropic "work" that she engages in. Here, Ford illustrates her

idea that men and women must be able to perform the same kind of work, especially when it comes to reform work, in order to achieve the broader goals of socialism. In this way, her novel also illustrates "old" philanthropy as mutually exclusive from Socialism, which is where progressive women's work is currently taking place.

On the Threshold further illustrates this mutual exclusivity by taking up the themes of living with the poor as a way to sympathize with them and thus reach equality with them, similar to the philanthropic method used by the Ranyard Nurses and rejected by *A Sunless Heart*. The novel represents a failed attempt at creating community and sympathy between middle-class, educated women (Lucretia and Kitty) and their maid, Beatrice. Lucretia and her friend, Kitty, come from middle- class families who are not completely supportive of their decision to study art in London. The two friends move into a flat in Bloomsbury and start a friendship with their maid-of-all-work, Beatrice. As they get to know Beatrice and their landlady, Mrs. Mount, they come to understand that Mrs. Mount treats Beatrice poorly, and they offer her their understanding. When Mrs. Mount fires Beatrice and evicts her from the living quarters that were her payment for her work, Kitty and Lucretia try to find her and bring her back to their apartment so that she has somewhere to stay. However, Beatrice's refusal demonstrates the failure of their sympathy through their experience living in similar conditions to Beatrice: "'You've been kind to me, kinder nor any one; but you'll be going home soon, and I shall never see you again. The likes of you, miss, can't understand what it is; it seems fine out here, it's like a bit o' life. I know you meant it kindly coming to fetch me back, and I'll never forget it; but I can't go back, I can't, and that Mrs. Mount will be harder nor ever after this'" (Ford, *On the Threshold* 50). Beatrice, despite her thankfulness for the friends' sympathy, recognizes that there is a chasm between the two even after Kitty and Lucretia have taken the time to get to know her in close quarters. Kitty

and Lucretia's experiences with Beatrice have motivated them to find her and take care of her, but even that sympathy is not sustainable. Beatrice recognizes that the friends' kindness has worse long-term consequences, while Kitty and Lucretia can only see their present kindness. In this way, the novel demonstrates how sympathy or shared suffering was not a way for women to create alliances between each other. More significantly, it is one of the few examples of a rejection of fellow-feeling expressed through the point of view of the working class.

The novel depicts Kitty and Lucretia's attempts at sympathy with Beatrice as the consequence of a naïve understanding of class relations. Kitty and Lucretia's experiences with getting to know the less fortunate through close encounters further confuses them, as their experiences only serve to make them understand that their "views about general morality were altering strangely" (Ford, *On the Threshold* 42) based on what is immediately in front of them. For example, their view of Mrs. Mount softens after they hear her side of the story about Beatrice's disappearance, and they feel especially sympathetic when Mrs. Mount tells them her troubles right before they move out of the apartment. As they come to terms with their failure to sympathize, their formerly clean-cut views of morality to become more ambiguous: "'Lucretia, what are we to do? We've found Beatrice, as we said we would, but now we cannot kill Mrs. Mount, as we said we must!' and Kitty groaned. 'I wish people were either entirely good or entirely bad, it would make the world so much simpler! We must really come back to these rooms and try to love Mrs. Mount [. . .]!'" (83). Rather than guiding her in determining who deserves help and who does not, Kitty's attempt to sympathize with both parties and synthesize both views into a common understanding only serves to confuse her morality and prevent her from acting on it. The silliness of Kitty's statement is highlighted with her mention of killing Mrs. Mount with no sense of self-awareness about the hyperbole of that statement. There is

nothing else to suggest that Kitty or Lucretia were seriously considering murder, and the phrase is commonly used in an exaggerated way; but Kitty's self-serious tone here makes her statements seem out of touch. This strange statement in a moment that is all about the girls' simplistic view of morality and their rapid oscillation between sympathies underscore the idea that we shouldn't take seriously their musings on sympathy with the poor as political statements that are endorsed by the novel.

Within the context of the novel's separation between philanthropy and socialist progressivism, Ford focuses on the relationship between Kitty and Lucretia and how it fails to reach equality because Kitty and Mr. Estcourt also do not commit fully to the ideals of equality between the sexes. The failure for the women to develop their friendship further is made visible by Lucretia's first-person narration throughout the novel. Where Lucretia is torn between her desire for Kitty and her realization that she can't acceptably communicate that to Kitty, the reader is able to see the contrast between Lucretia's inward thoughts and outward actions. Additionally, her first-person reflections on socialist politics allow the reader to see where Lucretia is more skeptical about the ideals that she and Kitty talk about. Where Lucretia seems to share Kitty's idealism, Lucretia's recounting of the events of a socialist meeting complicates a reader's assumption that the women have, together, achieved a higher political plane in that the focus on friendship allows them to move beyond a focus on marriage. Lucretia, at first, has full faith that Kitty is on the same page: "Friendships between men and women, which we felt were one of the leavening forces of the world, possessed much more interest for us than falling in love" (Ford, *On the Threshold* 28). In this moment, Lucretia's explanation of their friendship follows a long discussion of relationships between the sexes, and her use of the unifying pronouns of "we" demonstrates Lucretia's assumption that Kitty's neutral outward behavior

towards the main male character, Mr. Estcourt, is proof that Kitty's politics come before a mere interest in finding a husband. Her focus on friendship rather than love demonstrates the way that she is required to code her desire for Kitty and justify the way that she wants it to replace the desire that Kitty could have for a man. Yet, as the socialist meeting goes on, Lucretia comes to understand that Kitty's adoption of socialist ideals are a way for her to appear attractive to Mr. Estcourt: "I saw Estcourt's face light up as Kitty spoke, and for an instant their eyes met. My heart sank, for I loved Kitty as I loved no one else, and it seemed to me as that look passed between her and // Estcourt, something grew up between them which must separate her from me" (31-2). At this point, Lucretia realizes that any evidence that she had of Kitty's genuine idealism, and any notion of shared ideals between them, were fantasies that she entertained about their political aims. She frames that socialist meeting as merely a stage for the traditional endeavor of marriage, and this realization also marks a shift in her narration from the shared pronouns of "we" and "us," to a more isolated narrative style that distances her from Kitty.

Lucretia's realization that Kitty's political ideals are more performative than genuine allows the reader to see the superficiality of the girls' politics; but more importantly, it makes clear that the potential for the new world of socialism and relationships between women that go beyond sympathetic caregiving are lost because of the hierarchy between Kitty and Lucretia. Examples of worship, rather than equality, abound in the novel. Although we can't take Kitty or Lucretia too seriously, Lucretia's naïve declarations of love for Kitty in the novel demonstrate how, rather than rejecting their political viewpoints, we should reject the way that they express their love in a hierarchical way:

> However, after we had known Beatrice a few days, Kitty suddenly announced that our creed had changed—I always followed Kitty's lead—and that henceforward

> we must understand, first, that people who are oppressed are often more wicked than their oppressors, and, second, that wicked // people require more love and help than good ones. (Ford, *On the Threshold* 11-2)

Here, Lucretia frames Kitty's political ramblings as an illustration of their attachment to each other. Kitty is the clear leader, and Lucretia follows her lead because she loves Kitty. It does not matter to Lucretia where Kitty's political opinions go; it matters to her that she can use politics as a way to express her attachment to Kitty in an acceptable way. In the same way that Lucretia does take her political expressions seriously, the reader cannot. Where Kitty's politics are enacted during the novel through attempts at altruistic shared suffering and sympathy with the poor, the hierarchy between the two women is most visible. Ford also aligns the pair's ideals most closely to the antiquated altruistic ideals of philanthropy, which in turn makes their socialist labor unrealized.

Because of Lucretia's narrative detachment and their hierarchical relationship, both women are unable to work towards a socialist future. The two women remain trapped in a world of ideals rather than action:

> "Lucretia," said Kitty at last, "we must swear to one another, on our love for each other, that we will set about changing all this. We must reform these things. Let us solemnly swear it now, Lucretia dear." Solemnly we swore it, and solemnly we sealed our oath with a kiss. It was rarely that we kissed each other, but that night we clung together in the darkness, for we seemed to be on the threshold of a great unknown world, and we were filled with awe, though our faith and courage, like our ignorance, were great, boundlessly great. (Ford, *On the Threshold* 52)

The pair's glimpse of a utopian future is framed by their attachment to each other at its most

intense. Despite this moment of hope, though, the potential of Kitty and Lucretia's attachment to each other is undermined by convention. At the end of the novel, Kitty falls back on the concepts of friendship and marriage to imagine a socialist future for herself, Lucretia, and Mr. Estcourt. She talks about her and Mr. Estcourt's future socialist work, unenthusiastically saying that they might teach or write songs; then she expresses her disappointment in her relationship with Mr. Estcourt, saying that it is not the "great and noble companionship" (124) she hoped it could be. Rather than being on the threshold as she was for a moment with Lucretia, she now feels that she is "lost in a dreadful grey forest" (125). But rather than reviving that moment, Kitty still describes her attachment to Lucretia using conventional terms: "'How beautiful our friendship is!' she went on presently. 'We are somehow like each others' mothers; we understand each other all through, and how we rest in each other'" (125). She falls back on labels that are acceptable to use to describe female relationships, such as mother and friendship, but they are still hierarchical and offer no future.

On the Threshold, much as its title suggests, illustrates a key dilemma in late nineteenth-century philanthropic reform work. As Lucretia and Kitty struggle to make connections to the poor through sympathy, they also struggle to form equal alliances with each other. Because of this, the novel cannot be explained with a critical lens, such as the ones that Sharon Marcus and Jill Rappoport offer, that features altruistic or sympathetic philanthropic models as keys to women's progress. Ford's and Johnstone's novels both reject older forms of philanthropy and point out the difficulties with professionalized philanthropy, but in so doing they do not seek to return philanthropy to its earlier state of sympathy and fellow-. Rather, these novels create conditions that make it impossible for women to return to these earlier models and make it clear that, in order for women to create alliances with each other, they must leave philanthropic work

behind altogether. Ultimately, these novels challenge our own critical views about the role of philanthropy in women's progress in the late nineteenth century: it is not a tool for women to transcend the hierarchies of capitalist philanthropic models, as Marcus argues, nor does it establish the "horizontal exchanges," as Rappoport argues, that are so essential for women to transcend these capitalist hierarchies. As this dissertation argues, professionalized, i.e., late nineteenth-century, philanthropy is an inherently unequal and detached enterprise, and just because women can take up this enterprise does not mean that they change these conditions. Philanthropic reform did not, and could not, also create reform in gender roles in the Victorian era.

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