'I WILL NOT WEEP': READING THROUGH THE TEARS OF HENRY MACKENZIE'S *MAN OF FEELING*

The Limits of Tears

Tears are the crux of both the success and the failure of Henry Mackenzie's first novel, *The Man of Feeling* (1771). Fragmented, short, episodic, and overabounding with scenes of weeping, *The Man of Feeling* was immensely popular in its day. Its success in the 1770s was due to its capacity to move and affect deeply, drawing the reader into a culture of tears. As contemporary opinions testify, crying over *The Man of Feeling* was the test of the sensibility of its early readers, by whom tears were not only valued, but, by the time of the novel's publication, were more or less compulsory attributes and signifiers of a feeling heart and unquestionable morality. The anonymous critic of the *Monthly Review* insists that anyone 'who weeps not over some of the scenes it describes, has no sensibility of mind'.[1]

Tears, however, did not always come easily for everyone. In 1826 Lady Louisa Stewart recalls a childhood memory about the time when the novel was first published. As she writes to Sir Walter Scott: 'I remember so well its first publication, my mother and sisters crying over it, dwelling upon it with rapture! And when I read it, as I was a girl of fourteen not yet versed in sentiment, I had a secret dread I should not cry enough to gain the credit of proper sensibility.'[2] Those young and innocent minds on whom the culture of sensibility models itself paradoxically have to become versed in the feelings they are naturally expected to possess. As Harley, the hero of Mackenzie's novel, reflects: 'Our delicacies [. . .] are fantastic; they are not in nature!'[3] Harley himself, always identified as the over-sentimental character of Mackenzie's novel, is surprisingly tearless at many critical moments. For instance, on the morning of his departure for London, his aunt says goodbye to him 'with a tear on her cheek' (p. 58). Peter, Harley's faithful servant, is 'choaked with the thought, and his benediction could not be heard' (p. 59). The only person who can resist tears is Harley himself. He 'shook [Peter] by the hand as he passed, smiling, as if he said, "I will not weep"' (p. 59). Harley's smile is turned into a cover for repressed tears only by the narrator's speculation. The narrator, through the lens of his sentimental expectations, trains the reader to read emotionally, to read through his tears.

This article will investigate the ways in which tears become central signifiers

[1] *Monthly Review*, 44 (1771), 418.

[2] Letter to Sir Walter Scott of 4 September 1826, in *The Private Letter-Books of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by Wilfred Partington (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), pp. 271–73 (p. 273). Lady Stewart also points out the rather different effect that Mackenzie's novel had on its readers a few decades later. When her circle of friends read aloud *The Man of Feeling*, 'the effect altogether failed. Nobody cried, and at some of the passages, the touches that I used to think so exquisite—Oh Dear! They laughed.' She goes on to observe that Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, 'the book that all mothers prohibited and all daughters longed to read' in her youth, is found tiring and dull by the younger generations in the 1820s (p. 273). For changing reading—and weeping—practices in the eighteenth century see Anne Vincent-Buffault, *The History of Tears: Sensibility and Sentimentality in France* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1990).

[3] Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, ed. by Maureen Harkin (Plymouth: Broadview, 2005), p. 59. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

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of sympathetic emotional exchange in Mackenzie's novel. John Dwyer avers that the role and complexity of tearful scenes in *The Man of Feeling* have been underestimated by most modern critics of Mackenzie's novel, who take the abundance of tears in the novel to be the sign of melodramatic and self-indulgent emotionalism. There is a tendency, Dwyer claims, to caricature the novel's tearfulness and overlook its pioneering psychological methods as well as their moral purpose and enormous ideological power.[4] Taking up Dwyer's point, this article will focus on one important aspect of the novel's intricate web of tearful responses, namely the way in which tears of sympathy form part of a sentimental reading practice. In other words, I shall explore the mechanism through which a narrative and psychological method can become a powerful ideological tool.

Recent scholarship, however, tends to be more concerned with the widening gap between sentimental morality and eighteenth-century social conduct than with the interactions between the two. The novel's melancholy tone, the inability of its hero, Harley, to achieve his goals in the competitive context of his society, as well as his isolation and death are frequently interpreted as an allegory of the failure of the morals of sensibility to function within the social practice of the period. According to John Mullan, the publication of *The Man of Feeling* in 1771 marks a turning-point in the history of the genre, when 'sentimental morality cannot reflect at all on the practice of any existing society'.[5] The culture of self-interest, he claims, builds up a sentimental fantasy, victimizing and isolating those who blindly and naively try to live up to its values. Susan Manning sees Mackenzie's life work as a sceptical enquiry into the effects of sentiment on human behaviour, while Stephen Bending and Stephen Bygrave claim that the sentimental novel has limited answers to the political problems of its time.[6] Maureen Harkin reads Mackenzie's novel as a self-conscious dramatization of the powerlessness of novels to intervene in the social sphere. Rather than exposing the failure of sentiment to produce a viable ethical practice, she claims, *The Man of Feeling* tackles the limits of the novel's potential for changing the social sphere and for producing community. Through its tropes of mutilation, destruction, and vulnerability of texts and objects, the novel negotiates conflicting positions about the possibility of

[4] John Dwyer, 'Enlightened Spectators and Classical Moralists: Sympathetic Relations in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', in *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland,* ed. by John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher (Edinburgh: Mercat, 1993), pp. 96–118 (p. 112).

[5] John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 114–46 (pp. 118–19), and 'The Language of Sentiment: Hume, Smith, and Henry Mackenzie', in *The History of Scottish Literature*, ed. by Andrew Hook, 2 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), II, 273–88 (p. 275). See also Janet Todd's chronology of the development of sensibility in the period in *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 3. For the insistence of criticism on Harley's unfitness for the world see also David G. Spencer, 'Henry Mackenzie: A Practical Sentimentalist', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 3 (1967), 314–26; G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 142 and 144; Gillian Skinner, *Sensibility and Economics in the Novel, 1740–1800* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. 92.

[6] Susan Manning, introduction, in Henry Mackenzie, *Julia de Roubigné* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 1999), pp. v–xxvi (p. ix); Stephen Bending and Stephen Bygrave, introduction, in Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, ed. by Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. vii–xxiv (p. xvii).

literature as a form of social critique. While providing images of distress and sympathy, it spells out no effective means of opposition to the ills it depicts.[7]

What is not emphasized enough in today's scholarship, however, is that—despite the recognized doubt concerning the practicability of sentimental values in the period—Mackenzie's novel is successful in realizing a very important, affective, agenda precisely through its tears. The novel demonstrates a belief in the ability of sentimental fiction intensively to form and reform the reading public, self-consciously acting out how such an education in feeling is brought about. As the responses of its first readers demonstrate, tears, while they could indeed be signs of truthful emotional reaction, were, at the same time, effective means by which a culture established its ideologies through the individual's affective responses.[8] Mackenzie's novel shows how an institutionalized culture of sensibility is produced, while demonstrating its own involvement in such cultural production. The novel enacts the process through which society becomes 'versed in sentiment', as it happens through individual processes of reading and a text's appeal to the individual on an emotional level. While it is true that *The Man of Feeling* does not directly draw up any agenda for the reformation of social ills, it shows how literature can realize its social and political agenda on the level of the individual's emotions. Mackenzie thus reveals the way in which the sentimental reader—a highly political product—is constructed by the means of reading itself. Far from representing a failure actively to participate in the social, both *The Man of Feeling* and its contemporary success demonstrate how a process of interpretation through affective response has the potential to connect fiction and life, and thus instantiates how reading that is performed in the private sphere also has public, social, and political stakes. This reading practice, however, is problematic: where reading is expected to be a scene of sympathy it will be burdened with the moral ambivalence and discontent inherent in the concept of sympathy itself.

Through an analysis of Mackenzie's novel in the context of the literature and philosophy of sensibility, this essay will trace the way in which the text self-consciously enacts the reader's education via the culture of tears. *The Man of Feeling* is said to be the most tearful novel of the eighteenth century, yet, I argue, its affectivity should not be taken for granted. Harley's sentimentality is created in front of our eyes by those who read and narrate him, drawing the reader of the novel into a similar, mimetic mode of interpretation. The mind of Harley is constructed like a mirror—alluding to the philosophical constructions of the feeling subject as imagined by David Hume and Adam Smith—which reveals more about those who read him than about Harley himself. Harley's mind not only reflects, but also improves the complexions of those who look into it. In

[7] Maureen Harkin, 'Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*: Embalming Sensibility', *ELH*, 61 (1994), 317–40 (pp. 318–19, 336). In the introduction to her edition of *The Man of Feeling* Harkin points out the emphasis in sentimental novels on 'instructing the reader how to react, how to feel'. But in addition, Harkin claims, Mackenzie is highly conscious of 'the futility of effort that emerges in sentimental fiction': *The Man of Feeling*, ed. by Harkin, pp. 9–38 (pp. 12–13).

[8] For a history of tears and their role in the eighteenth century to represent true emotional response see Tom Lutz, *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears* (London and New York: Norton, 1999), pp. 50–52. For a variety of psychological views on tears see *Adult Crying: A Biopsychosocial Approach*, ed. by Randolph R. Cornelius and J. J. M. Vingerhoets (Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2001).

this way, he is never the subject in question, but instead brings about a shift of focus, turning both narrator and reader into men of feeling. I shall argue that the 'man of feeling' consists in an always shifting perspective; it is a technique of reading rather than a clearly defined character type. The sentimental feeling subject is inseparable from a reading practice that operates through emotional response. The tears of the man of feeling always mark ambivalent moments of sympathy, which are also staged in other novels of the period, including Sarah Fielding's *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744), Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), Laurence Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (1768), and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798). Novels of sentiment critically reflect on Enlightenment theories of sympathy, where fellow feeling unsettles the boundaries of the self and blurs the distinction between self and other. They warn us that moments of sympathy can cast doubt on true altruistic motive and can help maintain existing power structures. The ambivalent tears of sympathy, as we shall see, are the common concerns of eighteenth-century sensibility and intersubjective psychoanalytic theory.

Mackenzie's introductory chapter well illustrates how the novel of sensibility finds—and even produces—its own sympathetic readers. It positions the novel as a fragmented, damaged manuscript found by two unsuccessful hunters. The narrator and the curate, after the disappointment of missing their prey, look around to contemplate the melancholy locale, and talk about a man called Harley who had once lived there. Here the curate presents his company with a bundle of papers used by him as wadding—papers that contain the history of Harley in whom the narrator has taken an interest:

> 'I should be glad to see this medley,' said I. 'You shall see it now', answered the curate, 'for I always take it along with me a-shooting.' 'How came it so torn?' ''Tis excellent wadding', said the curate.—This was a plea of expediency I was not in condition to answer; for I had actually in my pocket great part of an edition of one of the German Illustrissimi, for the very same purpose. We exchanged books; and by that means (for the curate was a strenuous logician) we probably saved both. (pp. 48–49)

While the narrator saves the manuscript that has been abused by the curate, it turns out that he himself treated his German Illustrissimi unkindly. Every text, the novel seems to say, has its own reader—and the novel of sensibility can be salvaged only by those kind-hearted creatures who are 'a good deal affected with some very trifling passages in it' (p. 49). The survival of the text is due to its capacity to affect its reader almost to the point of tears. Its powers cannot extend to all readers, only to those select few who possess enough sensibility to be able to enjoy its 'medley'.

In Mackenzie's theory, formulated at the time of the novel's composition, sensibility mechanically operates among the members of a community who possess the capacity for refined feeling. He explains to his cousin, Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock, that the language of sentiment works by a sudden recognition of some hidden capacity that has always been there in the reader, and which the story of sentiment brings to the surface. On 31 July 1769 he writes: 'believe me, where genuine sentiment and feeling are at bottom, we cannot write with too much freedom; and the reader will be pleas'd in proportion as these qualities

reside in himself'.[9] Sentimental writing works by depicting minor details which 'their intimates' can recognize, and thus their passions are aroused (p. 37). The way poetry speaks to the heart and creates a link between author and reader is 'like finding some family picture in a stranger's house; we conclude ourselves acquainted, and are friends at the first sight' (pp. 51–52). It needs a scene of recognition, brought about by literature, for an already existent familiarity and community to come to light. The function of the literature Mackenzie undertakes to write is to bring about such scenes of recognition. Thus, the introduction of *The Man of Feeling* offers two models with which the reader can identify, grouping the readers into those who would and those who would not save the novel from complete destruction. 'Which reader are you', the novel seems to ask, 'the curate or his friend?' The reader can testify to his or her true sensibility by reading on, and proving to be a better 'man of feeling' than the curate.

One of the novel's first readers, the educationalist James Elphinston, falls into the trap and immediately accepts the novel's invitation into the community of sentimental readers. Soon after the publication of *The Man of Feeling*, he expressed to Mackenzie his dissatisfaction with the fragmentariness of the novel in a friendly correspondence. 'His truly sentimental friends', he writes, would like to see Harley's story 'in a more consistent dress; to see him begun, continued (though diversified) and ended, perhaps, with a prospect of similar prosperity.' In its present fragmented condition the introduction can please only those 'who cannot taste *the man of feeling*; and whose praise, if they should bestow any, would but make him blush'. Joining the group of the sentimental readers, he is happy that 'every reader of feeling' received Harley as a brother, but he finds the behaviour of the curate coarse and insensible.[10] No doubt it should hurt the sensibility of true men of feeling that a novel of genuine emotion has an introduction where even the one who saved the manuscript from destruction refuses to weep over it, claiming that 'one is ashamed to be pleased with the works of one knows not whom'.[11] Elphinston probably never notices that the 'insensible' curate saved another text, the German Illustrissimi, which his sensible friend had destined for the same kind of destruction. Elphinston knew without thinking which party to join. Thus, the scenery of ruin and disappointment and the damage to the manuscript show a melancholy prospect not in order to express resignation and pessimism, but in order to call out for a community of men of feeling to salvage the fragments and turn back the process of destruction. The reader is invited—and even pressed—not only to read about

[9] Henry Mackenzie, *Letters to Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock: On Literature, Events and People 1768–1815*, ed. by Horst Drescher (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), p. 17. (Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.) Mackenzie and Elizabeth Rose started to correspond in 1768, when the young Mackenzie settled down in Edinburgh after finishing his legal studies in London. His cousin, living in Kilravock Castle, was his literary confidante, to whom he sent finished chapters of *The Man of Feeling*, on which Elizabeth commented. As Mackenzie writes to her in October 1770, 'you are not only mistress of my thoughts but you have them even in embryo' (p. 54).

[10] Letter to Henry Mackenzie of 4 May 1771, in *Literature and Literati: The Literary Correspondence and Notebooks of Henry Mackenzie*, I: *Letters 1766–1827*, ed. by Horst W. Drescher (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 50–51. Drescher presents this letter in Elphinston's innovative spelling, which I here standardize, as Drescher also does later.

[11] *Man of Feeling*, p. 49.

but also to *be* the true man of feeling, buying into an institutionalized culture of tears and compassion. Even if its fictional narrator did not weep, Mackenzie's contemporaries could not—or sometimes did not dare to—resist their tears.

Mirroring Minds

Like the novel's manuscript, its protagonist is a tool devised to find—and produce—sentimental readers. Harley is a character who, like a mirror, deflects the reader's gaze, shifting it away from Harley onto all those who narrate, see, and read him. To explain Harley's naively trustful way of reading the personality of others, the narrator of *The Man of Feeling* describes his protagonist's mind as follows:

> Though I am not of opinion with some wise men, that the existence of objects depends on idea; yet, I am convinced, that their appearance is not a little influenced by it. The optics of some minds are in so unlucky a perspective, as to throw a certain shade on every picture that is presented to them; while those of others (of which number was Harley) like the mirrors of the ladies, have a wonderful effect in bettering their complexions. Through such a medium perhaps was he looking on his present companion. (p. 63)

The narrator places Harley's subjectivity within a framework of influential ideas circulating in eighteenth-century culture. The description of Harley's mind, however, simultaneously reveals the speaker's own narrative and epistemological standpoint. When describing Harley, the narrator interprets Harley's way of reading the world. While Harley reads the character of 'gentleman' into the sycophant who aspires to be one (p. 66), the narrator admits that his own reading of Harley is also determined by subjective factors. The exposure of Harley's distorting vision is at the same time the narrator's self-exposure, and a confession of his own epistemological scepticism. His framework of thought is embedded in its context of contemporary philosophical ideas on subjectivity and perception—a Humean stance on the relations between the world, reason, and the human subject, and a Berkeleian perspective on vision.[12] It is the position of 'scepticism with regard to the senses' from which the narrator of *The Man of Feeling* admits to be speaking, and which also characterizes Harley's way of reading the world through the influence of his own state of mind. The tentative 'perhaps' in the last line further unsettles our confidence in the narrator's actual knowledge. Claiming from a perspective of distorted vision and

[12] In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, David Hume questions the existence of objects as distinct from our mind and perception. Moreover, in Hume's opinion, it is not only external existence that should be treated with doubt, but our own body, which is also accessible to us only through sense perception. Ideas of doubt regarding the external world that is accessible to us only through the senses had also been advocated by earlier philosophers of the period. In the *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709), George Berkeley argues that all we see is not the objects themselves, but a signifying system of the external world. The knowledge we can have of external objects is an interpretation given by the mind to the information gained by us via perception. In John Locke's theory, our knowledge of the world is entirely dependent on processes of sensation and reflection. See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), ed. by L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 66–68 and 187–218; George Berkeley, 'An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision' (1709), in *The Works of George Berkeley*, ed. by Alexander Campbell Fraser, 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), I, 127–210; John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1690; repr. London: Penguin, 1997), pp. 109–10.

questionable knowledge that Harley's vision is distorted shifts the reader's attention from character to narrator. The immersion of the narrative voice in the philosophies of epistemological scepticism and uncertainty draws the reader into a narratological puzzle. We might wonder who the narrator's utterance actually relates to when he is speaking about the main character. Whose story are we reading here? And who, or what, is the man of feeling?

The metaphor of mind as looking-glass appears in a number of philosophical texts that helped form ideas which were influential in the cultural production of sensibility. In writings by John Locke, David Hume, and Adam Smith, this metaphor marks an instability or even crisis related to the concept of a coherent, self-sufficient, knowing and feeling subject.[13] Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) depicts human minds as mirrors that reflect passions, sentiments, and opinions. In a self-inducing sympathy, a person's emotions and opinions are reflected by other minds in a multiplicity of reverberations, until original and mirror image become indistinguishable, and the dividing lines of subjectivities become blurred. In the chapter that investigates the source of our esteem for the rich and powerful, Hume writes:

> In general we may remark, that the minds of men are mirrors to one another, not only because they reflect each other's emotions, but also because those rays of passions, sentiments, and opinions, may be often reverberated, and may decay away by insensible degrees. Thus the pleasure which a rich man receives from his possessions, being thrown upon the beholder, causes a pleasure and esteem; which sentiments again being perceived and sympathized with, increase the pleasure of the possessor, and, being once more reflected, become a new foundation for pleasure and esteem in the beholder. [. . .] Here then is a third rebound of the original pleasure, after which it is difficult to distinguish the images and reflections, by reason of their faintness and confusion. (p. 365)

The consequences of such a multiple, sympathetic refraction are that it becomes less and less possible to distinguish to whom one's feelings actually belong. Feelings, mixed and intensified in their passage from self to self, allow distinct subjectivities to slip into one another. The rich man not only has material means, but he also possesses feelings borrowed from others who admire the pleasure of his riches. His emotions are dependent on and constructed by someone else's feelings.[14]

In Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) the figure of the mirror refers to society, which provides the individual with feedback on his

[13] Smith and Hume were a direct influence on Mackenzie. Mackenzie knew and admired Hume. As a lawyer of aristocratic descent, he mixed with those literati who contributed to the lively intellectual scene of eighteenth-century Edinburgh, including, besides Hume and Smith, Henry Home (Lord Kames), Hugh Blair, William Robertson, and Alexander Carlyle. Hume and Smith were founder members of the Select Society established in 1754. See Harold William Thompson, *A Scottish Man of Feeling: Some Account of Henry Mackenzie, Esq. of Edinburgh and of the Golden Age of Burns and Scott* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 40, and Mullan, 'The Language of Sentiment', p. 275. For the comparison of the human mind to a looking-glass in John Locke's philosophy see *Essay*, p. 25, where the metaphor implies a mechanical, passive receptivity of the mind to external ideas.

[14] For an investigation of the period's fascination with exploring where feelings come from, how they are transmitted, and to whom they belong, see Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996). As Pinch argues, many eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers discover that one's feelings may not really be one's own (pp. 2–3).

or her behaviour and passions. It is through the internalization of this mirror that the individual's emotional development is brought about. If one grows up in complete isolation, Smith argues, one will not be able to think of one's sentiments and conduct, nor of the beauty or deformity of one's face. Brought into society, the individual is instantly provided with a mirror, which is placed in 'the countenance and behaviour of those he lives with, which always mark when they enter into, and when they disapprove of his sentiments; and it is here that he first views the propriety and impropriety of his own passions, the beauty and deformity of his own mind'.[15] Smith uses the trope of the mirror to argue that the moral and emotional self is not self-sufficient and cannot develop without the reflection provided by our internal looking-glass, representing the judgement of other moral, emotional, and social beings. Following the positive or negative responses of society to the individual's actions and feelings, the person's 'desires and actions, his joys and sorrows, will now often become the causes of new desires and new aversions, new joys and new sorrows' (p. 129). Morals and emotions are born out of the judgements of the other within the self, which Smith calls the 'impartial spectator' or 'man within the breast'. This impartial spectator is the internalized mirror that—like Harley's mind—turns us into a better person when we look into it. Thus, the mirror of society is formative of the affective, moral self that it simultaneously inhabits.

The looking-glass metaphor in Mackenzie's novel brings into play a similar disruption of coherence, subversion of self-sufficiency, and displacement of the centre of human subjectivity. Harley's mind, as we learn from the novel, is a distorting mirror, which not only reflects but also improves the complexion of those who look into it. On the one hand, the trope of the looking-glass is used by the narrator to expose Harley's technique of reading—one that projects the reader's own goodness and benevolence onto the rest of the world. This explains Harley's social awkwardness and serves as the reason for his frequent exploitation and victimization by fraudsters during his journey. For Harley, the world is benevolent and good, because he sees only himself in every countenance. On the other hand, as the metaphor of the mirror in its philosophical context suggests, Harley, even though he is presented as the central character, never becomes the subject in question. Every act of attention directed at him brings about the deflection of the viewer, and a shift of focus. Like the fawning crowd feeding the vanity and producing the passions of the rich in Hume's *Treatise*, Harley is no subject himself, but an object used for the production of someone else's subjectivity and passions—a subjectivity incomplete without the other. Like the manuscript found by the curate and his friend, Harley is searching for, and produces, men of feeling. Where he turns up, the world shows a different face. In this way, the story of the man of feeling is always the story of someone else: of the one who sees, reads, and narrates.

[15] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 129. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

Sympathy and its Discontents

Sentimental novels of the period often warn about the dangers inherent in moments of sympathy, as theorized by Hume and Smith, where the boundaries of the self are thrown into crisis and where the other's emotions can be mistaken for one's own. Scenes of charity can point to the pitfalls of benevolence and highlight the darker side of the sympathetic impulse advocated by the philosophers of the eighteenth-century moral-sense school. Encounters with the poor are a recurring motif in sentimental novels. Beggars, the poor, and the needy crowds surrounding a wealthy benefactor are the 'other' in whose presence the virtues of sensibility manifest themselves, and who hold up a mirror to the values, vanities, and vices of sensible men and women of means. Most of the time, however, the scene of charity reveals more of the one who gives than the one who begs.[16] The beggar's way to earn his payment is often to assume the role of the double with whom the potential benefactor can easily identify. In Sarah Fielding's *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744), for example, David (the protagonist) is betrayed by his greedy younger brother, Daniel, who secretly forges the will of their deceased father, leaving David with practically nothing. Daniel, who formerly pretended to love the benevolent and talented David, now abuses his impoverished brother and tries to make him his dependant. When the outraged David leaves his brother's house in despair, he gives away one of his last shillings to a beggar who appears to be his mirror image. As the beggar tells him, he too was 'turned out of doors by an unnatural brother'.[17]

Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) calls attention to the possible discontent behind the narcissistic satisfaction of mutual mirroring. As both Goldsmith's and Fielding's novels show, the danger for the sentimental benefactor lies in giving away much more than one's fortune; it can possibly lie in losing the centre of one's self and placing it in the other. Disappointed by the hypocritical flattery and mock-friendship of dependants, Sir William Thornhill, the wealthy aristocrat of Goldsmith's novel, walks around disguised as an honest but poor man, Mr Burchell, in order to find true friendship and virtue. When Sir William was younger, he enjoyed the adulation of dependants to such an extent that most of his pleasures were derived from flattery. The figure of Sir William takes to the furthest limits the outlook voiced in the moral philosophy of Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, and Francis Hutcheson. According to Shaftesbury, to possess 'natural affections' that promote the good and benefit of the public also involves having affections that make our own selves happy. A considerable part of our pleasure, he claims, derives from sharing the delight and contentment of others, and receiving positive affections in sympathy with them. Our acts are naturally performed with reference to another person, in expectation of the admiration, esteem, kindness, or even flattery we receive in

[16] See e.g. Yorick's pleasure in distributing his money among a group of beggars or his determination not to give anything to the Franciscan monk in Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (1768). At one point Yorick uses the scene of begging to expose female vanity, where the act of charity is performed in expectation of undeserved praise. See Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*, ed. by Ian Jack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 6–7, 35–37, and 107–09.

[17] Sarah Fielding, *The Adventures of David Simple*, ed. by Malcolm Kelsall (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 19.

return. Francis Hutcheson—the most important disseminator of Shaftesbury's ideas in Scotland—explains altruism by the presence of a so-called 'moral sense' in human nature. This, Hutcheson claims, is an ability that makes us impulsively approve of and be pleased with whatever is virtuous—that is, those actions and affections that promote the good and well-being of others. Hutcheson also argues that our disinterested acts can be explained only by the innate benevolence of human nature, which is the universal foundation of moral sense.[18]

Goldsmith, however, shows how the idea of natural goodness and the belief in a love that both gives pleasure to the individual and creates the bonds of society can potentially turn against themselves, becoming the very tool of social isolation and the disintegration of the self. Sir William Thornhill 'began to lose private interest in universal sympathy' by a pathological form of sensibility:

> Physicians tell us of a disorder in which the whole body is so exquisitely sensible that the slightest touch gives pain. What some have thus suffered in their persons, this gentleman felt in his mind: the slightest distress, whether real or fictitious, touched him to the quick, and his soul laboured under a sickly sensibility of the miseries of others.[19]

Making one's feelings entirely dependent on those of others not only brings about poverty, but impoverishes and empties out the very core of the self, threatening it with destruction. While his over-generosity leads Sir William into giving away his fortune, he gradually loses the adoration and flattery of those who used to need his support. The more he fits into the sentimental ideal, the less opportunity he has for practising this ideal. As his example shows, living exclusively for the social affections paradoxically quenches both the social feelings and the pleasures of the self that derive from such feelings: 'But in proportion as he became contemptible to others, he became despicable to himself. His mind had leaned upon their adulation, and that support taken away, he could find no pleasure in the applause of his heart, which he had never learned to reverence' (p. 28). The self of the sentimental man of feeling is centred in the other, and is therefore not self-sufficient. Acting supportively and charitably towards the other is a personal need, motivated by easing one's own mental pain—comparable to the agonies of the sensible body—caused by the other's slightest distress. Besides, it is done in expectation of a reward, a positive feedback on which one's entire consciousness depends.

In *The Vicar of Wakefield* Sir William Thornhill recognizes a trap: dominance intermingled with too great reliance on the feelings of the other actually jeopardizes the very mastery the self claims as its own. On the surface the charitable man of sensibility lives only for the good of the other. But the guise of the good man hides a structure that cannot be thought outside hierarchies. The bonds of love that create the social ties in Shaftesbury turn out to have the same root as the bond that ties together master and slave, as outlined later by Hegel.

[18] Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. by Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 204; Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue; in Two Treatises*. (London: J. Darby, 1725), p. 132.

[19] Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield: A Tale. Supposed to be Written by Himself* (London: F. Newbery, 1766), pp. 26–27. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

Extreme sensibility is not simply an intense reactive state of both mind and body, but a form of pathological dependence. Growing out of a mutual need, it is a form of dominance where even the person of higher social status ultimately becomes dependent for recognition and for his very existence on the people he supports. The 'natural affections' of the man of feeling, when put into social practice, remain narcissistic and do not make mutual recognition possible.

Jessica Benjamin addresses a similar problem in relation to classical (mainly Freudian) discourses of psychoanalysis, where interpersonal interactions are seen in terms of a subject–object relationship, which dynamic endangers the recognition of the other person as inherently independent from the perceptions of the self. As Benjamin argues, the other is 'not merely the object of the ego's need/drive or cognition/perception but has a separate and equivalent center of self. Intersubjective theory postulates that the other must be recognized as another subject in order for the self to fully experience his or her subjectivity in the other's presence.'[20] Benjamin claims that domination is not something to be readily assumed; it is not a psychological inevitability, but something that develops culturally out of the breakdown of an initial intersubjective state, a collapse of mutual recognition. For Hegel, she claims, as well as for classical psychoanalysis, the breakdown of this mutuality is inevitable. In Hegel's theory the omnipotent ego, no matter how strongly it strives for independence, must still face a fundamental paradox: the independence and power of the master is interrelated with its being acknowledged by the subordinate party. The absoluteness of the self is inevitably undermined by the recognition of the other on which it necessarily depends.[21]

Thus, discourses of sensibility and psychoanalysis often struggle with similar questions regarding the vicissitudes of the self in its interpersonal relationships. Sentimental novels show how hard it is to grasp the psychological reality of such an intersubjective state and the recognition of the other as subject rather than object. What love, these novels seem to ask, could fulfil our wish for an intersubjective recognition when even the love of the good man, the love of benevolence that creates the social bond, is like a hall of mirrors? The figure of the man of feeling, I would like to suggest, is a textual locus for the attempt to realize this mutuality which for most Western societies has always remained a difficult task, if not an impossible one. The sentimental novel, if it cannot offer a solution, at least conveys the awareness of the necessity of such an ideal state. It achieves its goal by rendering reading problematic, showing why and how reading matters as an individual and affective task that also has social and political consequences. It is, after all, a process of reading in which the other person as similar or different, as object or subject, is understood. As sentimental novels show, the bonds of society are dependent on the transferential bond

[20] Jessica Benjamin, *Like Subjects, Love Objects: Essays on Recognition and Sexual Difference* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 30.

[21] Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), pp. 7–8, 32–33. See also Sigmund Freud, 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego' (1921), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey and others, 24 vols (London: Vintage, 2001), XVIII, 67–143 (hereafter *SE*); Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *The Emotional Tie: Psychoanalysis, Mimesis and Affect*, trans. by Douglas Brick and others (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 1–14.

of the reading process and are shaped by the mutual emotional investment of the participants. The otherness of the other, however, remains difficult to access since it can be found only beyond the transferences on which the literature of sensibility depends, beyond the bonds of Shaftesbury's 'natural affections'.[22]

Playing with the literary tradition that centres on the figure of the benefactor, Mackenzie's Harley does not want to let the beggar hold up the usual mirror. Instead, he tries to allow space for the recognition of otherness. While the beggar offers to tell Harley his future—something all passers-by want to hear—Harley asks for the beggar's own story instead, giving him an opportunity to explain how he became a fortune-teller. Thus Harley wants to listen to the story of suffering that had always been silenced or disbelieved by others; as the beggar complains:

> I told all my misfortunes truly, but they were seldom believed; and the few who gave me a half-penny as they passed, did it with a shake of the head, and an injunction, not to trouble them with a long story. [. . .] I changed my plan, and, instead of telling my own misfortunes, began to prophesy happiness to others. This I found by much the better way: *folks will always listen when the tale is their own*; and of many who say they do not believe in fortune-telling, I have known few on whom it had not a very sensible effect. (p. 61, emphasis added)

The beggar explains how 'every one is anxious to hear what they wish to believe' (p. 61). If he wants to survive, the story he tells must be the fulfilled wish of the listener offered in the guise of the future.

The encounter between Harley and the beggar soon turns into a Humean meeting of mirrors, where wishes and stories are reflected and mingled in a multiplicity of reverberations. Harley urges the beggar to 'let me know something of your profession; I have often thought of turning fortune-teller for a week or two myself' (p. 60). Understanding that Harley appreciates frankness, the professional liar confesses that he makes a living by telling lies. He endeavours to satisfy Harley with the true and 'entertaining' story he wishes to hear (p. 60). Facing the man of feeling, he is compelled to show himself in a better light if he wants to profit from the encounter, so he boasts of having 'had the humour of plain-dealing in me from a child', and claims that 'I was in some sort forced to the trade, for I dealt once in telling the truth' (p. 60). Harley gets what he wanted to hear; the story of the beggar's life remains Harley's wish-fulfilment, presented as the truth behind the profession of lying, but still from within the economic conventions of that profession. The beggar ends up narrating the story of the interesting business Harley himself wanted to try out for a short time, in others words, exactly what the man of feeling 'wishes to believe' about begging. His story had to reveal the secrets of fortune-telling, be entertaining and worth Harley's money. While Harley's mind, so to say, betters the complexion of the beggar's narrative, the beggar's story, in its turn, reflects the wish of his benefactor.

[22] For the operation of transference in the process of reading see Peter Brooks, 'The Idea of a Psychoanalytic Criticism', in *The Trial(s) of Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Françoise Meltzer and Peter Rudnytsky (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 145–59 (pp. 152–55); and Jerre Collins and others, 'Questioning the Unconscious', in *In Dora's Case*, ed. by Charles Bernheimer and Claire Cahane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 243–53 (p. 252).

The act of charity shows a similarly controversial face: 'Harley had drawn a shilling from his pocket; but virtue bade him consider on whom he was going to bestow it.—Virtue held back his arm:—but a milder form, a younger sister of virtue's, not so severe as virtue, not so serious as pity, smiled upon him: his fingers lost their compression;—nor did virtue offer to catch the money as it fell' (p. 61). The man of feeling is a tool, rather than the subject, of his own emotions. His act of charity is not a voluntary, self-conscious decision of a sensible mind, but the work of an involuntary moment caused by the mechanical operation of sympathy. The sympathy between poor and rich is brought about by the cunning tale of the beggar, making the fantasy of the rich materialize in the story of the poor. It is on the basis of the illusion of similarity that an encounter can take place. Rather than being a scene of recognition and giving, Harley's act of charity remains an economic exchange that sustains social hierarchies.

It takes a feeling reader to identify every charitable act with a corresponding sensible heart—a reader for whom Harley's mind can function like a looking-glass that makes the complexion of the world better. Mary Wollstonecraft's novel *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) draws attention to the important political stakes of being educated into such a way of reading. Wollstonecraft shows how serious the problem becomes when the looking-glass that improves one's appearance is really a lady's mental mirror. Maria's reading, governed by the fantasy image of a man of feeling who makes the world's face better, has tragic consequences. George Venables, her future husband, abuser, and persecutor, gains Maria's love by performing a charitable act which, for Maria, is the emblem of a feeling heart. The guinea which Venables gives to Maria in support of the distressed Peggy, as Maria recalls, 'invested my hero with more than mortal beauty. My fancy [. . .] quickly went to work, with all the happy credulity of youth, to consider that heart devoted to virtue, which had only obeyed a virtuous impulse.'[23] As Maria has to learn from her own bitter experience, the ideal of the man of feeling can easily remain an empty pose, an apparatus through which the ideology of patriarchy reasserts itself. Obeying a virtuous impulse, as Harley did, does not necessarily imply a virtuous heart, hiding as it does the potential bonds that tie together master and slave: the unyielding dynamics of dominance.

Mobile Identities

Harley's sympathetic lens even makes it possible for the horrors of the eighteenth-century madhouse to acquire a more pleasant complexion. Harley's friends are shown around Bedlam by a cruel keeper, who introduces the mad 'in the phrase of those that keep wild beasts for shew' (p. 67) and presents a terrifying scene of clanking chains and horrid, wild cries. Harley himself, however, is approached by a 'decent-looking man' who offers to give him 'a more satisfactory account of the unfortunate people you see here' (p. 67). The stranger goes up to him when Harley falls behind his companions and lingers within the world of Bedlam for a short time instead of following the rhythm of the sane. As it turns out at the end of the episode, this man is one of the

[23] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary*; and *The Wrongs of Woman*, ed. by Gary Kelly (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 135.

inhabitants, and thinks himself to be 'the Chan of Tartary'. It is only the man of feeling among the visitors who is singled out and taken on a private tour of the madhouse. The world of the mad does not open up for the regular visitor—it can open up only for the man of feeling.

The mad guide's story of Bedlam is indeed different from the one the cruel keeper has to offer. The inmates are not wild beasts, madmen, or maniacs any more but 'unfortunate people'. The mad Newtonian scientist whose cosmological calculations did not work according to plan is 'a gentleman who had once been a celebrated mathematician', who 'fell a sacrifice' to science (p. 67). Harley is introduced to talented people, many of whom had once been well known for their achievements. The mad guide characterizes them through what they used to be rather than by naming them as anything in the present; their identity and humanity lie in the story of their past. As he points out to Harley, apropos of the businessman whom bankruptcy reduced to madness: '*this* [. . .] *was* a gentleman well known in Change-alley' (p. 68, emphasis added). The man who constantly recites poetry is introduced as a 'figure' who 'was a schoolmaster of some reputation', and interrupts their conversation as a 'voice' (p. 68). From the guide's perspective he did not lose his wits by trying to solve a difficult problem but he 'came hither'—as if by his own will—'to be resolved of some doubts he entertained concerning the genuine pronunciation of the Greek vowels' (p. 68). The scholar of poetry is himself a figure. He is only a trope in the story Harley's guide tells about him—a trope of his luckier and more glorious past.

For the mad guide, Bedlam is a place inhabited by gentlemen, unfortunate people, voices, figures, ghosts, and indefinable creatures whose identity can be caught only in the grammatical past tense. This scene of Bedlam is a text whose figures stand for stories of interesting and once successful human beings now turned into mere signifiers—a text completely different from what the cruel keeper offered the visitors, who, as a result, took flight in horror. The different perspectives of the two guides construct Bedlam as a text dependent on its narrator, which text makes it impossible for both visitors and inmates to assume and construct stable identities. The inhabitants are confined by verbal signs that can mean anything depending on the reader: a prison-house of language. In the figure of the guide Harley finds his double, another man of feeling, and it is only between the two men of feeling—or two madmen—that a conversation can take place. Through the language of history and poetry, Harley and the guide enter into a mental domain which assumes the universality of madness and its underlying presence in all human actions. The guide proposes that madness is a condition that overflows the walls of Bedlam: 'the world, in the eye of a philosopher, may be said to be a large madhouse' (p. 69). Harley agrees, and only after this agreement has been established does the guide reveal his 'true' identity as the Chan of Tartary, and therefore his delusion. Like the other inhabitants of Bedlam, he turns out to be a half-fictional character from a story of the past, a figure lacking existence in the present.

Sigmund Freud, in his reading of Wilhelm Jensen's *Gradiva*, gives account of an encounter where delusion and sanity have to speak the same language in

order for a cure to take place.[24] The hero of Jensen's novella, the archaeologist Norbert Hanold, is driven by a delusion to find the reality behind an ancient bas-relief representing a girl with a distinctive gait. When tracing the reality of the gait in his present environment does not bring the desired results, he undertakes a trip to Pompeii, where he indeed finds a woman with the Gradiva-gait who matches his fantasy. The girl, Zoe Bertgang, Hanold's once intimate childhood friend (whom the scholar had simply foreclosed from his consciousness), enters into a conversation with the obsessed archaeologist. By assuming the role of the revenante the man takes her to be, Zoe can uncover the nature of the other's madness. As Freud writes, she accepts the young man's delusion only in order to set him free from it. Curing his delusion is possible only by 'taking up the same ground as the delusional structure and then investigating it as completely as possible' (p. 22). This encounter is not simply an encounter between sanity and madness as Freud presents it, but also a story about the politics of reading. It is an allegory of reading and recognizing difference—an encounter between woman and man where woman, in order to be noticed, has to step into the male fantasy created around her existence.[25]

The Bedlam episode in Mackenzie's novel presents a similar scenario. Here the mad guide has to assume the fantasy of Harley in order that he may be heard. Becoming the reflection of the man of feeling, the mad guide presents a better, more humane, more sympathetic story of the horrors of Bedlam. The only way for madness to raise a voice against the dehumanization and the forgetting imposed on it by society is to assume the identity of sanity. But when the guide reveals his identity, Harley notices for the first time—and shies away from—their difference. The moment otherness is revealed, it is instantly rejected by the man of feeling, whose fantasy it has been to see a world of feeling. When he discovers what world he has been in the process of entering, he is 'struck by this discovery', and abandons it: 'he had prudence enough, however, to conceal his amazement, and bowing as low to the monarch as his dignity required, left him immediately, and joined his companions' (p. 69). The world of the mad needs to speak the language of sensibility in order to claim recognition—a recognition that is eventually denied even by the man of feeling himself.

In the women's ward, Harley listens to the story of the melancholy girl who lost her lover, Billy, and became a means of financial exchange in an unhappy marriage arranged by her father. The girl's madness lies in not being able to feel emotions or shed tears any more: 'I would weep too, but my brain is dry; and it burns, burns, burns!' (p. 70). Harley's resemblance to the dead Billy activates a scene of mutual transferences: 'I would not have you weep: you are like my Billy; you are, believe me; just so he looked when he gave me this ring; poor Billy!' (pp. 70–71). While the girl identifies Harley with her lost lover, the melancholy Harley can similarly identify with, and sense his future in the fate of, the dead

[24] Sigmund Freud, 'Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*' (1907), in *SE*, IX, 7–95; Wilhelm Jensen, *Gradiva* (1903), trans. by Helen M. Downey (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon, 1993).

[25] For feminist readings of Freud's reading of *Gradiva* see Sarah Kofman, 'Summarize, Interpret (Gradiva)', in *Freud and Fiction*, trans. by Sarah Wykes (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), pp. 85–117; Mary Jacobus, 'Is There a Woman in This Text?', in *Reading Woman* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 83–109; Rachel Bowlby, 'One Foot in the Grave', in *Still Crazy after All These Years: Women, Writing and Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 157–82.

Billy, who also left his lover in the hope of bettering his fortune. The mad girl, like Jensen's deluded Norbert, touches her companion, holds his hand and presses it to her bosom, and finally puts Billy's ring on Harley's finger. Harley's tears make the girl—previously thoughtful and silent—speak and feel again. The scene of sensibility also affects the other visitors: 'except the keeper's, there was not an unmoistened eye around her' (p. 70). In contrast to Freud's reading of *Gradiva*, touching the other is not a test of the reality of the other; it does not provide a possible way out of the delusion, but remains within the bounds of the transference. It is by touching the body of Harley that the mad girl turns him into Billy and forces him back into the fantasy. The production of emotional responses characteristic of sensibility is made possible only by fastening tight the web of transferences by which both self and other are helplessly bound. The man of feeling needs to be (in) the other in order for sensibility to be produced.

The 'man of feeling', therefore, is not Harley; it is an emotional lens, a technique of reading (through feeling) rather than a pre-existent character or personality type. The construction of the 'man of feeling' implies an always shifting perspective. Harley, for those who read him, is a hollowed-out figure eternally mobilized by—and mobilizing—someone else's emotions. This process is well illustrated by the scene of Harley's death. The narrator, a friend of Harley's, attempts to reanimate Harley's lifeless body, 'stretched without sense or feeling' in front of him:

> I took his hand in mine; I repeated his name voluntarily:—I felt a pulse in every vein at the sound. I looked earnestly in his face; his eye was closed, his lip pale and motionless. There is an enthusiasm in sorrow that forgets impossibility. I wondered that it was so. The sight drew a prayer from my heart; it was the voice of frailty, and of man! the confusion of my mind began to subside into thought; I had time to weep! (p. 138)

Tears are the marks of an illusion experienced by the narrator. The illusion is that of *prosopopoeia*, a trope through which the inanimate becomes animate. The pulse of the corpse is the narrator's own pulse, wished into the other's body. His illusory reanimation is an 'enthusiasm of sorrow' (p. 97), in which the other's feelings are, in reality, one's own. In Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* our horrific and melancholy picture of the dead is the result of a similar reanimation, which Smith theorises as an act of sympathetic identification. Our grief results

> from our putting ourselves in their situation, and from our lodging, if I may be allowed to say so, our own living souls in their inanimated bodies, and thence conceiving what would be our emotions in this case. It is from this very illusion of the imagination, that the foresight of our own dissolution is so terrible to us. (p. 16)

By the end of the novel the narrator has become a Harley-figure. Sitting inside Harley's favourite place, the hollow tree, he turns into a container for noble feelings: Harley's lens of sympathy has softened his hatred of the world into pity. Similarly, when we mourn Harley we wish to revive the man of feeling by recovering our own humanity lodged in the other. The death of the man of feeling repeats the gesture of the novel's introduction, inviting us to mobilize our sympathy and reconstruct the community of genuine sentiment.

Like the curate's friend in the novel's introduction, readers did save this novel. It went through a large number of editions from 1771 until the end of the century, and has been constantly re-edited since.[26] But despite its textual survival, it is, like most sentimental novels, often deemed 'unreadable' by today's reading public. Its late nineteenth-century editions even include an 'Index to Tears', where the taxonomy of tearfulness is clearly presented as a curiosity, with the possible intention of eliciting a mirthful response in the audience.[27] While the novel has recently gained an increasing amount of critical attention from those specializing in the literature and history of sensibility, it remains on the margins of the literary canon, even within the academic curriculum of major universities. The critical discourse through which the novel is salvaged today tends to turn away from the complexity of emotional response altogether or distances tearfulness into a historical past, which can be understood only by means of scholarly contextualization. Mackenzie's novel is retained by foreclosing the issue of the tears it used to be able to trigger. We do not cry over sentimental novels any more. Instead, we produce scholarly analyses from a safely detached perspective in the present.

The novel's marginalization, however, can serve to raise important questions. Have our reading practices changed so much that we consider the eighteenth century's indulgence of the reader's emotions distasteful or difficult to comprehend? Or do we simply shed different tears now? Has the university itself become a means for institutionalizing the foreclosure of emotional response? And how long can we safely live in what Maureen Harkin calls a 'distinctly post-sentimental age'?[28] Through its tears, Mackenzie's novel teaches us something about reading. Like Freud's interpretation of *Gradiva*, it exposes the way in which one is deluded or seduced into a shared fantasy, while showing the risks and difficulties that arise in any encounter with the other. In our age, as in Mackenzie's, texts exist that—as sentimental novels once did—compel us to absorb the values and ideologies of a culture by directly appealing to our tears or our feelings. Making us conscious that our emotional responses *do* exist is a task that must be addressed by future practices of critical reading. The reading practices encouraged within the academy must negotiate a space for an affectivity that is theorized yet experienced at the same time. Reading the sentimental novel with an attention to emotional response may help us become aware of the ways in which the seductions and fantasies of our own contemporary culture foreclose the issue of tears, which thereby escape being analysed and understood by the very practices on which we rely for understanding.

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[26] For a list of the editions of Mackenzie's novel see Thompson, pp. 417–18. The latest editions are by Brian Vickers (2001) and Maureen Harkin (2005).

[27] The index first appeared in Henry Morley's 1886 edition and is reproduced in Brian Vickers's 2001 edition (pp. 110–11).

[28] Harkin, introduction, p. 20.