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Pleasing Spectacles and Elegant Dinners: Conviviality, Benevolence, and Charity Anniversaries in Eighteenth-Century London

Sarah Lloyd

As the number and interests of charitable institutions expanded throughout Britain during the eighteenth century, so special fund-raising events, anniversary celebrations, and meetings multiplied. During 1775, for example, the major metropolitan charities and a plethora of minor benevolent societies courted middle- and upper-class Londoners with invitations to concerts and exhibitions. Men could support various hospitals and other good causes by dining in taverns and City Livery Halls in company with civic and ecclesiastical dignitaries, even noble and royal dukes. Both men and women might attend charities' anniversary services, ornamented with special music and a sermon, choosing among dispensaries, hospitals, lying-in charities, religious societies, and various efforts to reform and reclaim the poor for public benefit. On Sundays, armed with tickets, special prayer books, and even keys to their rented pews, women and men might attend the chapel of a philanthropic institution. Alternatively, they could listen to a fund-raising sermon and watch charity-school children arrayed in the gallery of a parish church. Toward the end of the year, they might pay half a guinea each to hear Handel's *Messiah* in the Foundling Hospital Chapel or go to Covent Garden and

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Drury Lane to watch tragedies and farces.¹ Charitable activity thus extended beyond churches, alms, and sermons into the theater. It spilled onto the streets as gentlemen processed to dinner; it accompanied art and music. Conversely, waves of fashion drove visitors to one philanthropic institution or another to see deserving recipients, hear a particularly popular preacher, or to be observed themselves. Central to all such proceedings—metropolitan and provincial—was display, whether of the Magdalen Hospital's penitent prostitutes seated in the chapel gallery, the procession of those saved from death by the Royal Humane Society, or the anniversary parade of Newcastle Infirmary's benevolent supporters.²

Unlike other forms of charitable fund-raising, considerable sums were frequently invested in this activity, a feature that suggests its significance to contemporaries. The Welsh charity school, Gray's Inn Lane, for instance, spent over £92 in 1773 on a play to generate around £177 profit. The Festival of the Sons of the Clergy cost over £400 a year for dinner and a full orchestral service. Such events were an important aspect of individual charities' business, spawning special committees to manage them and connecting specific causes to particular commercial, artistic, and political circles.³ By the mid-eighteenth century, charitable events in London had settled into an annual pattern linked to the urban social and political calendar, with anniversaries in first half of the year, especially April–May, and theatrical performances around Christmas. Thus, in another sign that this activity mattered, charities had to compete to

¹ *Public Advertiser* (January–December 1775). This is not a comprehensive account of charity events in London in 1775.

² Sarah Lloyd, "'Pleasure's Golden Bait': Prostitution, Poverty and the Magdalen Hospital in Eighteenth-Century London," *History Workshop Journal* 41 (Spring 1996): 51–72; J. P. Malcolm, *Anecdotes of the Manners and Customs of London during the Eighteenth Century*, 2d ed. (London, 1810), 1:84; Carolyn D. Williams, "'The Luxury of Doing Good': Benevolence, Sensibility, and the Royal Humane Society," in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts (Washington Square, N.Y., 1996), p. 99; Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 79.

³ Welsh School, Ashford, minutes of the Board of Governors and Trustees, vol. 3, 3 January 1774, National Library of Wales (hereafter cited as Welsh School minutes); see also Simon McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 181, 251, who reports that a benefit for the Royal Society of Musicians in 1796 cost over £796, exhausting income to a meager profit of £6.12.6; Arthur Rook, Margaret Carlton, and W. Graham Cannon, *The History of Addenbrooke's Hospital Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 55; Philip Rhodes, *Doctor John Leake's Hospital: A History of the General Lying-in Hospital York Road, Lambeth, 1765–1971* (London, 1977), pp. 26, 28, 32, 37, 41; E. H. Pearce, *The Sons of the Clergy, 1651–1904* (London, 1904), p. 191, according to whom, in 1775, the twelve stewards of the anniversary of the Sons of the Clergy paid 35 gns. each; *Public Advertiser* (6 May 1762); Ruth McClure, *Coram's Children: The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, Conn., 1981), pp. 68–71.

get the most advantageous and clement day and attract the most eminent patrons and desirable company. The London and Westminster charity schools moved their anniversary on several occasions to get a better position in the calendar. In 1728 the date was changed from Whitsun to the first Thursday in May to avoid the hot weather in which the children were “stifled” in church. A second reason for the move, that most of the lords, bishops, and gentry were generally out of town, was not announced in the press.⁴ The stewards of the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy, a particularly elite group, guarded its position vigorously, repeatedly shifting the date of its anniversary. In 1778 the charity resolved to put a notice in at least three daily papers, “it being thought requisite, to prevent the Interference of any other Charitable Institution, that some Intimation should be given to the public of the days of the Rehearsal and Anniversary.” In 1787, John Bacon, secretary to the stewards, heard that the king had fixed the very days of the rehearsal and anniversary to review the Horse Guards. This, the stewards complained, would deprive the charity of the best wind instruments and reduce the collections. Through the intervention of the archbishop of Canterbury, the King did without wind instruments on one day and moved the date of the second.⁵ The charity calendar was sufficiently prominent for it to serve as a marker of past time, and not only in elite circles: giving evidence in an adultery trial, a cook dated her observations by the Sons of the Clergy rehearsal.⁶

But why was such attention given to processions, dinners, and entertainment? What meanings did such events convey about charity, beneficiaries, and participants? What opportunities and risks did urban commercial culture present to the charitable? I argue here, first, that anniversaries and feasts were not simply a remnant of older religious, charitable, county, and civic traditions.⁷ New, entrepreneurial institutions

⁴ *SPCK Early Eighteenth-Century Archives* (London: World Microfilms, 1976), pt. A, Minutes and Reports, vol. 12, 16 April 1728, p. 208; *London Journal* (12 April 1729).

⁵ Pearce, *Sons of the Clergy*, p. 207; Minutes of the Stewards of the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy, A/FSC/1, 24 February 1778, 13 March 1787, London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter cited as Sons of the Clergy minutes); for comments on weather, see A/FSC/1, 4 May 1779, 18 May 1782.

⁶ For evidence of the broader social and political context of anniversaries, perambulations, and processions, see A. R. Wright, *British Calendar Customs: England* (London, 1938), 1:129–39, 166–69, 176–80, 2:130–35, 3:102–3, 155–56, 179; David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London, 1989); Nicholas Rogers, *Whigs and Cities: Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 353–89; *Trials for Adultery*, vol. 7, Biker v. Morley, evidence of Sarah James (1741) (London, 1779–80), p. 11.

⁷ Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 94–95; Judith M. Bennett, “Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England,” *Past and Present*, no. 134 (February 1992): 19–41; Maria Moisa, “Debate: Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England,” and

adopted and revitalized these practices, a habit that suggests their utility in attaching supporters and fund-raising: "it is natural upon such occasions, to break bread together," said Jonas Hanway, pioneer of new philanthropic causes.⁸ Church services and dinners were prominent features of benevolent activity through which social relations were enacted. They enabled each charity to project and display its objectives, and these included not just the productive outlay of money and effort on the poor, but also appropriate sentiment and behavior among the charitable themselves. Processions and food (reminiscent of the Christian love feast) should alert us to the symbolic elements that acted as channels of social meaning in these activities.⁹ Their significance went beyond cash and propaganda, to issues of symbolic order. Formalized patterns of display produced the categories and boundaries through which men and women, rich and poor, were to know themselves in relation to peers and others for fleeting moments or sustained periods. In this sense, charity anniversaries were ritualized activities, marked out materially, aesthetically, spatially, and temporally from other philanthropic business, and with a correspondingly increased capacity to represent social relationships and create authority.¹⁰ This required conscious management and complex ne-

Judith M. Bennett, "Reply," *Past and Present*, no. 154 (February 1997): 223–42; Ger vase Rosser, "Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England," *Journal of British Studies* 33 (October 1994): 430–46; Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 250–64; Newton E. Key, "The Political Culture and Political Rhetoric of County Feasts and Feast Sermons, 1654–1714," *Journal of British Studies* 33 (July 1994): 223–56; Paul Morgan, "County Feasts," *Notes and Queries* 45, no. 1 (March 1998): 54–64; Ian W. Archer, *A History of the Haberdashers' Company* (Chichester, 1991), pp. 126–32; David M. Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry, 1558–1642* (London, 1971).

⁸ The general point is noted by Jonathan Barry, "Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort," in *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550–1800*, ed. Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks (Basingstoke, 1994), p. 99. The Magdalen Hospital (founded 1758), e.g., held an anniversary service and dinner; see *London Chronicle* (6 April 1764), Early English newspapers (microform); see also Jonas Hanway, *The Defects of Police the Cause of Immorality . . .* (London, 1775), p. 275.

⁹ Key, "Political Culture," p. 242; Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990); John Walsh, "Religious Societies: Methodist and Evangelical, 1738–1800," *Studies in Church History* 23 (1986): 288–89; Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," *Daedalus* 101, no. 1 (Winter 1972): 61–81; Leonard Cowie, *Henry Newman: An American in London, 1708–43* (London, 1956), p. 50.

¹⁰ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York and Oxford, 1992). For definitions of what constitutes a ritual deployed for purposes of historical analysis, see Peter Borsay, "All the Town's a Stage: Urban Ritual and Ceremony, 1660–1800," in *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns, 1600–1800*, ed. Peter Clark (London, 1984), pp. 228–58; Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton, N.J., 1989), p. 13; Rosser, "Going to the Fraternity Feast," p. 432.

gotiation to ensure that dignity and control were maintained throughout. Anniversaries were valuable, albeit precarious moments of assertion, feeling, and performance. These dynamics shaped individual events and the meanings of charity itself in relation to eighteenth-century public culture.

Second, charitable display was culturally specific. Its symbolic elements operated through particular, shifting understandings of poverty, wealth, and social relations. Charities thus took shape within eighteenth-century consumer culture. They exchanged spectacle for money and dealt in desire, blurring distinctions between resorts, theaters, livery halls, and churches. Midcentury, charities advertised alongside quacks, publishers, and auctioneers and asserted their patriotism among reports of war, face cream, and suicide.¹¹ They also exploited particular commercial opportunities. Concerts and theatrical performances, breakfasts and dinners at Ranelagh Gardens, harnessed the urban trade in pleasure and exhibition, drawing on the services of benevolent impresarios, and putting to charitable uses spaces associated with gender transgression and audiences in which women were prominent.¹² Such connections exposed charity to debate over the social effects of luxury and consumption (literally in the case of food), and controversy drew on further questions about decorum in church and appropriate music. One newspaper correspondent of 1720 complained about theater musicians performing at the Sons of the Clergy anniversary, associating their presence with general behavior more suited to Drury Lane than “the Temple of the Lord.”¹³ By the second half of the eighteenth century, this alignment between commerce and philanthropy was significant in refiguring benevolence and charity; it extended institutions’ scope and techniques, but continued to raise troubling issues

¹¹ *Public Advertiser* (22 May 1756).

¹² McVeigh, *Concert Life in London*, pp. 39, 55, 66–67; Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978); J. S. Taylor, *Jonas Hanway: Founder of the Marine Society: Charity and Policy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1985), p. 78; David Garrick organized benefits for the Lock Hospital, the Welsh charity school, Westminster New Lying-In Hospital, and the Marine Society; see Linda E. Merians, “The London Lock Hospital and the Lock Asylum for Women,” in *The Secret Malady: Venereal Disease in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France*, ed. Linda E. Merians (Lexington, Ky., 1996), p. 135; Welsh School minutes, vol. 3, 19 November 1773; Rhodes, *Doctor John Leake’s Hospital*, p. 32; Donna Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, N.J., 1989), p. 80; *The Letters of David Garrick*, ed. David M. Little and George M. Kahrl (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 1: letters 178, 216; 2: letter 728; 3: letters 964, 1087, 1329; see also Anne Borsay, *Medicine and Charity in Georgian Bath: A Social History of the General Infirmary, c. 1739–1830* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 81–84.

¹³ *London Journal* (21 December 1720), quoted in Nicholas Cox, *Bridging the Gap: A History of the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy over 300 years, 1655–1978* (Oxford, 1978), p. 50; Richard Burn, *Ecclesiastical Law* (London, 1763), 2:278.

concerning the effects of fashion and money on philanthropic principle and efficacy. Both aspects of this engagement with eighteenth-century commercial culture elaborated the meanings of charity, and charity's relationship to society, its governance, and structure. It also produced a discourse about the benevolent subject in which lines of gender and authority were uncertain. While expanding men's opportunities to be dignified and benevolent, it also jeopardized a long tradition of charitable stewardship—the mark and responsibility of social power—by exposing the men who participated in these events to criticism from those who associated fashion, luxury, and consumption with women. Yet as this critique might suggest, the very parallels between charity and urban exhibition that compromised male status opened a space for philanthropic ladies whose participation was reported in the press. Even so, fashion endangered their activities too and had to be carefully managed by those women who adapted spectacle and ceremony to represent their own charitable practices.

Historians of eighteenth-century British charities have noted the use of anniversaries as fund-raising devices and sermons as occasions for presenting arguments and securing status.¹⁴ In general, however, their interest has been largely directed toward developments in organization and administration: voluntary societies funded by subscription; new targets for philanthropic intervention; institutional arrangements; and the vital interconnections between the policies of individual charities and broader patterns of social and economic thought.¹⁵ Feasts, processions, and anniversary services have attracted much less attention, and their effects and meanings are often taken as self-evident: a parade of deserving "objects," exalted company, and an ample dinner, opened purses.¹⁶ Hugh Cunningham has explored the anniversary meeting of the London and Westminster charity schools from the perspective of childhood, but

¹⁴ Donna Andrew, "On Reading Charity Sermons: Eighteenth-Century Solicitation and Exhortation," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43, no. 4 (October 1992): 581–91.

¹⁵ Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*; David Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660–1960* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964); Donna Andrew, "Two Medical Charities in Eighteenth-Century London: The Lock Hospital and the Lying-in Hospital for Married Women," in *Medicine and Charity before the Welfare State*, ed. Jonathan Barry and Colin Jones (London, 1991), pp. 82–97; Borsay, *Medicine and Charity in Georgian Bath*.

¹⁶ Owen, *English Philanthropy*, p. 48; Merians, "The London Lock Hospital," pp. 135–36; Rook, Carlton, and Cannon, *History of Addenbrooke's Hospital*, pp. 52–55; Bronwyn Croxson, "The Public and Private Faces of Eighteenth-Century London Dispensary Charity," *Medical History* 41, no. 2 (April 1997): 141; Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, pp. 79–82; Stanley A. Seligman, "The Royal Maternity Charity: The First Hundred Years," *Medical History* 24, no. 4 (October 1980): 405; McClure, *Coram's Children*, pp. 68–71, 179–89 (musical benefits are treated as an aspect of the arts and detached from the chapter on hospital finances); Malcolm, *Anecdotes*, 1:55–57.

not charity.¹⁷ Roy Porter's influential 1989 essay on the "gift relation," in which he argued that charitable exchange secured social connection and institutionalized benevolence, offers an important analytic framework for the study of festivities.¹⁸ However, in examining those eighteenth-century voluntary societies that shaped the gift relation, Porter is not particularly interested in the specific forms of fund-raising and associated sociability: the dinners, concerts, and theater performances, benefits at assizes, races, assemblies, or the material culture of the collecting box and ticket. Nor is he concerned with the implications of these interconnections. In general, therefore, historians of British charity have taken a minimal line in describing benefits as entertainment and anniversary meetings as moments of fellowship. While acknowledging the significance of pleasure in eighteenth-century charitable practice, this approach underestimates anniversaries' connections with other more serious religious ceremonies and perhaps mirrors various arguments that early modern ritual forms were on the decline during the eighteenth century.¹⁹ It also overlooks historical and literary studies that have traced an eighteenth-century accommodation between morality and commerce through the creation of an aesthetically discerning, polite, and sociable public. In his excellent study of painting in eighteenth-century England, David Solkin, for example, suggested that the symbiotic relationship between the Foundling Hospital and English painters was an important moment in the consolidation of a new public united in self-interested benevolence.²⁰ Analyzed in terms of aesthetic politics, charitable display acquires ideological and cultural complexity.

The historiography that comes closest to these elements is one not primarily concerned with charity, but rather with the eighteenth-century public sphere and the "middling sort." Here charities are but one aspect of urban association, conviviality, mutuality, and civic tradition. Sharing churches, taverns, coffeehouses, and pavements with corporations, guilds, freemasons' lodges, friendly societies, debating societies, radical clubs, and patriotic organizations, charities were an expressive domain—a "theater" in Peter Borsay's terms—through which collective identities

¹⁷ Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 38–45.

¹⁸ Roy Porter, "The Gift Relation: Philanthropy and Provincial Hospitals in Eighteenth-Century England," in *The Hospital in History*, ed. Lindsay Granshaw and Roy Porter (London, 1989), pp. 149–78.

¹⁹ Borsay, "All the Town's a Stage"; Charles Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 271; Heal, *Hospitality*, pp. 391–95.

²⁰ David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, Conn., 1993), pp. 157–74.

and civic virtue were publicly constituted in display.²¹ Kathleen Wilson, in particular, has proposed that the provincial subscription charity created new public spaces—discursive and material—in which middle-class, heterosexual men could claim citizenship in an expansive and ideologically competitive urban culture through the exercise of patronage and authority over the poor. The subscription model, she argues, constituted government along radical lines of openness and accountability, legitimating distinctive political aspirations to participation. Wilson notes in passing that conviviality, feasting, and processing contributed to these objectives in expressing subscribers' status, benevolence, and place in town life.²²

The concept of benevolence is well established as a central and much-debated element in eighteenth-century moral discourse, especially that shaped by Shaftesbury and Hume. It appears in studies of urban association and of the discursive efforts of Addison and Steele to construct polite, civil society. This is Solkin's framework when he centers the public sphere, and qualifications for participating in it, on benevolence.²³ However, in claiming what is effectively a philosophical or literary version of benevolence for the emergence of civil society, for polite and ambitious middle-class men, these accounts make charity secondary to other social formations. This is a functional version shorn of that extensive network of meaning through which benevolence carried much wider and often more commonplace associations. Therefore instead of using this material to trace an emergent middle class or shifting ideology

²¹ Barry and Brooks, eds., *The Middling Sort of People*; Borsay, "All the Town's a Stage"; Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660–1770* (Oxford, 1989); Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley, 1996); James Epstein, "Radical Dining, Toasting, and Symbolic Expression in Early Nineteenth-Century Lancashire: Rituals of Solidarity," *Albion* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 271–91; Frank O'Gorman, "Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England, 1780–1860," *Past and Present*, no. 135 (May 1992): 79–115; Rogers, *Whigs and Cities*; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, Conn., 1992), pp. 88–89; for the early nineteenth century, see R. J. Morris, *Class, Sect, and Party: The Making of the British Middle Class: Leeds, 1820–1850* (Manchester, 1990), pp. 161–203. Aspects of philanthropic practice that Morris dates to the early nineteenth century are evident elsewhere in Britain in the first half of the eighteenth century; see, e.g., p. 197.

²² Wilson, *Sense of the People*, pp. 27–83; Kathleen Wilson, "Urban Culture and Political Activism in Hanoverian England: The Example of Voluntary Hospitals," in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford, 1990), pp. 165–84.

²³ Solkin, *Painting for Money*; Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1994); David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3d ed. (Oxford, 1975), pp. 176–79, 295–302.

of governance, I propose to examine charity as a phenomenon significant in its own right as a primary social expression.

Benevolence, a comprehensive moral and religious quality, was central to understandings of charity, the sovereign eighteenth-century virtue.²⁴ It connoted appropriate feeling, the desire to do good, and was expressed most fully in acts of charity; it promised pleasure and satisfaction in this world and the next.²⁵ In defining how an individual should behave, benevolence marked—and thus created—difference: religious, national, social, racial, and sexual. It engaged with issues of social order, property, and rights to legitimize existing social structures.²⁶ Over the course of the century, benevolence assimilated and projected additional meanings while others were lost. For example, arguments that the poor were God's representatives on earth dropped away as associational charities stressed the immediate social benefits of their work.²⁷ From the mid-eighteenth century, benevolence absorbed the fashionable discourse of sentiment in which sympathetic feeling—a sort of emotional instinct—connected donor to recipient, and controversially redrew the boundaries of masculinity and femininity to enable new forms of social behavior exhibited in new social spaces, including those created by charities.²⁸ In the early 1790s, George Dyer harnessed benevolence to a radical political agenda.²⁹ As the meanings of benevolence were negotiated through text (sermons, pamphlets, and treatises) and through practice, including institutions' anniversaries, older elements and associations coexisted with newer and not necessarily compatible contexts. Benevolence linked charity, religious practice, fashion, and politics; it was a discursive channel through which meanings flowed in multiple directions; it was an exercise in authority. Charity was necessary work. It was not just a civic duty, a question of police, but also a spiritual exercise that gave it unique status and power in eighteenth-century social and cultural life.

²⁴ "London Hospital Sermon" (1767), in *The Collected Works of William Warburton*, ed. R. Hurd (London, 1788), 5:507.

²⁵ John Balguy, *The Duty of Benevolence and Brotherly Love, and the Ill Effects of a Party Spirit* (Assize sermon) (London, 1739); Williams, "'The Luxury of Doing Good,'" pp. 77–107.

²⁶ William Dodd, *Discourses on the Miracles and Parables* (London, 1757), 4:90–142.

²⁷ Isaac Barrow, *The Duty and Reward of Bounty to the Poor* (London, 1671); James Carrington, *Benevolence the Genuine Character of Christianity* (sermon preached at the anniversary meeting of the governors and contributors to the Devon and Exeter Hospital) (Exeter, 1758).

²⁸ G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, 1992).

²⁹ George Dyer, *A Dissertation on the Theory and Practice of Benevolence* (London, 1795).

For these reasons the exercise of charity shaped other cultural practices. First, charity had close, and on occasion, controversial links with politics. Charity was political in the broadest sense of the term since it was concerned with social and moral order and with authority, both human and divine; in a narrower sense too, some charities became embroiled in extraparliamentary and religious politics.³⁰ It was inseparable from claims to govern since its dynamic was hierarchical: inequality, preachers claimed, was divinely sanctioned to allow the exercise of charity and benevolence. Benevolence intersected with political identity since national preeminence, Protestantism, charity, and order were conceptually locked together. Second, if the eighteenth-century public sphere is defined as a series of social networks and spaces (literal, in the case of clubs and assemblies, or figurative, as with print) that combined wealth, commerce, and meritocratic claims to act in the public good, then organized charity contributed both sociable practices and legitimating discourses.³¹ Church services, dinners, processions, advertisements, and publications promoted charity and created opportunities for conviviality available to all who acquired tickets or read the newspapers. In common with other Georgian social forms, women and men practiced charity in distinctive ways. As a legitimating discourse, charity, and a closely aligned discourse of pleasure, was concerned with the question of who was and what made the benevolent subject. Benevolence, sentiment, and public benefit were the verbal coinage of critical debate and the particular expertise of philanthropic discussion. However, charity was not just a means to political participation in other contexts and places or a forum for polite expression, themes given prominence by the broad historical narratives for this period.³² Charity and benevolence were also ends in themselves, simultaneously functional (concerned with social order and productivity) and performative (concerned with social being), generating power relations far more complex than an emphasis on “police” might suggest. Charity’s status as a major social signifier goes some way in explaining the ubiquity of philanthropic ceremony and festivity, and the importance of examining it.

³⁰ Craig Rose, “‘Seminary of Faction and Rebellion’: Jacobites, Whigs and the London Charity Schools, 1716–1724,” *Historical Journal* 34, no. 4 (December 1991): 831–55.

³¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (London, 1989).

³² This is the framework used in the following studies of charity institutions: Anne Borsay, “‘Persons of Honour and Reputation’: The Voluntary Hospital in an Age of Corruption,” *Medical History* 35 (1991): 281–94; Adrian Wilson, “Conflict, Consensus and Charity: Politics and the Provincial Voluntary Hospitals in the Eighteenth Century,” *English Historical Review* 111 (1996): 599–619.

In this article I focus on anniversaries held by two major London charities: the London and Westminster charity schools and the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy. Both were decidedly Anglican. Neither adopted sentimental fashion during the second half of the century, nor did they attempt to reclaim new groups from among the poor. In their concern for legitimate children, rather than penitent prostitutes or foundlings, for example, they pursued uncontroversial ends. In this they were typical of much eighteenth-century philanthropic activity, a point sometimes lost in a historiography concerned with charitable innovation. The two charities also differed from one another in important ways. The charity schools, managed by middle-class men with connections in trade, commerce, and the City (Bernard de Mandeville's "diminutive Patriots"), staged the largest anniversary event in Britain: a procession and church service involving all the charity schools in the capital.³³ The Sons of the Clergy, a seventeenth-century foundation, belonged to the social and religious establishment; its anniversary, and a "rehearsal" held two days earlier, was smaller than that of the charity schools, but socially more exclusive.³⁴ The schools were early examples of the eighteenth-century subscription charity; the Corporation was typical of older forms of organization, expanding midcentury to exploit subscription methods. Dissimilar in social composition and structure, the two charities also presented distinct views of the charitable relationship. At the schools' anniversary, beneficiaries—or "objects," in eighteenth-century parlance—

³³ Bernard de Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits. With an Essay on Charity and Charity Schools . . .*, 5th ed. (London, 1728), p. 316; according to the *Public Advertiser* (28 March 1753), two of the six stewards were aldermen; M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Puritanism in Action* (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 44–46. The London and Westminster charity schools first gathered in 1704. Each subsequent year a committee of school trustees organized the procession, service, and sermon. A separate committee of stewards organized the trustees' dinner. In 1782, the Society of Patrons of the Anniversary Meeting of the Charity Schools formed to manage and fund the anniversary. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) coordinated the charity school movement nationally. It had close institutional links with the trustees' committee and paid many expenses of the anniversary.

³⁴ The Charity for the Relief of the Poor Widows and Children of Clergymen (more commonly known as the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy) was founded in 1655 and granted a charter in 1678. First held in 1674, the festival raised an annual collection to apprentice clergymen's orphans (male and female). In 1749, the stewards who managed the festival established themselves as a separate society open to subscribers of both sexes to ensure a "constant succession of stewards" and educate clergymen's orphans until old enough to be apprenticed. Twelve stewards were appointed each year, and they paid the expenses of the festival. From 1753, the anniversary was held on the second Thursday in May, preceded on the previous Tuesday by the "Rehearsal" of music, an event that had developed into an important fund-raising event. Pearce, *The Sons of the Clergy*; Cox, *Bridging the Gap*.

were the means of attaching support and securing benevolence. The Sons of the Clergy emphasized the other side of the relationship and made their arguments through the benevolent subject. At their anniversary—the service at St. Paul’s Cathedral, followed by a dinner in the City—male benefactors were center stage throughout. However, in their respective size and social pretensions, these organizations reveal aims, strategies, and effects evident in other British charities. Provincial charity schools and branches of the Sons of the Clergy followed London models in Bristol and other centers.³⁵ Anniversary processions and dinners occurred throughout the country and, in a heterogenous field of activity, were the most common form of eighteenth-century collective charitable practice. Unlike exhibitions of paintings or concerts, such occasions were hardly novel in the service of charity, nor were they the most lucrative, yet they suggest the complex repertoire of eighteenth-century charitable argument and what was at times a troubled engagement with new cultural forms.³⁶

Records for the charity school anniversaries survive from their beginnings in the early eighteenth century. They chart the development of the annual celebrations and the accretion of procedures, rules, and details around the day. By 1740, the forms were settled and organization more a matter of routine. Equivalent documents for the Sons of the Clergy survive only from 1775. By this point their anniversary was well established but meticulously recorded, allowing detailed analysis of conviviality and benevolence in a period of intense debate about the management of social and sexual inequality. Newspaper advertisements and reports provide important evidence for both charities across the century, setting them in a broader context of philanthropic and commercial ventures. Taken together, these sources suggest organizers’ strategies and the extent to which they responded to structural and discursive changes that affected the meanings of both poverty and benevolence. Above all, as I argue in the next section, this material reveals the significance of charitable activity as effects of bodies, space, and emotion in expressing and experiencing an understanding of social relations.

* * *

Every year from 1704, the trustees of the charity schools of London and Westminster gathered the boys and girls educated under their man-

³⁵ John Conybeare, *Sermon* (Oxford 1752), pp. 24–25 (Sons of the Clergy, Bristol); Nicholas Burton, *Sermon* (Newcastle, 1712), pp. 1–3, 17 (Sons of the Clergy, Newcastle upon Tyne); Henry Downes, *Sermon* (Dublin, 1721), pp. 14–19 (Dublin charity schools); Richard Hurd, *Sermon* (Cambridge, 1753), p. 15 (Cambridge charity schools); Edmund Archer, *Sermon* (Oxford, 1713) (Oxford charity schools).

³⁶ Cox, *Bridging the Gap*, p. 85.

agement: all two thousand the first year, over nine thousand in the 1790s when the number of schools had multiplied.³⁷ Neatly dressed in their differently colored uniforms, the children carried copies of an account of the schools or a hymn. Marshalled by their masters, mistresses, parish beadles, and “peace officers,” they walked “in decent couples” through the streets, over the distance of about a mile, converging from two directions onto a church for the anniversary service. There they were arranged on scaffolding and forms; they sang the hymns in which a music teacher specifically employed for this purpose had already rehearsed them. Anniversary preachers discoursed on appropriate topics: charity, education, poverty, and childhood.³⁸ After the service, the children dispersed back to their schools where they were fed: mutton, spinach, and puddings at St. Saviour’s Girls School, Southwark, in the early part of the century.³⁹ Meanwhile, the treasurers and trustees assembled in a City tavern where they dined together on asparagus, fowl, hams, beef, a variety of puddings, and a bottle of wine each in a display of solidarity and self-congratulation: another rendering of benevolence, this time through eating and drinking.⁴⁰ Details changed through the century: the trustees finally gained access to St. Paul’s Cathedral in 1782, a setting that matched their aspirations of scale and patriotism; tickets were introduced in the 1780s; musical contributions, sermon content, the order of service, and menus varied. However, the major spectacular elements remained intact.

The charity schools’ anniversary was a significant occasion distinguished from daily activity by insignia, the scale of the gathering, clothes, tickets, music, special food, and religious sanctification. It remained relevant year after year as it absorbed different contexts; it carried symbolic weight, above all as a display of reciprocity between theoretically generous benefactors and grateful, deserving objects (afterall, ob-

³⁷ The Society of Patrons of the Anniversary of the Charity Schools, Minute books of the Trustees for the Charity Schools in and about the city of London and Westminster, and weekly Bills of Mortality, Church of England Record Centre, NS/SP/1/1–4, 1706–82 (hereafter cited as Charity Schools minutes); *SPCK Early Eighteenth-Century Archives*, pt. A, Minutes and Reports; John Stow, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster . . . Corrected, Improved, and Very Much Enlarged in . . . 1720*, by John Strype (London, 1754), 2:159–60; *London Journal* (12 April 1729), p. 2; *The Times* (3 June 1796), p. 3, col a.

³⁸ *Twenty Five Sermons Preached at the Anniversary Meetings of the Children Educated in the Charity-Schools in and about the Cities of London and Westminster, on Thursday in Whitson Week, from 1704 . . . to 1728 . . .* (London, 1729).

³⁹ St. Saviour’s Girls’ Charity School Southwark, Trustees and Subscribers’ Minute Book, A/NWC/1, 4 May 1708 (hereafter cited as St. Saviour’s Girls’ Charity School minutes).

⁴⁰ The anniversary dinner was moved to the day of the procession in the mid-1730s; for accounts of dinners, see Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/3, 22 April 1762; NS/SP/1/4, 10 December 1778.

jects need benevolent subjects to make proper sense).⁴¹ All these elements suggest its character as ritualized activity along the lines investigated by historians of medieval and early modern Europe.⁴² Gervase Rosser, for example, argues that medieval fraternity feasts were occasions “in the course of which new ideological and social relations were negotiated.” Participation was a form of social exchange and a means to assert moral authority, bridge divisions, and maintain boundaries.⁴³ In rather different historical circumstances the charity schools’ anniversary did all of this too, promoting ideas by enacting them. Participants, notably the trustees, created a spectacle to tell a story of order, Protestant success, harmony, and unity. While making the distinctions between objects and benefactors, they produced knowledge about the poor: their social obligations, attributes, and connections with social superiors. And one of the most important means of achieving this was through boundary crossing and reinforcement that emphasized the transformative power of the charity schools.

Particular features of the London and Westminster charity schools’ anniversary made it a powerful occasion that worked, as Cunningham has argued, through the concept of “order as spectacle.”⁴⁴ Its mobility and scale were significant, as was the way it crossed the parochial boundaries that conventionally contained the poor. It gathered a crowd—distinguished merely by circumstance from a mob—filled public space, and was seen and heard. This was a spectacle trustees and commentators read through dominant discourses about poverty, social order, and Christian charity.⁴⁵ The boys from the Hatton Garden mathematical school, carrying their instruments, indicated their benefactors’ contribution to navigation, trade, and national prosperity.⁴⁶ The politics of numbers that characterized economic thinking about the poor through much of the eighteenth century made this procession into a spectacle of political arithmetic: more hands to create more wealth and then to defend it. The chil-

⁴¹ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls (New York, 1991), pp. 3–4, 65–83.

⁴² Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*; David Harris Sacks, “The Demise of the Martyrs: The Feasts of St. Clement and St. Katherine in Bristol, 1400–1600,” *Social History* 11, no. 2 (May 1986): 146–55; Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York, 1966); Key, “Political Culture,” pp. 231–34.

⁴³ Rosser, “Going to the Fraternity Feast.”

⁴⁴ Cunningham, *Children of the Poor*, pp. 38–49. Cunningham analyzes this event as a carefully orchestrated demonstration of order and assertion of national pride that worked on the emotions to idealize, even misrepresent the children. Most of his evidence concerns the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

⁴⁵ For example, *Spectator*, no. 294 (6 February 1712).

⁴⁶ Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/1, 17 April 1729, 1 April 1736.

dren's uniforms, printed accounts, and progress in pairs marked their subordination within the social and moral hierarchy and guaranteed it. The children were simultaneously symbolic and flesh and blood; "little Eleemosynaries," their gestures embodied the abstract qualities of charity, while also being the objects on which it worked.⁴⁷ Roy Porter's analysis of the delicate mechanism of the gift relation, performed safely with "handpicked members of the labouring classes," reinforces the power of this dynamic. But the strength of this message—indeed the pleasure with which it was regarded—was generated not simply by spectacle, but by instability, the ambiguity on that dangerous margin between a productive and destructive poor. Are these the projector's dream or the magistrate's nightmare? This was a question all too relevant in 1716, for example, when the trustees feared the children would run with mobs and riots.⁴⁸ Thus the procession of charity school children conveyed a national message; they walked a discourse of population, productivity, order, and piety. Displayed in the Strand for the 1713 Thanksgiving, and again for the Accession of George I, the children were fashioned into a symbolic demonstration of national strength.⁴⁹ In the 1720s, Henry Newman, secretary to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, gave the patriotic message a specifically martial twist in inviting titled correspondents to attend the anniversary: the children performed their devotions with such "readiness" that they "seem to be as exact and uniform as the King's Guards are at their Exercise." It was "one of the most affecting Sights . . . to be seen in the Christian World."⁵⁰ But this was also a very flexible demonstration, capable of reinterpretation. The children in this sense were not incorporated as active participants in the nation, but were ciphers on which various lessons might be written.⁵¹ In the context of the French Revolution, *The Times* interpreted the children's dress, cheerful looks, and "exemplary conduct" at the 1796 anniversary as showing "the beneficial effects which the poor derive from a well regulated state

⁴⁷ George Stanhope, "Sermon" (1705), in *Twenty Five Sermons*, p. 45.

⁴⁸ Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/1, 31 May 1716; Cunningham, *Children of the Poor*, pp. 20–4; White Kennett, "Sermon" (1706) in *Twenty Five Sermons*, pp. 60–63; Rosser, "Going to the Fraternity Feast," p. 441; Porter, "The Gift Relation," p. 174; Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford, 1998); Rogers, *Whigs and Cities*, pp. 347–89.

⁴⁹ Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/1, 14 April 1713, 20 August 1714.

⁵⁰ *SPCK Early Eighteenth-Century Archives*, pt. C, Letters and Memorials, Official Letters of the Secretary: Newman's Draft Correspondence, vol. 14, p. 65 (1724, to Viscount Percival), reiterated in almost identical terms in vol. 22, pp. 58–59 (1731, to the countess of Hertford).

⁵¹ Barry, "Bourgeois Collectivism?" pp. 97, 102–3; for discussion of practices that stretched concepts of national, even political inclusion, see Wilson, *Sense of the People*; Colley, *Britons*.

of society; protected by a Constitution superior to that of any other country; and . . . a complete refutation to the wild theories of modern Reformists.”⁵² What was a sign of Anglicanism and utility in the 1720s was an emphatic display of British political superiority over all things French (or associated with France) in the 1790s.

The stakes were, therefore, extremely high when the trustees struggled to assert their authority and to contain ill-disciplined children, teachers, parents, and on-lookers, making increasingly elaborate arrangements to manage “many Irregularities,” infractions correspondents reported to the trustees or to the SPCK.⁵³ During divine service in 1711, “severall of the childrens mothers & others carryed the boys and girls to publick houses & gave them drink in the church” (mothers were a generally troublesome group who often interfered in charity schools’ daily business).⁵⁴ Children were noisy and irreverent and disturbed the congregation; they were late in making their responses.⁵⁵ Precautions had to be taken to prevent them falling off the scaffolding. Teachers neglected their duties and printed orders circulated annually instructed them not leave the children to their own devices.⁵⁶ Schools walked in alphabetical order to minimize perennial disputes over precedence, another boundary marker this time emerging from the poor’s social relations and subverting the trustees’ intentions. The children were badged, that old method of knowing the parochial poor and identifying miscreants. Porters and vergers were instructed to hush the children, keep the galleries clear of unauthorized people, and move the “mob” that blocked the entrance to the church and confused the crucial distinction between objects and benefactors. Stewards carried white wands as a sign of their dignity and were positioned strategically in an attempt to instill awe and order, reminding us of the number of different audiences—authorized and unauthorized—contained in these spaces: the children, trustees, school teachers, benefactors, eminent supporters, a mob.⁵⁷ Custom grew among the

⁵² *The Times* (3 June 1796); see also *Gentleman’s Magazine* (May 1803), p. 474.

⁵³ Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/3, 14 January 1762; NS/SP/1/1, 21 February 172[9], 1 April 1736; NS/SP/1/4, 13 February 1772; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (22 May 1771).

⁵⁴ Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/1, 11 April 1712. For examples of troublesome mothers, see St. Saviour’s Girls’ Charity School minutes, A/NWC/1, 1 July 1707; 9 November 1708; 3 May, 7 June and 4 October 1709; 14 January 1717; Welsh School minutes, vol. 3, 5 August 1765, 3 May 1773, 1 May 1775.

⁵⁵ *SPCK Early Eighteenth-Century Archives*, pt. A, vol. 5, 12 June 1712, p. 287; Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/3, 9 April 1767, 14 March 1771.

⁵⁶ Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/3, 10 January 1771; NS/SP/1/4, 13 February 1772; see also NS/SP/1/1, 9 and 30 June 1713.

⁵⁷ For example, see the following from Charity Schools minutes: on precedence, NS/SP/1/1, 1 March 173[8]; on badges, NS/SP/1/3, 14 January 1762; on porters, etc., NS/

children too, a sign that their misbehavior (and perhaps that of the mothers and crowd) was not necessarily opposition but might be a colonization of the day's ritual from below. Ribbons, feathers, and fans became "Anniversary Ornaments," much frowned upon by the trustees as signs of economic excess, political insubordination (especially in the context of events 1715–18),⁵⁸ and effeminating luxury.⁵⁹ Such behavior had to be contained because the children's patriotic status had to be continually reinforced and did not go uncontested, especially in the early eighteenth century when, for example, the inhabitants of Fleet Street opposed arrangements to display the children to the king in 1714.⁶⁰ Stories of containment and complaint thus revealed that the day had no single meaning and that, contrary to the trustees' explicit commands, the spectacle was produced through negotiation, obstruction, and acquiescence.

The charity schools' anniversary achieved success through performing their supporters' aspirations; what the trustees feared was behavior that would "take off from the Solemnity of the Appearance," an appearance of spiritual and social ends.⁶¹ Claims were made and lessons read visually. In 1713, the trustees' aim was that the children should be *seen* by the Queen.⁶² Preachers emphasized this theme, educating their congregations in appropriate reactions to the occasion (a role adopted by newspapers later in the century). White Kennett's 1706 application of conventional thinking about charity underlined this point:

among all the delectable Sight's that can fill the Eyes of Men; I believe none is more entertaining, more ravishing, than what we have now *before* us and *around* us. A dear and pretious Sight! Some Thousands of poor Children, arm'd with their own Innocence, adorn'd with your Charity, and above all, illustrated with the first Rudiments of Learning, Virtue and Religion! What Spectacle upon Earth can come nearer to that of a *Multitude of the Heavenly Host*? . . . A Congregation of these innocent ones is a goodly Sight to look, to feed, to dwell upon!⁶³

SP/1/3, 10 January 1771; NS/SP/1/3, 11 April 1765; NS/SP/1/3, 8 March 1770; on stewards, NS/SP/1/2, 12 February 1761; NS/SP/1/3, 9 April 1767; NS/SP/1/3, 11 April 1771.

⁵⁸ Rose, "'Seminaries of Faction and Rebellion.'"

⁵⁹ Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/1, 2 April 1713, 14 February 1755; NS/SP/1/3, 14 March 1771.

⁶⁰ Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/1, 1 September 1714.

⁶¹ Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/3, 14 March 1771; Craig Rose, "Evangelical Philanthropy and Anglican Revival: The Charity Schools of Augustan London, 1698–1740," *London Journal* 16, no. 1 (1991): 35–65.

⁶² Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/1, 14 April 1713.

⁶³ Kennett, "Sermon," pp. 49–50; sermons by Stanhope, Robert Moss, Samuel Bradford, Andrew Snape, Nathaniel Marshall, Hugh Boulter, Thomas Mangey, and Joseph Watson in *Twenty Five Sermons* make the same appeal to the visual.

Kennett's association of charity with an appetite for collective enjoyment alerts us to the symbolic integrity of the anniversary service and feast.⁶⁴ In his focus on pleasure, in his metaphors of consumption and relish, Kennett established the pleasures of charity as inseparable from considerations of police: material and spiritual aspects dissolved into one another. Mandeville, trenchant critic of charity schools, agreed that the sight of the children satisfied and pleased, singling out what his contemporaries also noted: "There is a natural Beauty in Uniformity which most People delight in. It is diverting to the Eye to see Children well match'd, either Boys or Girls, march two and two in good order; and to have them whole and tight in the same Cloaths and Trimming must add to the comeliness of the sight; and what makes it still more generally entertaining is the imaginary share which even Servants and the meanest in the Parish have in it, to whom it costs nothing: Our Parish Church, Our Charity Children."⁶⁵ However, while echoing some of Kennett's language, Mandeville scandalized his contemporaries by giving the scene a very different meaning. The pleasure, possession, and power were not divinely sanctioned, but selfish: "there is a Pleasure in Ruling over any thing . . . it must be ravishing to govern the School-master himself."⁶⁶ Thus the signs of benevolence were not necessarily self-evident, especially, it seems, where lower-rank men were concerned.

Aural evidence was also important but much more problematic, both at the anniversary and generally in dealings with the poor. Vicious, unkempt children were frequently characterized by their bad language, a form of verbal riot. Horace Walpole complained in the 1790s of charity children "croaking and squalling" psalms.⁶⁷ At the anniversary, children became difficult it seems as soon as they opened their mouths, whether to make their responses, talk, or eat. Yet the pupils' singing was significant in pleasing the congregation.⁶⁸ The hymn was sung in a "plain" manner, an adjective that sums up charity education; unlike their counterparts at the Foundling Hospital and various continental charities, the

⁶⁴ For another example of the metaphor of consumption used to discuss charity, see Mary Astell, *The Christian Religion, as Profess'd by a Daughter of the Church of England* (London, 1705), p. 204.

⁶⁵ Mandeville, *Essay on Charity Schools*, p. 320; see also p. 304.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 318–19.

⁶⁷ For example, Welsh School minutes, vol. 1, 20 December 1722 (boy discharged for "scurilous language"); Kennett, "Sermon," p. 61; Horace Walpole, *Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis (New Haven, Conn., 1937–83), 34:115.

⁶⁸ Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/3, 12 November 1767; Moss, "Sermon" (1708) in *Twenty Five Sermons*, p. 118; Stow, *Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster*, 2:165.

trustees repeatedly rejected solos.⁶⁹ The desired effect was of a disciplined mass, and individuals singled out from the crowd, whether by disorderly behavior or distinguished performance, disrupted that impression.

Each element of the anniversary—from nosegays to psalm singing—was an argument, a complex statement of social and moral relations. The significance of the occasion lay in its symbolic density and in the sensory effects through which spectators, trustees, and children experienced meaning. Watching or participating in the anniversary was different from reading a pamphlet or sermon about the poor. When Robert Moss stood in the pulpit at the 1708 anniversary and uncharacteristically declared the incompetence of “any kind of artificial Arguments, or any Words I could invent,” he privileged experience and emotion.⁷⁰ Only when this is grasped is it possible to understand the intense desire the sight provoked, so strong that the Princess of Wales said in 1715 “she would come in a Hackney Chair rather than not see the Charity Children.”⁷¹

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The socially exalted stewards of the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy also sought to create dignity and religious seriousness through enactment. Unencumbered by poor children, they performed all the necessary elements themselves. Whereas in some institutions charitable objects might pass the collection plate, noble stewards harnessed a different social dynamic in soliciting donations.⁷² The stewards drew lots over breakfast to decide the order in which they would walk to St. Paul’s Cathedral in the rehearsal and anniversary processions and their positions at the feast. Preceded by whiffers (musicians), the stewards reached St. Paul’s and “the West Door of the Cathedral was flung open.” Customarily attended by the lord mayor and Court of Aldermen, heralded by the

⁶⁹ Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/3, 12 February and 12 November 1767; on 30 June 1713, the committee unanimously rejected a proposal that one of the children should make a speech to the queen as she passed on her way to St. Paul’s to celebrate the Peace of Utrecht (Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/1); Thomas Campbell, *Diary of a Visit to England in 1775, by an Irishman*, ed. Samuel Raymond (Sydney, 1854), p. 28; Percy M. Young, *The Concert Tradition: From the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (London, 1965), pp. 22–23.

⁷⁰ Moss, “Sermon,” p. 117.

⁷¹ SPCK *Early Eighteenth-Century Archives*, pt. A, vol. 7, 13 October 1715, pp. 76–77.

⁷² McClure, *Coram’s Children*, p. 69; Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 13 May 1784.

sound of ringing church bells, the anniversary displayed the connections between two corporations: the Church and the City.⁷³ The stewards' visual emphasis on patrons, rather than objects, may account for another important difference between descriptions of their anniversary and that of the charity schools throughout the century: the presence of female supporters whose participation raises important questions about gender, print culture, and benevolence.

The aldermen's ladies contributed to the significance of the occasion, as each year the dean of St. Paul's provided the keys to the "closetts" for their use.⁷⁴ The stewards, in common with officials of other charities, not only courted persons of rank and distinction, but also attributed a specific place in churches or at charitable entertainments to upper-class women.⁷⁵ Eminent ladies demonstrated the opulence of the occasion, and, as the categories of observer and observed collapsed into one another, visibility became a sign of prestige rather than poverty. The spatial geography of the cathedral expressed rank and generosity as those who "contributed liberally" were "seated commodiously."⁷⁶ In the 1720s, when only two collections were taken by the Sons of the Clergy, it was apparently the "Ladies" who contributed at the rehearsal, with the remainder donated "at the Bason" (presumably by the gentlemen) during dinner.⁷⁷ Women continued to be associated with the rehearsal, an event similar to a concert and without the male weight of clerical and City trappings so evident at the anniversary.⁷⁸ In 1782, John Bacon, secretary to the stewards, reported that "some of the first Ladies in the Kingdom" had attended.⁷⁹ Women were not, however, restricted to the rehearsal. At the 1795 anniversary "the Ladies in particular were numerous, fashionable and beautiful, attracted by the excellence of the Music with a flattering assurance from an advertisement in the *Pub: Papers* that the Family of the Oranges would honor the Performance with their atten-

⁷³ Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 9 May 1780; James Warren, *A Sermon Preached at the Anniversary Meeting of the Sons of the Clergy . . .* (1728) (London, [1778]), app., p. 28.

⁷⁴ Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 8 March 1775.

⁷⁵ For example, *Public Advertiser* (10 May 1753); *Public Advertiser* (18 February 1762), Magdalen-House Charity (advertisement); *Public Advertiser* (23 May 1775), Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children (advertisement); Walpole, *Correspondence*, 9:273-74, on his visit to the Magdalen-House Chapel.

⁷⁶ *Public Advertiser* (5 April 1775).

⁷⁷ *Daily Post* (11 December 1724); *London Journal* (17 February 1727-28); Warren, *Sermon*, p. 26.

⁷⁸ Cox, *Bridging the Gap*, pp. 76-77.

⁷⁹ Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 14 May 1782.

dance; but did not.”⁸⁰ In a complex configuration of gender and race that marked the difference of the patriotic and benevolent British man, ladies were akin to other exotic visitors also attracted by music. In an episode that folded together two spectacles—that of the noble savage and the exhibition of benevolence—the “two chiefs from the East Indies . . . sat in the Bishop of London’s throne. They expressed much Reverence & Awe at the performance & seem’d beyond measure pleased.”⁸¹ Bacon’s minutes are valuable for their comments on the congregations at both events during the 1780s and 1790s—“genteel,” “numerous,” “company thin,” “respectable,” “brilliant,” “select,” “splendid”—words repeated in newspaper reports of the meetings.⁸² He thought publicity attracted women. But charities and eminent male patrons (who, unlike women, were named in reports) also had a symbiotic relationship with the press, a relationship that grew increasingly sophisticated in the circulation of benevolence, status, and money.

In 1712, the charity school trustees had rejected advertising on the general grounds that it attracted the wrong sort of people and because the sexton had the same name as a “player.”⁸³ By the second half of the century, when charities put their names to plays, such scruples were long gone. Indeed from the early eighteenth century, charities made extensive use of newspapers to announce special occasions, and increasingly they, and those who wanted their business, used the press to announce special occasions, call meetings, convey expectations of appropriate behavior, approach governors, and solicit favors.⁸⁴ In 1727,

⁸⁰ Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 7 May 1795.

⁸¹ Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 15 May 1781; for the Turkish ambassador’s attendance at the 1798 anniversary, see Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 10 May 1798.

⁸² Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 9 May 1780 (“genteel to a degree”); 4 February 1783 (“very numerous and respectable company”); 6 March 1788 (“numerous Assemblage of the first Persons of Rank”); 14 May 1789 (“brilliant”); 18 May 1790 (“select”); 16 May 1793 (“splendid”); 5 May 1795 (“company thin”); *Public Advertiser* (10 May 1765) (“many reputable Citizens”); *London Chronicle* (13–15 May 1777) (“a very respectable and brilliant audience”); *Daily Universal Register* (11 May 1787) (“a pretty numerous assemblage of Ladies and Gentlemen”); *The Times* (15 May 1793) (“a very numerous and respectable audience”); *The Times* (21 May 1794) (“we never witnessed so large or so respectable an assemblage of all ranks of people on the like occasion as yesterday”).

⁸³ Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/1, 21 May 1712; *SPCK Early Eighteenth-Century Archives*, pt. A, vol. 6, 13 November 1712, p. 33.

⁸⁴ For example, *SPCK Early Eighteenth-Century Archives*, pt. A, Minutes, vol. 1, 8 June 1704, p. 294; *Daily Post* (11 December 1721), Sons of the Clergy (advertisement); *Public Advertiser* (5 April 1753), Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children (advertisement); *Public Advertiser* (10 July 1754), London Hospital (advertisement); *Public Advertiser* (18 September 1754), London Hospital (ad-

the Sons of the Clergy placed six notices of the forthcoming anniversary in four different papers; in 1744, they paid for nine such advertisements in the *Daily Post* alone.⁸⁵ Officials, such as Bacon, planted information designed to whip up a good attendance, and institutions commonly published collection totals, a means of emphasizing prestige, communicating with donors, and demonstrating accountability.⁸⁶ Through advertisements and correspondence to newspapers, through published accounts and sermons, charities reached (and gathered) wider, unknown audiences created by print culture, and exploited an intersection between print and the urban spaces of tavern and coffeehouses: places where newspapers were read, tickets to anniversaries and benefits sold, and the benevolent gathered.⁸⁷ Through these spaces charities were connected with other social networks. The London and Westminster charity school trustees met in the Queen's Arms, St. Paul's Churchyard, as did a 6d. card club and the "Free and Easy under the Rose" political club.⁸⁸ Yet as so much recent historiography concerned with the Habermasian public sphere has demonstrated, women's relationship with eighteenth-century public culture was complex precisely because of the intersections between print and both the homosocial male world of urban space such as taverns, and those other urban places, such as theaters, assemblies, and circulating libraries, where women were conspicuous participants.⁸⁹ Where

vertisement); *Public Advertiser* (8 March 1775), Society for Discharge and Relief of Persons imprisoned for Small Debts (advertisement); *Public Advertiser* (6 May 1762), Sons of the Clergy (advertisement); *Public Advertiser* (3 October 1775), John Rawlinson to the governors, etc., of the City of London Lying-In Hospital (advertisement); Borsay, *Medicine and Charity in Georgian Bath*, pp. 43–44.

⁸⁵ Warren, *Sermon*, p. 27; *Daily Post* (4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, and 17 April 1744).

⁸⁶ *The Times* (22 May 1797): "It has been suggested to the Stewards of the Anniversary Meeting of the Sons of the Clergy, that there is a probability that the Prince and Princess of Wirttemberg may honour the Cathedral Church of St. Paul with their presence on Wednesday next" (they did not attend); Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 24 February 1778; *Public Advertiser* (18 January 1775), Society for Discharge and Relief of Persons imprisoned for Small Debts (advertisement); *Public Advertiser* (26 October 1762), the Asylum (advertisement); Wilson, *Sense of the People*, pp. 74–75; Borsay, "'Persons of Honour and Reputation'"; *London Journal* (4 April 1730).

⁸⁷ Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago, 1998); see, e.g., *Public Advertiser* (28 March 1775), Hospitals for the Small-Pox and Inoculation (advertisement).

⁸⁸ J. Brasbridge, *The Fruits of Experience; or, Memoir of Joseph Brasbridge, Written in His 80th year* (London, 1824), pp. 40, 50–51.

⁸⁹ Habermas, *Structural Transformation*. There is a substantial literature on gender and the public sphere. See Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime," *History and Theory* 31 (1992): 1–20; Joan Landes, "The Public and the Private Sphere: A Feminist Reconsideration" in *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse*, edited by J. Meehan (London and New York, 1995), pp. 91–116; Lawrence E. Klein, "Gender

exactly were women located in the structures of charitable display and sociability?

The charity schools' anniversary worked through the spoken and printed word and through techniques of enactment to emphasize hierarchical social relations that were simultaneously economic, political, and spiritual. Gender emerges from surviving records as a much less prominent marker. When apparent, it is one-dimensional, merely denoting the presence of men or women. For example, those troublesome mothers were evident and then distanced as far as possible; in no sense were the trustees' visual and verbal claims to benevolence complicated by reference to another category of benefactors, female supporters. Yet the presence and behavior of upper-class women at other charity events suggest that the charitable dynamic was driven by sexual as well as social difference. In the 1760s, William Hanbury found in his pursuit of grand charitable schemes that "beautiful ladies . . . occasioned the meeting to be afterwards much talked of on their own account."⁹⁰ As we shall see, uneasiness about the relationship between charity and urban commercial spaces was personified in the form of female entrepreneurs and effeminate men. To what extent, therefore, were references to women emblematic, designed simply to invoke a conceptual link between women and luxury, or between women, imagination, and pity?⁹¹ How was men's philanthropy shaped by social interactions; did the Addisonian ideal of women's civilizing presence in polite society extend to the charitable domain? To address questions such as these we must return to the metaphors of consumption and examine dinners and conviviality.

* * *

Two different groups of men attended anniversary dinners: charity officials and a wider group of supporters or diners who bought tickets for the occasion. The charity schools' anniversary dinner was limited to the first group; the Sons of the Clergy Feast aimed at the second. Absent from dinners were the poor themselves (a contrast with medieval fraternity feasts) and the diners' personal servants who were specifically excluded.⁹² Once indoors, feasts were never a spectacle of the open sort

and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29 (1995): 97–109.

⁹⁰ William Hanbury, *The History of the Rise and Progress of the Charitable Foundations of Church Langton* (London, 1767), p. 81.

⁹¹ Solkin, *Painting for Money*, pp. 165, 187; *Gentleman's Magazine* 36 (January 1766): 3–5.

⁹² Rosser, "Going to the Fraternity Feast," pp. 436–37; Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 8 March 1775; servants were also excluded from other charities' dinners; see, e.g., *Public Advertiser* (26 April 1775), the Asylum (advertisement).

enacted at church or by processions of “objects” but, in common with other gatherings in taverns or livery halls, were restricted to a closed audience of participants. Eating and drinking were at the heart of things. Associated activities might include processions to the hall or tavern where the dinner was held, toasting, singing, music, and a collection in support of the charity.⁹³ As James Epstein has shown, dining was a powerful means of mobilizing symbol, of inventing and deploying tradition.⁹⁴ The Sons of the Clergy were proficient in all of this. After the anniversary service, the lord mayor, archbishop of Canterbury, bishops, aldermen, and clergy went in procession to Merchant Taylor’s Hall. Each year, the stewards borrowed the City plate to embellish the anniversary dinner. They printed between nine hundred and a thousand tickets; over two hundred sat down to dinner in 1783.⁹⁵ The stewards claimed considerable authority: the location, guests, and corporation plate invoked the power, history, dignity, and status of the City, Church, and nobility, and of ancient guild and fraternity traditions. In providing the dinner and waiting on the tables, stewards not only increased the collection but performed as hosts the ritual of “ancient hospitality,” a concept with considerable currency in the eighteenth century as a sign of lost social distinctions and order.⁹⁶ Through such means, the symbolic power claimed was that of governance, a point only too evident when the lord mayor’s departing party forgot to take his mace and sword with them, and Bacon “felt all the authority of a Lord Mayor and acted accordingly.”⁹⁷

Conceptually related to authority was “conviviality.” Every year Bacon recorded the expansive feelings expressed by participants at the Sons of the Clergy rehearsal dinner restricted to musicians and stewards. In 1775, “the Stewards adjourned from the Church to the Queens Arms to dinner; where they entertained Dr Howard and the Gentlemen of the three Choirs and much Glee and Unanimity appeared.”⁹⁸ Bacon was particularly forthcoming about philanthropic conviviality, about the necessary conjunction of unanimity (harmony) with pleasure and facilitated

⁹³ For example, *Public Advertiser* (17 February 1752), Small-Pox Hospital (advertisement); *London Chronicle* (20–22 April 1769), London Hospital on the Sons of the Clergy discontinuing music at the hall in 1753, “as being thought not only useless, but disagreeable,” see Warren, *Sermon*, p. 34.

⁹⁴ Epstein, “Radical Dining.”

⁹⁵ Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 6 March 1788, 22 May 1783; dinner was provided for 240 at the 1779 anniversary dinner of the London and Westminster charity schools; see Charity Schools minutes, NS/SP/1/4, 6 May 1779.

⁹⁶ Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*; John Nicholl, *Ancient British Hospitality* (sermon preached before the Society of Ancient Britons) (London, 1741).

⁹⁷ Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 16 May 1793.

⁹⁸ Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 9 May 1775.

by food, drink, singing, toasting, and condescension, all in a charitable purpose.⁹⁹ When the marquess of Carmarthen left the rehearsal dinner in 1781, it was “to the great mortification of those that remained who could only drown their regret in a Bumper to the health of their convivial President.”¹⁰⁰ Although an end—a pleasure—in itself, good humor brought other benefits too. Bacon worried that quarrels, especially between the musicians, would spoil the charity’s reputation and fund-raising. In short, the performance of benevolence as a socially desirable goal coexisted with, but was not subordinated to, institutional cohesion.¹⁰¹

For at least a day or an evening, anniversary celebrations created or consolidated communities: of officials, charitable diners, Anglicans, the Welsh, patriots, Christians.¹⁰² As the homosocial character of the dinners and the language of conviviality demonstrate, this was a social relationship inflected by class and gender, which is why the girls of St. Saviour’s mentioned earlier were not being convivial with their mutton and spinach, but the ladies at St. Paul’s potentially were in their display of condescension and enjoyment. Bacon, however, never used this term to describe ladies, a point indicating its male focus, close association with intimacy, food, and clubs, and distance from secular, or even radical, sociability in which women did join.¹⁰³

It is hard to reconstruct the class of the Sons of the Clergy diners, or indeed of those who attended other institutions’ advertised anniversary dinners at 5s. a ticket midcentury, with a collection taken in the hall.¹⁰⁴ Collectively, the Sons of the Clergy diners contributed more than was collected in the cathedral at either the rehearsal or anniversary; generically they were known as “gentlemen.” They were certainly less eminent than the stewards and other named dignitaries at the church; many were probably clergymen.¹⁰⁵ However, attendance did not simply offer

⁹⁹ Hierarchy and fraternity were not necessarily contradictory. See, Rosser, “Going to the Fraternity Feast,” p. 444; for a different explanation, see Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 278.

¹⁰⁰ Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 15 May 1781; see also 16 May 1786.

¹⁰¹ Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 16 May 1793 (Bacon noted that it was fortunate that a dispute between the musicians occurred on the day following the anniversary “or such a Discord would have unharmonized the Day”); Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 11–12; see also Phythian-Adams, *Desolation of a City*, p. 110.

¹⁰² On sociability, see Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 267–83.

¹⁰³ Epstein, “Radical Dining,” p. 286.

¹⁰⁴ *Public Advertiser* (26 April 1753).

¹⁰⁵ Key, “Political Culture,” p. 239. Collection totals for 1775 were as follows: £210.16.3 at the rehearsal, £211.10.3 at the anniversary service, and £444.17.3 at the feast. Eminent supporters probably reserved their donations until the feast. Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 9 May 1775, 11 May 1775.

ticket holders a chance to mix with social superiors or provide officials with a means to secure consensus.¹⁰⁶ It also, like other ritualized activity, brought and induced participants into appropriate behavior, as benevolent, convivial men. This is clear from two incidents both of which were reported in newspapers, again suggesting the reflexive relationship between charities and the press and its potential to complicate through publicity the demarcations between visible and closed activities. The first episode occurred at the Sons of the Clergy dinner in 1717 and was reported as follows:

After the Feast was over, a Collection of Money was made for putting out poor Clergymens Children Apprentices; some gave five, other three, and other two Guineas, and the least that was given was a Crown; but an Irishman being there put 6d. into the Plate; upon which he was desired to walk out, and being searched by the Servitors, they found in his Hat under his Arm a Bottle of French Wine, and thereupon they carried and exposed him to all the Company, and afterwards kick'd him out of the Hall.¹⁰⁷

Charitable dining carried expectations of appropriate behavior in which sociability required generosity. Transgression was policed with humiliation and violence, heightened by xenophobia and perhaps by the climate of political instability: the Irishman was brought back into the company to be kicked out.¹⁰⁸

The second episode took place at the dinner of the Lying-in Charity for Married Women in 1764. "Some gentlemen beginning, as is too commonly the case, to sing indecent songs" were "genteelly" reproved and "soon after retired, seemingly disgusted, from the Hall."¹⁰⁹ In this instance, moral reproof has replaced violence; boundaries are no longer maintained through actual crossings and recrossings, but are preserved metaphorically. The singing gentlemen's offence demonstrates that donation was only one component of benevolence. Although it would be a mistake to read into this contrast some refinement of charity (drunkenness and quarrels also occurred in late-century philanthropy),¹¹⁰ these reports draw attention to the significance of conviviality and its regulation by other men. Indecency and rowdiness may have been checked at the Lying-in Charity dinner, but the benevolent—polite—subjects charities

¹⁰⁶ For example, Croxson, "Public and Private Faces," pp. 141–42.

¹⁰⁷ *Weekly-Journal or Saturday's-Post* (7 December 1717).

¹⁰⁸ Minutes do not survive for this period; in 1741, however, the stewards rejected French wine because of war with France. See Warren, *Sermon*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁹ *London Chronicle* (21–24 April 1764); see also *Public Advertiser* (6 May 1762) on Sons of the Clergy.

¹¹⁰ Sons of the Clergy minutes, A/FSC/1, 14 May 1782, 16 May 1793.

worked to produce were potentially problematic for two specific reasons that distinguished charitable conviviality from sociability in other contexts.¹¹¹ First, ideas about proper financial management of the poor grew increasingly demanding as the cost of parish poor relief rose. By the later eighteenth-century commentators routinely stressed the virtues of prudence, regularity, and foresight, and recommended new strategies to make the poor help themselves.¹¹² Any philanthropic endeavor, including processions, eating, and drinking, was likely to be assessed by such standards. Second, the complex eighteenth-century configuration of gender and sociability held particular dangers—luxury, effeminacy, and commerce—for benevolent men themselves and for their ambitions to discipline the poor into a type of virile frugality. During the 1770s, these difficulties and debates contributed to a broader perception of crisis—sexual, fiscal, military, cultural. This context raised the stakes by suggesting that far from being the antidote to national weakness, charity was now part of a general social malaise.¹¹³

Supporters of the Sons of the Clergy faced such problems in 1777 when they defended the festival against a letter in the *Public Advertiser* criticizing the expense of the feast and its “voluptuous eating and drinking.”¹¹⁴ While reminiscent of seventeenth-century complaints about livery dinners or attacks on parochial gluttony, the attack by “J.H.” (Jonas Hanway) invoked distinctly eighteenth-century terms.¹¹⁵ He presented himself as “a Man, a Subject, and a Christian,” the three positions that the diners assumed in their homosocial exclusivity, and in their patriotic and religious ceremony. But for J.H. the dinner was not Christian largesse. It had none of the authority Bacon asserted; it was “unmanly Extravagance.” J.H. appealed to the clergy to “shew us that there is more Honour and Satisfaction in supporting the Dignity [of] Humanity, Reason and Religion, than in the highest Exhibition of the modern *puerile Splendour of a Pantheon*, or a Cornelys!” He invoked, as the antithesis of manly virtue, the Pantheon concert rooms and Theresa Cornelys,

¹¹¹ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997), pp. 102–7.

¹¹² Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, pp. 135–62; “The Police: VIII,” *Oxford Magazine* (February 1771).

¹¹³ Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727–1783* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 567–613.

¹¹⁴ The correspondence can be found in the *Public Advertiser*: “J.H.” (8 May 1777); “An old Steward of the Sons of the Clergy, and a Layman” (12 May 1777); “A Layman” (14 May 1777). For material identifying “J.H.,” see Hanway, *Defects of Police*, pp. 275–77. Warren also entered into the debate in his *Sermon* at the 1778 anniversary (pp. 22–24).

¹¹⁵ Archer, *History of the Haberdashers’ Company*, pp. 126, 130–32; [Ned Ward], *The Parish Gutt’lers: or, the Humours of a Select Vestry* (London, 1722).

impresario of Carlisle House. He thus pitted charity against two key markers of that urban commercial culture and luxury that women seemed to dominate.¹¹⁶ Indeed, the *Public Advertiser* printed J.H.'s letter alongside "Masquerade Intelligence," which reported a "grand Masquerade" at the Pantheon and singled out a Miss Rayner for particular notice. J.H.'s complaint against the Sons of the Clergy seems to touch the activities of other charities as well. The Middlesex Hospital, for instance, held its 1762 and subsequent anniversary dinners in Carlisle House, and in 1771 Mrs. Cornelys retained the "decorations of the late Masquerade" as a "compliment" to the governors at their feast.¹¹⁷ His criticism may also appear to come closer to the Sons of the Clergy anniversary service and rehearsal, which, unlike the feast, were embellished by ladies of fashion. However, the concept of effeminacy floated free of specifically sexed bodies to indicate moments of particular disorder in the social and moral fabric, excesses that Hanway keenly observed in a variety of contexts.¹¹⁸ His critique therefore points to the instability of charitable forms. It attributed failures in charity not to female participation, but to failures of a particular form of elite masculinity (that of the stewards) judged according to its ability to police the poor.

J.H.'s letter suggested the shifting problematic of luxury, commerce, and status in defining "the public": were Hanway or the benevolent diners closer to the model of patriotic, moral men? Whereas Solkin's study of the Foundling Hospital suggests how the problem might be resolved, this incident, in which a Russia merchant, the leading philanthropist of his time, crossed one of the most eminent charities, reveals disjunctions in the meanings of masculinity, sociability, and charity itself.¹¹⁹ What was an "elegant" entertainment: the Marine Society's prudent fare without confectionary or the Sons of the Clergy's lavish spread costing three times as much?¹²⁰ Hanway was less confident than his contemporary, Hume, for example, that luxury, pleasure, and polish increased humanitarian feeling. He was also more concerned about the moment at which luxury became unacceptable, arguing that charitable acts made particular demands: "We seek for an occasion of being charitable, pious

¹¹⁶ McVeigh, *Concert Life in London*, pp. 14–15, 58; Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, pp. 574–75.

¹¹⁷ *Public Advertiser* (24 April 1762). The hospital returned to this venue in subsequent years. See, e.g., *Public Advertiser* (5 June 1777); *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (16 May 1771).

¹¹⁸ For example, Jonas Hanway, *A Journal of Eight Days Journey from Portsmouth to Kingston upon Thames, . . . to Which is Added, an essay on Tea . . .* (London, 1756).

¹¹⁹ Solkin, *Painting for Money*, pp. 78 ff.

¹²⁰ Hanway, *Defects of Police*, pp. 276–77.

and humane: we wish to teach the people frugality and industry, rather than shew them a very bad example."¹²¹ Hanway's objections were intensified not just by an accommodation between charity and the methods of commerce (an accommodation he himself encouraged), but by an accompanying conceptual shift that confused the distinctions between spiritual and worldly pleasure, between solidity and artifice. Whereas early eighteenth-century preachers at the charity schools' anniversary had distinguished between the "vanities" of the theater and "Christian Entertainment," the difference was less reliable as a guide to moral behavior midcentury. For example, Hanway's own Marine Society presented an opera at Ranelagh; musicians raised money for "decay'd" colleagues; and charity was used to justify more dubious ventures.¹²² Furthermore, as a *display* of the true and authentic self, benevolence was potentially compromised by the artificiality of performance, a tension increased by the vogue for sentimental charity in the 1760s. Complication was compounded by an enduring framework, employed early in the century by the *Spectator*, for example, which opposed charity to activities it associated with women such as fashionable clothes, luxury, and theatergoing.¹²³ Thus tensions over the exercise of charity, and over the meanings and social location of benevolence were easily presented in gendered terms, a move that raised the moral stakes. Significantly, Mandeville had presented the fashion for charity schools as analogous to that for "Hoop'd Petticoats" and satirized vain and vulgar governors "commended by the women."¹²⁴ Such difficulties were in turn part of a broader cultural debate in which both sides cut away the ground on which charitable custom operated. John Brown's *Estimate* (1757) collapsed the critical distance that had made moral discrimination possible, objecting that "SHOW and PLEASURE are the main Objects of Pursuit" in an age characterized by "a vain, *luxurious*, and *selfish* EFFEMINACY."¹²⁵ Those who pro-

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 277; John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (Baltimore, 1977), pp. 119–22.

¹²² Kennett, "Sermon," pp. 51–52; Stanhope, "Sermon," p. 45; see also Snape, "Sermon" (1711) in *Twenty Five Sermons*, p. 191; Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police*, p. 80; Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics and Society, 1793–1815* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 137–39. In the 1760s, the Society of Musicians attempted to circumvent the bishop of London's restrictions on theatrical performances in Passion week by appealing to Archbishop Secker, president of the Sons of the Clergy, and hinting that in return they would perform for nothing for that charity. See Lambeth Palace Library, Misc 1121, pp. 85–88.

¹²³ *Spectator*, no. 294 (6 February 1712), and no. 372 (7 May 1712).

¹²⁴ Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, pp. 313, 321.

¹²⁵ John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*, 3d ed. (London, 1757), pp. 66–67.

moted the idea that commerce was a means to refinement and social good, also eroded distinctions between fashion and virtue, although with a different end in view.¹²⁶ Philanthropists therefore had to find other ways to signal their Christian intent. And at the same time they had to guarantee appropriate sexual difference, above all manliness, and ensure the preservation of social distance as it was enshrined in the eighteenth-century principle that the poor should enjoy fewer comforts than the rich.

Consequently, supporters of the Festival of the Sons of the Clergy faced specific difficulties: first, in defending their activities against charges of luxury as excess and, second, in claiming maximum profit, philanthropic feeling, and social propriety. They responded with two very different arguments. The first appealed to Christian tradition, asserting that the dinner was not as expensive as Hanway claimed and that the leftovers were given to the poor. This strategy confirmed a related point that an “Assembly of the clergy” (an all-male gathering) was indeed different from other forms of entertainment (such as mixed company at the Pantheon). The second, argued from the opposite direction, claimed that such was the current dissipation that the “Garb of the Times” and “Influence and Allurement” (coded references to luxury, echoing Brown’s own terminology) were necessary if the charity was to do its work. It is interesting to note, however, that they did not take a third path, the discourse of sentiment, which blurred the differences between theatricality and authenticity and attracted powerful complaints that it made men effeminate. This strategy was adopted by charities such as the Magdalen Hospital for penitent prostitutes (another Hanway initiative), which grew fashionable in the 1760s through its carefully calculated performance of merit.¹²⁷

The skirmish in the *Public Advertiser* produced some odd paradoxes: a supporter of the Sons of the Clergy defending what was an old charitable (and indeed civic) form as a specific adaptation to modern times and fashion, and Hanway’s seemingly contradictory positions. Such apparent confusions emerged from a broader pattern within charitable activity. Spectacle and ceremony were commonly used throughout the century to promote specific charity institutions and attract the right sort of supporters. Although the forms were durable, the content, the precise elements, required continual restatement and negotiation in response to particular circumstances, the demands of different audiences and broader discursive shifts in poor relief policy. In institutional charities’ relation to civic space (livery halls, taverns, and coffeehouses) and

¹²⁶ Solkin, *Painting for Money*, pp. 30–37.

¹²⁷ Lloyd, “‘Pleasure’s Golden Bait.’”

their use of print culture to communicate with their audiences, gender emerges, first, in demarcating specific audiences for particular places (women at church, but not at dinner). Second, it was a constitutive element in the definition of who was and what made the benevolent subject: the convivial, charitable, well-regulated man.¹²⁸ But the specific attributes of the benevolent subject were neither fixed nor unanimously agreed upon during the century. The presence of women in urban commercial and fashionable culture, the complexity of women's relation to public affairs, and debate about proper forms of masculinity, produced instability evident in assertions of gentility, benevolence, effeminacy, and luxury. In short, changes in the cultural economy of charity forced at least one Sons of the Clergy supporter to redefine custom as fashion, a strategy that short-circuited Hanway's allegations of unmanly conduct by conceding the point to save the broader argument (that the charity was as effective as it could be). These tensions are also evident in Hanway's efforts to enforce social and sexual boundaries. His perennial concern with masculinity—his attempt to encourage martial vigor with the Marine Society, regulate sexual excess through the Magdalen Hospital, and police both social and domestic life through conduct literature—was difficult to reconcile with versions of commerce and fashion that revitalized charity while also appearing to foster luxury in its most troubling aspects.

Brown's *Estimate* haunts this debate. But his frequently quoted characterization of luxury as gender reversal suggests another question. Brown claimed that "the Sexes have now little other apparent Distinction, beyond that of Person and Dress . . . The one Sex having advanced into *Boldness*, as the other have sunk into *Effeminacy*."¹²⁹ Among its other effects, therefore, did instability around the meanings of benevolence also open spaces for female participation in institutional charity? Although this engagement has been generally regarded as minimal, it is perhaps possible to extend the definition of activity to include audiences and congregations where sometimes women held special ladies' tickets, but often attended on exactly the same terms as the majority of male supporters.¹³⁰ Convention could be breached. Hannah More dined in the Adelphi in 1776: "It was a particular occasion—an annual meeting, where none but men are usually asked."¹³¹ Evidence of more formal

¹²⁸ Maureen Harkin, "Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*: Sympathy, Women and Emulation," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 24 (1995): 175–90.

¹²⁹ Brown, *Estimate*, p. 51.

¹³⁰ For example, *Public Advertiser* (28 March 1753), Middlesex Hospital (advertisement); *General Advertiser* (28 February 1752), Smallpox Hospital (advertisement).

¹³¹ Hannah More to one of her family, 1776, *The Letters of Hannah More, Selected with an Introduction by R. Brimley Johnson* (London, 1925), p. 30.

arrangements is at times unclear. In the 1750s, the Sons of the Clergy advertised specific collections to apprentice poor girls organized by “Ladies of Distinction,” but no further details survive to establish the precise nature of this initiative.¹³² Was it simply a remnant of the earlier custom of collecting from the ladies at the rehearsal or did it represent the effort of specific women?

One provincial example from 1794 indicates that women could invoke symbol and ceremony at an institutional level, that they were not necessarily metaphorical or token presences. Catharine Cappe, a Unitarian, followed charitable custom in marshalling the girls of her Female Friendly Society, together with prospective members from various charity schools, to walk through the streets of York, led by officials and benefactors (all women). This, argued Cappe, would attach the young women to the society. The committee (all women) commanded visual argument in ordering that the steps of York Minster be kept clear so that the girls would be “seen to advantage.” Members and officers wore distinguishing green ribbons in their hats; the Minster service was followed by a distribution of tea and cake back at the female spinning school paid for by the benefactors. School masters, as well as mistresses, joined the parade.¹³³ It is significant, of course, that Cappe’s charity was a wholly female endeavor with specific adaptations (ribbons and cake in place of wands and wine).¹³⁴ Yet this did not necessarily neutralize the more radical implications of these women taking to the streets in pursuit of the public good. This is not an anachronistic reading of events. Cappe herself framed her work in terms of rivalry between the sexes: “the long protracted, and . . . unimportant controversy, respecting the physical superiority of the Sexes, will now, I hope, give way to a nobler contest.”¹³⁵ She campaigned for a role in charities established or run by men: the York Lunatic Asylum and the York Grey Coat Girls’ School. The Female Friendly Society met in two large rooms at Merchant Taylor’s Hall in York where, in the tradition of innumerable philanthropic institutions,

¹³² *Public Advertiser* (1 May 1753): “At the Desire of several Ladies of Distinction, there will be a charitable Collection, for the Benefit of poor Clergymens Daughters, upon the Delivery of the Tickets going into the Choir.” This is later subsumed into the more general statement that the collection “is appropriated for apprenticing the Sons and Daughters of necessitous Clergymen.” See *Public Advertiser* (28 April 1775).

¹³³ “Arrangements for the Annual Meeting,” York Ladies Female Friendly Society, York City Archives, Acc 50 YL/FF:12, 14 May 1794; Catharine Cappe, *An Account of Two Charity Schools for the Education of Girls: And of a Female Friendly Society in York: Interspersed with Reflections on Charity Schools and Friendly Societies in General* (York, 1800), pp. 71–72.

¹³⁴ See also More to Wilberforce, 1791, *The Letters of Hannah More*, pp. 171–73.

¹³⁵ Catharine Cappe, *Observations on Charity Schools, Female Friendly Societies, and Other Subjects Connected with the Views of the Ladies’ Committee* (York, 1805), p. ix.

the committee hung a list of the honorary (supporting) members for the duration of the meeting.¹³⁶

Cappe's own publicity confirms the importance of her studied intervention into public affairs through a display of female philanthropy. But she was careful to define the nature of this engagement. Following an established tradition, she distinguished herself from those other denizens of public space, ladies of fashion. She began life, she recorded in her autobiography, with "an aspiring temper," a great love of society, and a desire to figure in it. Smallpox and the death of her father deprived her of the requisite physiognomy and finances, thus saving her from boundless ambition and vanity and directing her to charitable causes.¹³⁷ In this narrative, charity became a form of regulation. Cappe asserted that women were capable of self-discipline, but through distancing themselves from commercial, fashionable society.¹³⁸ It is tempting to speculate that Cappe too was aware of the gendered fault-line running through the charitable domain, a fissure where fashion, commerce, and morality pulled apart. As a woman and a Unitarian she had to define herself against those elegant ladies who graced the Sons of Clergy anniversary and so avoid the dangers of luxury and intrusion which that association brought. Hannah More traveled a similar route, from literature and the stage to philanthropy, a journey in which the skills of the former were redeployed rather than renounced.¹³⁹ In using the same representational practices as the London charity school trustees, organizers of the York Female Friendly Society anniversary revealed how such demonstrations were founded in very particular understandings of social and sexual difference.

* * *

In 1757, male supporters of the Marine Society dined on "truly English" food and then, accompanied by the boys and as canons fired, they marched to the Theatre Royal Drury Lane to join a "brilliant audience" for a fund-raising performance of *The Suspicious Husband*.¹⁴⁰ Immediate circumstances (the Seven Years' War; commercial entertainment) and discourses (population; male vigor; politeness) shaped the Society's activities. But they were also part of a longer urban tradition

¹³⁶ Cappe, *Observations*, p. 170n.

¹³⁷ Catharine Cappe, *Memoirs of the Late Mrs Catharine Cappe, Written by Herself* (London, 1822), p. 392.

¹³⁸ For conceptual problems concerning female sentiment and virtue, see Harkin, "Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*."

¹³⁹ M. G. Jones, *Hannah More* (Cambridge, 1952).

¹⁴⁰ *Public Advertiser* (3 May 1757).

of processions and beef. Like much of the evidence already discussed, these philanthropic efforts suggest two conclusions.

First, from the early decades of the century, charities' exploitation of print culture, urban spaces, and discourses of pleasurable association progressively extended their reach and administrative techniques. Advertising in newspapers brought new audiences to charity performances (whether in theaters or churches) and was flexible enough to respond to demands for increasing levels of financial and social accountability. Dinners and anniversary services became hybrid occasions, absorbing meanings, from Pacific voyages to patriotism, appropriating behavior including elegance, gentility, and concertgoing. Fashion and a concept of "the public" were extensively and contradictorily invoked in discussions that deployed these associations to constitute the meanings of benevolence. But this permeability presented difficulties too. What were the limits of this engagement with fashion and money? (A question posed most powerfully in terms of luxury and effeminacy.) What were the social qualifications for benevolence? The London charity schools' anniversary presented a beguiling vision of social relations and productivity, in part because such problems were generally contained. The trustees policed the children to present a spectacle of innocence, frugality, and social deference, a view on which fears of Jacobitism at the beginning of the century and of the French Revolution at the end set a premium.

But benevolence also required an appropriate definition of the "subject," both male and female. It was here that particular trouble lay. The problem surfaced in praise for charitable scenes as more magnificent than ballrooms and courts.¹⁴¹ It hovered throughout the century in discussion of appropriate behavior at churches and feasts. It intensified in the 1770s to produce a commentary on elite masculinity. Hanway recognized its implications for definitions of benevolence, merit, and public benefit; Cappe employed it to position herself as a philanthropic expert. Both developed their arguments by censuring fashionable ladies. However, these women were also significant as donors, publicists, and participants. Their presence, both real and metaphorical, therefore cautions against dichotomous readings of eighteenth-century charitable activity in terms of gender, class, or public and private spheres.¹⁴² Instead, the evidence indicates the importance of those fluid and often provisional relationships created at particular events and in various spaces. These suggest how institutions and individuals converged in different orderings of benevolence. In 1757, the Marine Society's dinner, procession, and play created

¹⁴¹ For example, *London Chronicle* (12–14 June 1783) on charity schools.

¹⁴² Klein, "Gender and the Public/Private Distinction."

very different social groupings and emphases in the course of a day: at one stage, joining the boys and governors in an assertion of manly patriotism; at another, promoting fashionable, heterosocial, brilliance. Each distinctive element of the proceedings aligned the society with other charities following that model. These shifting configurations open to view the dynamics of charity as an integral part of eighteenth-century cultural practice and the mechanisms through which it articulated changing understandings of poverty and benevolence.

Second, anniversaries and benefits were part of a persistent pattern in which walking, eating, singing, toasting, watching, and praying were as significant as words in conveying the meanings of charity and of associated social values. It is only when this is firmly established that it is possible to detect the elaborate range of charitable activity in eighteenth-century London and the importance of enactment in creating and consolidating social meaning. Far from suppressing ritualized activity, commercial society presented new opportunities for it. In demarcating anniversary events from other sorts of business, officials organized processions, concerts, dinners, and church services to draw participants into the proceedings, so that they experienced benevolence. But this was only achieved through a process of negotiation, assertion, and, on occasion, conflict. The distinction between everyday activity and philanthropic display opens an analytic space in which it is possible to examine the complex, often fragmented ways men and women came to understand their obligations and pleasures and what it meant to be British and benevolent. It also raises questions about how and to what extent these experiences were translated into other social contexts. For however much Bacon's conviviality differed from the charity school trustees' solemnity and Cappe's sexual contest, all three claimed, quite literally, that charity could create social relationships.