Bastards and Foundlings
Zunshine, Lisa

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On April 24, 1750, William Hogarth put his painting *The March to Finchley* (see figure 2) up for auction, the proceeds from which were to go to the London Foundling Hospital. What happened next, according to the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, was that a “certain lady” discovered herself “the possessor of the fortunate number” and decided to present the painting to the Hospital. She was dissuaded, however, from doing so directly, “some person [having suggested] what door it would open to scandal, were any of her sex to make such a present.”

One possible rationale behind the prudent suggestion might have been the subject matter of the painting. The central characters in the painting are a handsome grenadier about to depart for battle, his jealous wife, and his young mistress. One of Hogarth’s friends, Justice Welsh, described the younger woman as “debauched, with child, and reduced to the miserable employ of selling ballads, who, with a look full of love, tenderness, and distress, casts up her eyes upon her undoer, and with tears descending down her cheeks, seems to say, ‘sure you cannot—will not leave me!’” The painting intended as a gift to the public charitable institution thus depicted a poor woman pregnant with an illegitimate child—a potential inmate of the same institution. Awkward as this circumstance appeared to be, it was not this awkwardness that informed the reaction to the generous lady’s initiative. In fact, we know that the lady (her name remaining unknown) handed *The March to Finchley* over to the artist, and Hogarth gave it to the Hospital in his own name; it was gladly accepted and proudly exhibited in the General Court Room. Thus it was specifically the gender of the donor, independently
from the dubious erotic charge of the painting, that provoked the fear of scandal in the auction participants. Notably, any mention of the lady philanthropist was erased from the two other contemporary accounts of the auction, one provided by the London Evening Post on May 1, 1750, the other by the Minutes of the Court of Governors on May 9. The London Evening Post reported:

Yesterday Mr. Hogarth’s Subscription was closed, 1843 Chances being subscribed for. The remaining Numbers from 1843 to 2000 were given by Mr. Hogarth to the Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of exposed and deserted young Children. At Two o’Clock the Box was open’d, and in the Presence of a great Number of Persons of Distinction, and the fortunate Chance was drawn, No. 1941, which belongs to the said Hospital; and the same Night Mr. Hogarth deliver’d the Picture to the Governors. His Grace the Duke of Ancaster offer’d them 2001. for it before it was taken away, but it was refus’d.3

According to the Court of Governors, “The Treasurer acquainted the
General Court, that Mr. Hogarth had presented the Hospital with the remainder of the tickets Mr. Hogarth had left, for the chance of the picture he had painted, of the *March to Finchley*, in the time of the late Rebellion; and that the fortunate number for the said picture being among the tickets, the Hospital had received the same picture."\(^4\)

Apparently, neither the *Post* nor the Court of Governors chose to mention that it was a “certain lady” who, upon drawing a “fortunate Chance,” decided to give up her prize for the benefit of the Hospital. In fact, the story was edited so carefully that there was no room left for the depiction of the generous outside donor; in the *Post*’s report, the winning number is said to turn up among the tickets belonging to “the same Hospital,” but the lady vanishes without a trace.

To appreciate the peculiarity of this story, we have to remember how assiduously the champions of the English infanticide prevention campaign had courted the support of gentlewomen at its early stages. Inspired by the prominent role played by women in the establishment and functioning of French, Italian, and Dutch foundling hospitals, the tireless Thomas Coram made the participation of Ladies of Quality a cornerstone of his anti-infanticide crusade.\(^5\) It was by his instigation that in 1735, twenty-one upper-class women signed a petition to the king about the need for a foundling hospital in London. This made it possible for Coram to start his next petition by pointing out “That many Ladys of Quality and Distinction [are] deeply touched with Concern for the frequent Murders committed on poor Miserable Infant Children at their Birth by their Cruel Parents to hide their Shame and for the Inhumane Custom of exposing New born children to Perish in the Streets.”\(^6\) Later Coram would claim that, in effect, the whole campaign for the opening of the Hospital had been the initiative of the ladies, who were subsequently supported in their noble undertaking by gentlemen.\(^7\) In November 1739, at a public ceremony inaugurating the official establishment of the new charity, Coram opened his speech with the following paean to the ladies: “It is with inexpressible pleasure, I now present your Grace, as the head of this noble and honourable Corporation, with his Majesty’s Royal Charter, for establishing an Hospital for exposed children, free of all expense, through the assistance of some compassionate great ladies, and other good persons.”\(^8\) The early history of the Foundling Hospital was thus marked by the commitment to include women and even go as far— at least rhetorically—as to present them as the primary moving force behind the establishment of this public charity. In light of this history, the account of the 1750 auction, with its fear of scandal surrounding the initiative of the anonymous
lady, looks like a puzzling aberration.

To unravel some parts of this puzzle, we have to reconstruct the cultural history of the London Foundling Hospital at mid-century, for it seems that the story of Hogarth’s painting was not an isolated accident; on the contrary, it was only too representative of the general exclusion of gentlewomen from a public role in the affairs of the Hospital starting in the 1740s. In what follows, I discuss several possible explanations for such exclusion, considering them in particular within the context of the recent feminist revisions of Jürgen Habermas’s paradigm of the bourgeois public sphere. I also show how the gender politics of the eighteenth-century infanticide prevention campaign influenced—and were influenced by—the works of contemporary fiction. Here I first consider briefly the reference to the Foundling Hospital in Tobias Smollett’s *Peregrine Pickle* (1751) and then discuss in detail the allusions to infanticide and illegitimacy in Samuel Richardson’s *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753–54). I argue that we could read Richardson’s portrayal of illegitimacy as indicative of his ambivalent take on the issue of female philanthropy. On the one hand, his novel appears to articulate emotional reasons behind the reluctance of Ladies of Quality to lend their names to the Hospital starting from the 1740s; on the other, *Grandison* stops short of giving to this reluctance an unqualified moral imprimatur. Instead, Richardson evokes a cultural fantasy in which the bastard children and their mothers—whose claims to financial and emotional support regularly disrupt the stability of the upper-middle-class household—could be neutralized and removed from the immediate field of vision of the threatened legal family. This ideal arrangement (that is, from the point of view of the Grandison women) both demands the wife’s vigilant attendance on the family—uninterrupted by her independent excursions to the public domain (including the domain of public philanthropy)—and commends men who build and support public charities in which transgressing women and their base-born children could be confined and reformed.

**Legitimating the “Shelter for Bastards”**

By the early 1740s, when the rush of excitement from receiving the public imprimatur in the form of the Royal Charter and taking in the first groups of illegitimate infants had somewhat subsided, the governors and guardians of the London Foundling Hospital found them-
selves dealing on an everyday basis with the problem of defending both the moral outlook of the new charity and its continuous claim to public financial support, which, until 1756, came exclusively in the form of private donations. By mid-century, the Hospital emerged as a genuinely controversial cultural institution. On the one hand, it embodied the best humanitarian impulses and provided an outlet for the complex civic ambitions of eighteenth-century Englishmen; on the other, it reflected the deep-seated class and gender anxieties of the British Enlightenment.

The Hospital’s prominent place in the English cultural imagination was captured by Fielding’s 1752 “compliment to the present Age for two glorious Benefactions . . . that to the use of Foundling Infants and that for the Accommodation of poor Women in their Lying-In.” As the first national joint-stock charity, the London Foundling Hospital served as a model for other philanthropic institutions, such as the Lying-in Hospital, Magdalen House, the Marine Society, and Lock Hospital, all of which sprang to life in the 1740–1760s. The Hospital’s foundational promise to provide the empire with “useful citizens”—the much needed soldiers and workers—responded to fears about the rumored depopulation of the country and appealed to the British sense of patriotism. Its overwhelming dependence on private donations offered to city merchants a gratifying opportunity to reconcile their “new-found wealth with the dictates of Christian and classical morality” by creating a “public sphere united by bonds of sympathy and benevolence—a body to which everybody possessed of a modicum of education and property might ostensibly belong.” Its carefully selected location and architectural outlook, the prominent social position of many of its governors, and its much publicized contribution to national arts—the Foundling Hospital’s annual art exhibition was a precursor of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture—turned a visit to the Hospital into “the most fashionable morning lounge in the reign of George II.”

The art exhibition was a brilliant stroke. Not only did it attract potential donors to the Hospital and generate positive publicity, but it also subtly contributed to the impression that the Hospital was open to—indeed, welcomed—public scrutiny. As David Solkin points out, “if people were to be persuaded to part with their money, strategies had to be devised to bring them on to the premises, so that they could see concrete evidence of [an important] task well done.” In fact, Michel Foucault’s succinct characterization of the underlying principles of the eighteenth-century insane asylum—“Surveillance and Judgment”—
rings equally true for the Foundling Hospital. Its governors and
 guardians made panoptical transparency the grounding principle of the
 institution’s relationships with the outside world. Foundlings grew up,
in Samuel Johnson’s words, “much accustomed to new spectators.” 16
 Visitors could see the children at work or play—a public diversion that
 turned out to be so popular among Londoners but so disruptive for the
 children that in 1751 the governors had to issue a special order that chil-
dren were not to be observed after their bedtime. 17 As to the
 “Judgment” part, any visitor could take it upon himself to criticize the
 Hospital’s routine and to offer suggestions for improvements; such
 civic-minded interventions would be heeded with respect, no matter
 how high-handed and irritating they might seem to the governors. 18

 More ambivalent—and rarely discussed by cultural historians—was
 the Hospital’s strategy of legitimating itself through the manipulation
 of the cultural categories of “bastard” and “foundling.” On the one
 hand, the very name of the institution, the Foundling Hospital, as well
 as the selection of paintings welcoming visitors in the General Court
 Room, implied that the objects of the Hospital’s charity—the bastards—
 were to benefit from the mythopoetic aura that informed classical and
 early modern representations of foundlings. On the other hand, the
 Hospital had to tread a fine line between banking on some aspects of
 this myth (i.e., the ultimate social and sexual conformity of the fic-
tional foundling) and rejecting others (i.e., the foundling’s dizzying
 social mobility). Governors and guardians of the Hospital deployed
 the cultural differentiation between bastards and foundlings so as to
 simultaneously present the institution designed to take care of illegiti-
 mate children as the means of an enlightened containment of other-
 wise unruly sexual and social forces and to assure the paying public
 that their young charges knew well their humble place in the social
 hierarchy.

 Next to the portraits of British statesmen, poets, and composers,
 the sumptuously decorated General Court Room of the Hospital fea-
tured a series of paintings on biblical themes depicting children receiv-
ing relief and benediction from strangers: the exposed Ishmael perish-
ing in the desert with an angel hovering above him; the dying son of
 the widow of Zarephath revived by Elijah; the infant Christ showered
 by the magi’s “gifts, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh,” 19 and Moses
 brought before the benevolent daughter of the Pharaoh. One distin-
guishing characteristic of all the children portrayed in these paintings
 is their relative “maturity,” especially striking in the case of Moses, who
 looks like an unusually sturdy three-month-old in Francis Hayman’s
Such touching-up of biblical stories was not accidental: the age of the abandoned child had historically been one of the key criteria used by English parish clerks to decide whether the child was illegitimate. Bastard children were typically abandoned immediately after birth or “as soon as the lying-in period was complete.” When the abandoned child was more than two months old, it was likely that factors other than illegitimacy—such as poverty and widowhood—prompted its parent(s) to part with it. This consideration was reflected in the admission policy of the Foundling Hospital: as the Hospital was to provide safe haven exclusively for illegitimate children, only infants under the age of two months were allowed to be taken in. The “daily crowd of [visitors] in their splendid equipages” – the potential donors of the Hospital – were thus presented with the pictures of the visibly legitimate children crucially dependent on the kindness of strangers.


Female Philanthropy and the London Foundling Hospital
What could be accomplished by projecting the presumed legitimacy of biblical foundlings onto the children of the Hospital? (I use “presumed” because several of the paintings’ characters weren’t unquestionably legitimate; for example, Christ had been regularly gracing the popular lists of the “good” bastards published throughout the early modern era.) The parallel association of the Hospital’s bastard charges with literary foundlings, and of the moneyed visitors of the Hospital with biblical benefactors, represented an innovative rhetorical strategy adopted to fortify the Hospital’s own claims to ideological legitimacy and to other people’s money. The champions of the Hospital tapped the cultural view of the fortunate foundling, someone who transcends his or her temporary ordeals of abandonment, poverty, and rumored shameful birth to be at last safely contained within publicly sanctioned sexual and social boundaries. The cultural availability of the old literary tradition discriminating between vile bastards and benign foundlings implied that the Hospital deserved credit for taking in bastards—the would-be agents of social destruction, atheism, and sexual deviance—and turning them into foundlings—hard workers, devout Protestants, eligible marriage partners, and good citizens of the commonwealth.

The legitimacy of many fictional foundlings also allowed the champions of the Hospital to implicitly strengthen their claim that by taking in illegitimate children, they were returning the children’s mothers to the path of virtue. It was hoped, as Brownlow puts it, that after being “preserved” from the “desperate crime” of infanticide, the “wretched parent [would], by her penitence and future rectitude, [maintain] the cause of virtue, and once more [enjoy] the pleasure of reputation after having tasted the ill consequences of losing it.”

By entering the Hospital and becoming a foundling instead of a bastard, a child was thus meant to serve as a guarantee of his mother’s future adherence to the sexual norms of her community, thus directly counterbalancing the old charge that by taking illegitimate children off their mothers’ hands, the Hospital removed the strongest check to female promiscuity.

Its evocative name and predilection for a certain style of pictorial representation notwithstanding, the Hospital needed to distance itself from one particular aspect of cultural myth: the fantastic social mobility of the foundling. The young charges of the charity were not to entertain any high-flown ideas about their birth or destiny, and neither were the visitors to the Hospital to receive an impression that the children were “coddled” and being brought up above their station. That the
Hospital was readily suspected of such indulgence is clear from the advice to the governors proffered by the author of the anonymous 1761 pamphlet, *Some Objections to the Foundling Hospital Considered by a Person in the Country to Whom They Were Sent*. The pamphlet recommends the governors bring the foundlings up “in such a manner as will fit them to bear any hardships”—feed them on “simple fare,” dress them in “cheap” and “light” garments (19). In response, perhaps, to such external pressure, the governors made a point of contrasting the lavishly decorated General Court Room with the Spartan look of the children’s quarters. As Rachel Ramsey points out, the former “was the epitome of mid-century luxury and elegance. The difference between it and the rooms occupied by children are striking, but, of course, that was exactly the point. No contributor . . . could fail to compare the two vastly different decorative schemes without being convinced of the carefully maintained distinction between those who gave generously and those who received humbly.”23 The governors also complemented the simple diet, moderate exercise, and useful pastimes (winding silk, netting purses, knitting, and spinning) of their children with such recreational activities as learning a variety of hymns that referred pointedly to their illegitimacy, some written especially for the Hospital, some adapted from biblical Psalms. A typical hymn (quoted in full above, in the introductory chapter) featured a child who “confessed” that “each part of [her] sinful frame [had been] form’d in Guilt” and pleaded to God to “wash off” the “foul offence” bestowed upon her by her fornicating parents.24

In her comprehensive 1981 account of the history of the London Foundling Hospital, Ruth McClure points out that such hymns were representative of the overarching project of socializing the inmates of the Hospital to their modest station in life and notes that other eighteenth-century charities relied on similar methods to help children to “early imbibe the Principles of Humility and Gratitude to their Benefactors, and to learn to undergo with Contentment the most Servile and laborious Offices.”25 Apart from this general strategy of teaching children to know their place, the hymns that reminded them about their sin and guilt perhaps provided a necessary counterpart to the rhetorical message sent by the paintings exhibited in the General Court Room that identified the charges of the Hospital with legendary foundlings.

And yet despite the high social profile of many of the Hospital’s governors and donors, its willingness to submit to rather troublesome public scrutiny, and its rhetorical strategy of manipulating the cultural
categories of “bastard” and “foundling,” the Hospital never managed to shed its association with sexual and social transgressiveness. The grumbling that the “shelter for bastards [encouraged] irresponsibility and licentiousness” continued unabated, taking different forms as the century went on. It was widely rumored that its champions wanted to swindle the public into paying for the upkeep of their own illegitimate children; the 1750 pamphlet *The Scandalizade, A Panegyri-Satiri-Comic-Dramatic Poem* claimed that Coram conceived of the Foundling Hospital because he “had many a Lass grapp’d under the Lee.” In 1760, when several other charitable institutions copying the Hospital’s joint-stock model were opened in London, the Foundling Hospital was often presented by its ill-wishers as part and parcel of a larger confederacy aimed at debauching the nation’s morals. As a popular pamphlet entitled *Joyful News to Batchelors and Maids: Being a Song, in Praise of the Fondling Hospital, and the London Hospital in Aldersgate-Street* [one of London’s Lying-in Hospitals] proclaimed, now “young Maids may safely take a Leap in the dark with their Sweethearts; and if they should chance to be with child may go to Aldersgate-street and lie-in, and when their month is up, they may go to the Foundling Hospital and get rid of their Bantling, and pass for pure Virgins.”

**“Ladies of Quality” and the London Foundling Hospital**

The history of the Ladies of Quality’s involvement with the London Foundling Hospital is symptomatic both of the Hospital’s and the Ladies’ ambiguous position in the eighteenth-century public sphere. On the one hand, Coram made a point of presenting the campaign for the opening of the Foundling Hospital as initiated and strongly supported by upper-class women. Furthermore, after the establishment of the Hospital, prominent upper- and middle-class women actively participated in its affairs by serving as inspectresses of the country nurses hired by the Hospital to take care of the young children. Among those who took it upon themselves to monitor, without any remuneration (or, more important for the present argument, any public ado) the work of country nurses were Martha Vansittart (“one of the beauties of the court of George II [whose] father, Sir John Stonhouse, had been a Privy Councillor and Comptroller of the Household to Queen Anne”); Anna Maria Poyntz (the maid of honor to Queen Caroline, whose hus-
band was a “Privy Councillor and at the accession had been ‘high in favour and confidence of the new King George II,’ and who had been appointed Governor to the Duke of Cumberland, the king’s then nine year old son”\textsuperscript{29}; and Juliana Dodd (whose brother was “a great friend of Mrs. Thrale and Miss Burney” and whose husband was a close friend of Horace Walpole—one of the Hospital’s early governors.\textsuperscript{30}) Juliana Dodd’s persuasive arguments in September 1759 led the governors to abandon the contemplated initiative of paying the nurses an extra three pence a week to enable them to buy the children’s clothing themselves instead of receiving it from the Hospital.\textsuperscript{31} The surviving correspondence between the Hospital’s inspectors and its governors attests to the crucial role played by women, such as Vansittart and Dodd, in the functioning of the charity.

On the other hand, once there was no Coram to drag them into the spotlight,\textsuperscript{32} women ceased to lend their names to the public support of the Hospital altogether. As McClure points out, “over the years many women contributed generously to the Foundling Hospital, visited it, served as godmothers to its children and as inspectresses of its country nurses, and offered suggestions to improve the conduct of its affairs, but none of them ever sought to participate officially in its administration.”\textsuperscript{33} McClure’s explanation for their reluctance to participate in the Hospital’s administration is that “English women, unaccustomed to the burden of governing a public charity, might have refused nomination to official position had they been asked.” She also suggests that it is likely that those in charge of the public image of the Hospital were reluctant to include women in its governing body, thinking “their new project sufficiently controversial without risking any additional criticism that disregard of the customary ways of doing things might provoke.”\textsuperscript{34}

Neither of these two reasons strikes me as completely satisfactory. First, it is difficult to accept that English women would consciously shun the burden of governing a public charity; in fact, we know that they participated actively and publicly in affairs of other charities founded at the same time. Second, the argument about the governors thinking “their new project sufficiently controversial without risking any additional criticism that disregard of the customary ways of doing things might provoke” does not work if we ask, What were the models that the governors presumably had in mind and did not want to disregard? As a matter of fact, in the 1730s and 1740s, the public charity was still a novel institution in England, and the Foundling Hospital had no native models to imitate; in order to find out more about the customary
ways of doing things, Coram had to look abroad. Through his friend Thomas Bray, Coram knew that in France “even Princesses and Duchesses, and other Ladies of the Prime Nobility of Paris, to the Number of Two Hundred and above [had] associated themselves, and entered into a Confraternity to manage [L’Hopital des Enfants-Trouves],” and he was eager to follow the continental way of advancing the project. Again, it is difficult to say what would have happened had Coram not become estranged from the affairs of the charity in the early 1740s, but it appears, nonetheless, that the absence of women from the “responsible participation in the government of London Foundling Hospital” did not agree with “the customary ways of doing things”: it presented a rupture with both the existing continental tradition and Coram’s earlier insistence that Ladies of Quality should constitute the vanguard of the infanticide prevention campaign.

A different explanation is offered by Donna Andrew, who comments upon the “surprising absence of female subscribers among the published subscription lists” (subscriptions being an important source of money for the Hospital) and adds that out of twenty-one women who signed the 1735 petition to the king, not one gave publicly, “that is to say in her own name, to the charity once it became incorporated.” The latter information modifies McClure’s earlier statement that “over the years many women contributed generously to the Foundling Hospital.” Contribute they did, but many of them not in their own names, but rather, as Andrew points out, through “their husbands or other near male relatives.” Even more important, we now know that women were absent from the list of governors and guardians and from the published subscription lists. If the former could be explained, as McClure suggests, by English women shirking the unfamiliar burden of governing a public charity, what about the latter? Was signing a subscription list also a novel burden singularly unappealing to English women? Not so, Andrew contends: English women were willing to subscribe openly to other charities; a number of them supported the already mentioned City of London Lying-In Hospital and the British Lying-In Hospital, as well as the Lying-In Charity, the Marine Society, and Magdalen House. It was specifically this charity that seemed to scare away potential female philanthropists. Or, as Andrew puts it, “since women were commonly held to be the arbiters and bastions of public morality, they may well have been hesitant to allow their names to appear in support of an institution that could possibly be thought to be ‘improper’ or conducive to sexual immorality.”

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The most striking evidence of women’s hesitation to associate publicly with such an institution comes from John Brownlow’s 1858 chronicle of the early days of the London Foundling Hospital. At the end of the volume, Brownlow printed the list of the Hospital’s governors and guardians. Running up to the year 1857, it contains close to one hundred names, without a single female name among them. It seems that the pattern of demographic uniformity of the Hospital’s governing body, established somewhere in the 1740s, continued to hold well into the nineteenth century, long after the Foundling Hospital had ceased to be a readily available object of titillating accusations.

The March to Finchley episode with which I opened this chapter seems to fit the pattern of the double position of women in relation to the Foundling Hospital. On the one hand, the Hospital gratefully accepted the painting, which was a de facto gift from the female donor who drew the lucky number, even though the nominal giver was the artist himself. On the other hand, the female philanthropist remained anonymous and virtually absent from most published accounts of the transaction. The situation was all too typical of the Hospital’s interactions with women at mid-century. The work of its inspectresses, as we remember, was received with gratitude and appreciation, but that gratitude and appreciation were for internal consumption, so to speak, for the names that the public associated with the Hospital were not Martha Vansittart, Anna Maria Poyntz, and Juliana Dodd, but Thomas Coram, John Bedford, Jonas Hanway, William Hogarth, Joseph Highmore, George Handel, William Cadogan, Hans Sloane, Richard Brocklesby, Richard Mead, Horace Walpole, Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, Charles Burney, and many others—all men who did not fear that their connection with the controversial philanthropic institution would “open [the] Door to Scandal” and who had the luxury of being able to simply shrug off the scourilous rumors (e.g., of their having presumably sired some of the foundlings) and to continue with their patronage of the charity.

However, some nagging questions still remain. If, as Andrew suggests cogently, women’s role as “the arbiters and bastions of public morality” made them “hesitant to allow their names to appear in support of an institution that could possibly be thought to be ‘improper’ or conducive to sexual immorality,” why was the Foundling Hospital singled out as a charity more injurious to the reputation of aspiring female philanthropists than, for example, Magdalen House, a shelter for “fallen” women? And just what was it that happened in the decade


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between the Ladies of Quality petition orchestrated by Coram and the *March to Finchley* auction that somehow entrenched the view that the public association of gentlewomen with the Hospital was now less desirable and likely to damage both the cause of the infanticide prevention campaign and such a “delicate . . . beautiful and brittle” thing as female reputation?

One way to address such questions is to correlate them with the cultural phenomenon described by such scholars as Felicity Nussbaum, Nancy Armstrong, and Ruth Perry as the mid-eighteenth-century valorization of domesticity, which presupposed the general retirement of women from the public sphere into the domain of the family. The change in the public attitude toward gentlewomen’s participation in the affairs of the Hospital indeed coincided suggestively with what Nussbaum characterizes as the peak of the eighteenth-century “cult of motherhood,” or the new cultural conviction that the “domestic woman [had] power to shape the public realm, particularly the nation, through procreation and education.” What this development could have meant in practical terms was that a good female citizen was defined as a devoted wife and mother, and not as an aspiring philanthropist offering her unsolicited gifts to the Hospital. Furthermore, as Perry argues, an important condition of the mid-eighteenth-century “colonization” of the female body—the appropriation of women’s reproductive services for the “nation and the empire”—was the repression of women’s active sexuality. “Maternity,” as she writes, “came to be imagined as a counter to sexual feeling, opposing alike individual expression, desire, and agency in favor of a mother-self at the service of the family and the state.” We can speculate that since service to the state could be relayed primarily through service to the family, female philanthropy—the activity that benefited the state by bypassing the family—could have been construed as indicative of the woman’s indifference toward her “primary” duties of wife and mother, a certain flightiness of character, and perhaps even a certain looseness of morals signaled by her social forwardness.

There is a danger, of course, in smoothing over the immense complexity of what was happening in the domain of public philanthropy at mid-century and claiming that women were withdrawing en masse from the public realm and refocusing their attention on the family. In fact, a number of recent feminist revisions of the Habermasian paradigm of the eighteenth-century bourgeois public sphere have questioned our tradition of rigid gendering of public and private spheres of influence. Susan Staves has argued that a number of historians of the

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eighteenth-century family “have succumbed to a bourgeois illusion that there can be a clear separation between, on the one hand, a public and economic sphere, and, on the other, a private domestic sphere of true feeling and personal authenticity, [thus accepting] the very ideological formulation created by eighteenth-century advocates of domesticity.”

Similarly, Dena Goodman has critiqued the oversimplified readings of Habermas’s conception of the authentic public sphere and persuasively theorized a “feminist historiography that is not trapped within the public/private opposition.”

In the context of this critique, compared to other charities at mid-century the Foundling Hospital was rather exceptional in its total lack of public female support. It could be that as the first institution of its kind in eighteenth-century England, it retained its cultural shock value more tenaciously than did other hospitals, such as the founded shortly thereafter Magdalen House, and that as such, it came to embody—more so than the other charities—anxieties about the role of women in the public sphere. It could also be that the principle of anonymity adopted by the Foundling Hospital (i.e., the mothers could just disappear without a trace after depositing their children at the Hospital, whereas at Magdalen, the physical retention of women somehow implied their greater accountability) appeared to substantiate the continuous harping that the Foundling Hospital made it possible for a certain type of female opportunist to carry on unchecked her “depredations upon mankind,” making this charity thus appear particularly antagonistic to the interests of well-to-do married women.

We recognize the articulation of the latter sentiment in the satiric passage from Tobias Smollett’s Peregrine Pickle (1751) in which several Ladies of Quality attempt to decide the fate of a young woman who had married for love against the wishes of her family, thus forfeiting her inheritance and provoking her father’s implacable enmity, and whose husband died soon after, leaving her a destitute widow with twin infants. One lady recommends placing the infants in the Foundling Hospital; another is convinced that once they enter the Hospital, their mother would be free to seduce rich young men and thus destroy the emotional and financial well-being of good families:

My lady duchess concluded that she [the young widow] must be a creature void of all feeling and reflection, who could survive such aggravated misery; therefore did not deserve to be relieved, except in the character of a common beggar; and was generous enough to offer a recommendation, by which she would be admitted into an
infirmary, to which her grace was a subscriber; at the same time, advising the solicitor to send the twins to the Foundling-Hospital, where they would be carefully nursed and brought up, so as to become useful members of the commonwealth. Another lady, with all due deference to the opinion of the duchess, was free enough to blame the generosity of her grace, which would only serve to encourage children in their disobedience to their parents, and might be the means not only of prolonging the distress of the wretched creature, but also of ruining the constitution of some young heir, perhaps the hope of a great family; for she did suppose that madam, when her month should be up, and her brats disposed of, would spread her attractions to the public, (provided she could profit by her person) and, in the usual way, make a regular progress from St. James’s to Drury-lane. She apprehended, for these reasons, that their compassion would be most effectually shewn, in leaving her to perish in her present necessity; and that the old gentleman would be unpardonable, should he persist in his endeavors to relieve her. A third member of this tenderhearted society [said]: “Let the bantlings . . . be sent to the hospital [and she would take the mother as her servant].” (429–30)

It hardly matters to the lady duchess and her friends that the young woman in question used to be married and that the children are legitimate: their admission to the Foundling Hospital would automatically activate the scenario of a “fallen” woman now free to continue her depredations upon “great families.” And since the second lady either belongs to or ambitiously identifies with “great families,” her warning about the threat represented by a “madam” whose “brats” are taken off her hands appears to spell out the reason a woman of quality should not support the Foundling Hospital.

The passage is ambivalent in ways perhaps not consciously intended by Smollett, testifying to the difficulty of deriving any clear-cut ideological “message” from the works of eighteenth-century fiction focusing on illegitimacy. On the one hand, the narrator has no sympathy for the cruel trio and clearly disapproves of their sentiments, including the second speaker’s view of the Foundling Hospital as a charity that enables prostitution, ruins the hopes of great families, and thus does not deserve the support of gentlewomen. On the other hand, by letting us know that one of the callous ladies is a “subscriber” to an “infirmary” (which appears from the context to be Magdalen House!), Smollett seems to uphold—whether intentionally or not—the notion that
the women who subscribed to charities substituted that kind of ostensible “public” kindness for more valuable and genuine “private” compassion. Indeed, we learn that when “shocked at the nature . . . of this ungenerous consultation,” Peregrine rushes to the house of the poor woman with a gift of twenty pounds, he meets there the celebrated Lady V., “who having heard by accident of [the] deplorable situation [of the young widow], had [also] immediately obeyed the dictates of her humanity . . . and come in person to relieve her distress” (431; emphasis added). The “private” altruism of Lady V. is thus contrasted to the “public” philanthropy of the lady duchess, leaving the reader in no doubt as to which constitutes true benevolence, but also strengthening the notion that something was seriously amiss with the hearts and minds of ladies who flaunted their support of philanthropic institutions instead of assisting those in need quietly and privately. Note that even the good old argument about raising the children of the Hospital into “useful members of the commonwealth” acquires sarcastic overtones when used by the lady duchess. There is something incongruous, the narrative seems to imply, in a woman’s mouthing this ostensibly “male,” ostensibly “public” political catchphrase. A woman should express her compassion not by parroting the impersonal slogans of the infanticide prevention campaign but by doing what Lady V.—this “angel ministering to the necessities of mortals”—does: relieve the miserable widow “in person,” softening into the “inchanting tenderness of weeping sympathy” while fondling one of the poor babes on her knee, and thanking another kind giver—Peregrine—“with such look of complacency . . . that his whole soul [is] transported with love and veneration” (431). Lady V. seems to be the epitome of the proper domestic woman, “educating,” so to speak, young men in noble sentiments, or, in this case, “approving” the young man for following his best impulses.50

If we want to complicate even further this already complicated passage, we may remember that Lady V. is not exactly the most “domestic” of women and Peregrine not the most virtuous of young men. She has earlier given birth to an illegitimate daughter (who died in infancy), and he is illegitimate (though he himself does not know about it) and highly promiscuous—a bastard who sires bastards all over Europe and who would not hesitate to rape any current object of his passion. Smollett’s novel thus responds subtly to the stale set of accusations regularly raised against the London Foundling Hospital, namely that those who supported the Hospital did it primarily because they hoped that it would save them the expense of caring for their own bastards. Of course, Lady V. would never stoop to leaving her child at the Hospital.
and neither would Peregrine, with his—however warped—notion of “honour,” but it is nevertheless significant that the two people who could have—at least hypothetically—benefited from the “services” offered by this institution do not support the Hospital and instead aid the poor woman in person and privately.

The Foundling Hospital thus occupies a double position in *Peregrine Pickle*. On the one hand, supporting a public philanthropy does not automatically render the supporter a good person—and in the case of a woman, it actually seems to indicate her callowness. On the other hand, slandering the Foundling Hospital—by implying that it breeds prostitution or benefits rich fornicators—marks the slanderer as narrow minded and obdurate, her accusations groundless. For a woman, at any rate, to be on the safe side in the world of Smollett’s novel, it is better to neither assist nor condemn a public charity, limiting herself to private eleemosynary acts, preferably witnessed—approved and emulated—by a man.

**Infanticide, Illegitimacy, and Property in *Sir Charles Grandison***

Broadly speaking, the same advice applies to the women in Richardson’s *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753–54), in which the issues of infanticide, illegitimacy, and philanthropy are considered almost exclusively in terms of their potential impact on a middle-class family, or rather on that complicated hybrid of upper-class wealth and titles and middle-class sensibilities that constitutes the Grandison clan. Read in the context of the eighteenth-century infanticide prevention campaign, *Grandison* appears to articulate emotional reasons why an upper-middle-class woman would be wary of supporting a public philanthropy rumored to sponsor illegitimacy and to absolve sexually transgressing females from the consequences of their liaisons. At the same time the novel seems to frown on the private lack of charity and indiscriminate demonizing of bastards and bastard-bearers. This double thrust of *Grandison* frequently makes ambiguous its references to child murder and bastardy, an ambiguity that echoes the incipient discomfort we may detect in the description of the ruthless dispossession of Thomasine’s “cubs” in *Clarissa*.

In *Grandison*, the topic of infanticide comes up where it is least expected: in the letter that Sir Charles’s sister Charlotte (the newly
minted “Lady G.”) writes to Aunt Selby and Lucy. Charlotte is pregnant with her first child and mortally afraid of her impending labor, but ever the incorrigible wit, she manages to interlace her dark parturitional forebodings with racy jokes. At the close of her letter, she inserts a note inviting Aunt Selby and Lucy to “come early that [she] can shew [them her] baby-things,” so that later they “may be able to testify that [she] had no design to overlay [her] little Marmouset.” Charlotte alludes here to one of the most popular lines of defense used in infanticide trials—the “benefit-of-linen.” If an unmarried mother of a dead infant could prove that she had prepared all the necessary linen well before a baby was born (which showed that she had intended to keep the baby), the case against her would be summarily dismissed. Charlotte, a married, rich, upper-class female, who ostensibly has nothing in common with women typically accused of infanticide or with the ignominious realities of the infanticide courtroom, appropriates the rhetoric of that courtroom with surprising ease. Worse still, she expects that her addressees, the middle-aged dignified lady and the young inexperienced girl, both leading a sheltered existence in provincial Northamptonshire, would also know about the essence of the “benefit-of-linen” defense—otherwise the joke would fall flat. That they do know about it and that they are expected to think that the joke is risqué is obvious from the reaction of Harriet, Charlotte’s sister-in-law, who copies Charlotte’s letter for her grandmother Shirley (the audience keeps expanding) and observes dryly that the note is in Charlotte’s “usual stile” (3:358). So topical a reference to infanticide may seem out of place among characters of refined sensibility (even though everybody gets the joke), and it must have contributed to some of Richardson’s contemporaries’ dislike for his “patterns of charming pleasantry.” Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, for one, thought that “Charlotte’s coarse jokes and low expressions [are such] as are only to be heard among the Lowest Class of People” (421).

What does the “benefit-of-linen” joke mean for the pregnant Charlotte? Lois A. Chaber sees Charlotte’s witty letter as an exposure of “marriage’s institution which disguises the bloody biological ordeal at its center.” She is also aware of the “sinister overtones” of Charlotte’s allusions to killing her newborn baby and interprets “infanticide [as] the logical culmination of the rebellion against maternity that the prenatal Charlotte (verbally) engages in.” My reading of this episode qualifies Chaber’s based on the fact that Charlotte refers to a court procedure (the “benefit-of-linen”) associated primarily, if not exclusively,
with unwed mothers of a certain social class. Chaber’s interpretation allows for an attractive subversiveness in Charlotte’s playful class-crossing association; the “bloody biological ordeal” of giving birth is the same for Lady G. as it is for, say, Hannah Warwick, a servant who in 1767 was accused of concealing the birth and the death of her illegitimate child. It seems to me, however, that rather than identifying with her big-bellied sister-women across class boundaries, Charlotte is recreating—with a certain degree of schadenfreude—a scenario involving a serving-class woman apprehended and about to be punished for her sexual trespass. This reading is not immediately obvious if we consider Charlotte’s remark (as does Chaber) in the context of her frequent expostulations against marriage as a social institution aimed at subjugating women. If, on the other hand, we situate it in the context of the novel’s multiple references to illegitimacy, and particularly the references to the ongoing attempt of the Grandison clan to safeguard itself against various illegitimate pretenders to the family fortune, we realize that the pregnant Charlotte has many reasons to brood about the threat represented by bastards and their mothers, and that she may derive a subconscious satisfaction from imagining a bastard-bearer caught and put on trial for her transgression.

The Grandison girls—Charlotte and Caroline—are made aware quite early of the dangers represented by such women and their children. Their father, Sir Thomas Grandison, has several illegitimate children with Mrs. Oldham, formerly a woman of quality who now has to earn her living as a housekeeper. He also supports “another mistress in town, [with] a taste for all its gaieties . . . who even [assumes] his name” (1:320). Mortified by his mounting expenditures, he saves the expense of a dowry for his eldest daughter, Caroline, by preventing her marriage to the virtuous man of her choice, Lord L. Having witnessed Caroline’s sufferings, and apprehending “what must be [her] sufferings in turn,” Charlotte determines to “take any step, however rash, where virtue [is] not to be wounded, rather than undergo what [her sister] underwent from . . . [Sir Thomas]” (1:404) and nearly throws herself away on an unworthy man, one Captain Anderson. Another sad repercussion of Sir Thomas’s illicit liaisons is that, ashamed of his sexually prompted financial indiscretions, he keeps his beloved son, Charles, abroad for many years, thus setting into motion Charles’s Italian “entanglement,” the source of much grief to the main female character of the story, Harriet Byron. Finally, to make matters worse, Sir Thomas abandons one kept mistress in pursuit of another—a sixteen-year-old Miss Obrien—brought up by her covetous relatives “with a
notion that her beauty would make her fortune” (1:353). Sir Thomas
dies unexpectedly, just when the young Miss is ready to enter his keep-
ing (“500l. a year for her life” [1:354])—and only his death prevents the
further disintegration of the family fortune. (Disappointed, but assured
that no man can resist a good-looking “young creature” and that he
would forget his family and class obligations to satisfy his “vice,” Miss
Obrien attempts to seduce Sir Charles Grandison in place of his
deceased libertine of a father. Sir Charles, however, is of a different
mettle. He admires Miss Obrien “as a man would a fine picture”
[1:376] and expostulates with her until, confessing her base intentions,
she “weeps, and vows that she would be honest.” He then marries her
off to a “tradesman near Golden Square” [1:377; emphasis added]—to let
her dig for gold in her proper station!)

Next to one prodigal patriarch is another: Lord W., an uncle on the
mother’s side of the Grandison family, lives in sin with the
“deplorable” Mrs. Giffard—a woman whose lack of “birth” and “edu-
cation” is compounded by her lack of “moderation” (1:358)—and who
thus squanders the estate that Sir Charles, Caroline, and Charlotte are
supposed to inherit (provided that Lord W. remains childless). Yet one
more Grandison, Sir Thomas’s nephew, Everard, finds himself
imposed upon by a “cast[off] mistress, experienced in all the arts of
such, and acting upon the secret influences of a man of quality [who],
wanting to get rid of her, supports her in a prosecution commenced
against [Everard] for performance of covenants” (2:442). Another fam-
ily, the “ancient” and deserving Mansfields, suffers because of the
indiscretion of their maternal uncle who, at the age of seventy, married
his servant and left his property to her two children, fathered, in fact,
by another man (an echo, perhaps, of the story of Clarissa’s Thomasine,
whose children, according to Belford, were fathered by her clandestine
hostler-lover and not by her gentleman-keeper).

Richardson makes a point of portraying the young Grandisons as
almost unrealistically vulnerable to the financial damage that could be
inflicted by illegitimate children and their mothers. On the one hand,
under British law, illegitimate offspring could not inherit property at
the expense of legitimate heirs, and being the first-born son seems to
ensure Sir Charles’s position as the sole inheritor of the parental estate.
On the other hand, in practice, there were many ways to divert money
and property from legitimate children. First, there were inter vivos set-
tlements, that is, “the transmission of property or goods during the life-
time of the bequeather.” Sir Thomas engages in inter vivos transmis-
sions when he pays for Mrs. Oldham and her children and when he
agrees to bestow 500 pounds a year upon Miss O'Brien. Second, the whole estate could be whisked away from the first-born son if it were held by his father “in fee simple” rather than in strict settlement. Strict settlement meant that the current owner of the estate was but a life-long tenant keeping the property for his eldest son (who in turn would keep it for his eldest son), with no right to will, or lease, or mortgage it except for purposes explicitly discussed in the settlement. Sir Thomas Grandison holds his Irish estate “in fee simple”—Richardson is very particular about this point—which gives him the right to squander it, the right that he, unfortunately, is only too quick to exercise when he borrows money upon this estate to pay his “debt of honour” (1:329), that is, the debt incurred by whoring. That Sir Thomas’s borrowing money upon his Irish estate is severely detrimental to his son is clear from the moneylender’s insistence—which goes against the set of standard procedures—that Sir Charles should be made aware of the deal and even join his father in the security. Finally, a current owner of the estate could break the entail, as did for example the fifth Duke of Bolton, who had “a very short reign,” but still managed before his death to charge his entailed estates “with the payment of his debts, several annuities, and the residue of his legacies,” which included 14,000 pounds to his mistress and 12,000 pounds to his daughter.

Richardson does not specify whether Sir Thomas’s second estate (back in England) is held in fee simple. One telling detail, however, leads us to suspect that it is. Sir Thomas falls ill just before signing “the releases”—the legal forms guaranteeing Miss O'Brien her 500 pounds per year. The person who “posts down, on the first news he [has] of [his master’s] being taken ill, hoping to get him to sign the ready-drawn up releases” is one Mr. Bever, his corrupted “English steward” (1:355). We do not know for sure whether the new annual expense of 500 pounds would make Sir Thomas borrow money upon his English estate, but the presence of his “English steward” suggests that the second estate is also held in fee and thus can be spent on the future illegitimate children of Miss O'Brien. Significantly, after the mid-seventeenth century, it was rather unusual for a prominent aristocratic family to have all its estates in fee. Besides, the personality of Sir Thomas’s “frugal” father strongly suggests that he would take care to tie his “profuse” son to the strict settlement. Richardson, meanwhile, was “reasonably well informed about the legal issues” surrounding the strict settlement. Balancing between being explicit on the matter and making his story improbable, he thus hints darkly that, in principle, the younger
Grandisons could meet the same fate as did the nieces and nephews of Lord Mansfield or, indeed, the author’s own friend Elizabeth Midwinter, whose father managed to disinherit her altogether, leaving the family property to the illegitimate son he had with his servant. It is likely that what is really going on here is that Richardson projects the familiar economic fear of the middle-class family threatened by illegitimacy onto the upper-class family, although in real life, as McClure and John Habakkuk have argued, the upper-class family would have been protected by its “great wealth” from the danger represented by the bastard pretender to its property.

It is not surprising, then, that Charlotte is uniformly harsh in her judgment upon the designing females of inferior class standing, whom she sees as preying upon well-to-do families. When given a chance to humble their late father’s mistress, Mrs. Oldham, Caroline and Charlotte, in particular, do so with a vengeance until their magnanimous brother stops their cruel sport. Later, having made clear what she thinks of this “tribe” of women, Charlotte almost flies at her best friend Harriet, who dares to contradict her and pity the unfortunate Mrs. Oldham and her illegitimate children. “Be quiet, Harriet,” snaps Charlotte, “Would you be as tame to a husband’s mistress, as you seem favorable to a father’s?” (2:305) Because Charlotte’s father, and her uncle, and her cousin—virtually every single one of her male relatives, excepting her superman of a brother—have proved susceptible to the charms of designing female interlopers, her marriage and pregnancy make her sharply aware of her own and her future child’s vulnerability to illegitimate pretenders to family fortunes. It is in this context that her reference to the infanticide trial could be read as an indirect expression of her desire to see such women apprehended and penalized for their sexual misdeeds.

Richardson did not necessarily agree with Charlotte’s uncompromising condemnation of the “tribe” of kept women. As we know, he actively supported both the London Foundling Hospital and Magdalen House and became a governor of both charities in 1754 and 1758, respectively. Much as he detested the practice of keeping mistresses, his narrative strives to differentiate between the custom itself—which he held as evil in principle—and the “unhappy women . . . drawn [into it] . . . by the perfidy of men” (2:356), a fine differentiation not always sustainable in a novel representing so vividly the destructive consequences of illicit love affairs for the legitimate family. Chaber’s insightful diagnosis of Charlotte’s infanticidal joke as expressing fear of being
trapped in the exploitive marriage economy should not thus occlude the larger meaning of this joke within the novel’s consistent attempt to safeguard and sanctify this economy. Though replete with the “bloody ordeals” of childbirth and grounded in female conformity, domestic space is figured in Grandison as infinitely appealing and warranting a vigilant protection against illegitimate intruders who have the capacity to destabilize it.

The novel’s take on female philanthropy is thus grounded in the conflict between its two ways of looking at “fallen” women and their illegitimate offspring: are they “unhappy women” (2:356) and their children “unhappy innocents” (1:366), or are they “creatures” (1:370) of that infamous “tribe,” and their children “living proofs” of their “disgrace” (1:366)? Are they to be pitied or castigated? Supported with the services of the London Foundling Hospital and Magdalen House or driven to commit infanticide? And if they are to be pitied and supported, what role, if any, should gentlewomen—legally married wives and mothers, standing to lose from the “creatures” depredations—play in this charitable endeavor?

The novel does not provide an unambiguous answer to any of these questions. On the other hand, its main heroine, Harriet, consistently expresses her compassion toward the “fallen” women and their children. First, she censures Mr. Greville for abandoning his mistress, whom he “brought with him from the Wales” without giving her “sufficient [means] for a twelvemonth’s scanty subsistence” (1:25)—and we can only guess how Charlotte would have responded to this sentiment in her friend. Second, Harriet applauds Sir Charles’s behaving generously toward Mrs. Oldham and allowing “her an annuity, for the sake of her sons by his father” and expresses such interest in the fate of the late Sir Thomas’s mistress that it prompts Charlotte to observe, in her arch manner, that “our Harriet is strangely taken with Mrs. Oldham’s story” (1:375). Finally, it is Harriet who brings up the concept of philanthropy and proceeds to defend a woman’s right both to use this trendy neologism and to partake in the activity that it denotes. Insisting that her love for Sir Charles Grandison stems from her desire to “promote and share in [his] glorious philanthropy,” she writes an aside directed at her loving but still rather misogynistic uncle Selby: “Yes, my uncle! Why should women, in compliance with the petulance of narrow-minded men, forbear to use words that some seem to think above them . . . ?” (1:389).

On the other hand, Harriet’s position as a budding female philan-
throphist particularly compassionate toward illegitimate children and their mothers is complicated by the possibility of her marrying the only man on Earth who is guaranteed not to keep mistresses and sire bastards. Since Harriet is not to know the fears of an average wife, her generosity of spirit is ultimately worth less than Charlotte’s—were Charlotte to be so liberally inclined—and thus cannot be perceived as the official, although unavoidably idealized, “viewpoint” of the novel.

And in any case, Harriet’s interest in philanthropy becomes if not less strong then certainly less vocal as she moves closer to being the next Lady Grandison. Although present during the fourth volume’s famous exchange concerning public charities, in which Sir Charles describes his scheme for “An Hospital for Female Penitents” (2:356)—the novel’s version of Magdalen House—she does not say a word and functions more like the stenographer locked in Sir Hargrave Pollexfen’s closet in an earlier episode than as a participant in the conversation. By this time, Harriet, as Jerry Beasley has pointed out, is well on her way to falling completely “under Grandison’s influence,” being “changed” and “diminished,”68 and gradually losing “the marks distinguishing her identity from Grandison’s: her sharp vocal inflections . . . , her relative independence . . . , and her autonomous personal narrative” (37).69 Harriet’s days of speaking up for kept women and their children and dreaming of glorious philanthropies are over by the end of the third volume.

*The History of Sir Charles Grandison* thus by no means condemns the philanthropic efforts of its age, nor does it seem to doubt their efficacy and moral outlook. Nor does it say explicitly that upper- and upper-middle-class women should not support the charities directed at easing the lot of illegitimate children and their “unhappy” mothers. At the same time, it makes two points about such support, neither of which is very encouraging. First, it makes us understand why Charlotte, for example, would rather visualize a serving-class woman exposed and punished for her sexual transgression and infanticide than support an institution designed to “preserve” such a woman from her “desperate crime”70 in hopes of returning her to the path of virtue. Charlotte is fed up with sexually attractive women of inferior class standing and their illegitimate children, the source of the ceaseless drain on her family’s emotional and financial well-being. Because of this, she is likely to acquiesce to the view of the Foundling Hospital as an “immoral” charity freeing female opportunists to continue their “depredations upon mankind.” Again, Richardson does not say that such a view is correct, but, via Charlotte, his last novel provides tacit emotional validation for
the absence of gentlewomen from the lists of public supporters of the Hospital.

The history of Harriet’s relationship with Sir Charles Grandison strengthens this validation. Throughout the first and second volume, Harriet feels free to express openly her compassion for illegitimate children and their mothers. In the fourth volume, Sir Charles subsumes her charitable impulses under his own expostulations about the “Hospital for Female Penitents.” From that point on, the novel makes clear that whatever philanthropic inclinations Lady Grandison may have, they will have to be articulated in private into the kindly ear of her husband, who then will have the option of making them public and seeking other men’s approval of them. To make up for this loss of her independent voice, the novel glorifies the implicit political power presumably exercised by Lady Grandison. As her husband observes, it is virtuous wives who move their men to “purchase and build for them; travel and toil for them; run through, at the call of . . . King and Country, dangers and difficulties; [to] at last, lay all [the] trophies [and] acquirements, at [their wives’] feet; enough rewarded in the conscience of duty done” (3:248). It is virtuous wives, then, who move their men to “purchase” a suitable ground, to “build” a Foundling Hospital, and to support it with their subscriptions and gifts of valuable paintings. The March to Finchley will be exhibited in the General Court Room, attesting to the joint effort of British men and women to support “glorious Benefactions,” but the lady must vanish.