Mary Lenard

Preaching Pity

Dickens, Gaskell, and Sentimentalism in Victorian Culture
# Table of Contents

**Introduction** ............................................. 1

**Chapter One: Critical Visions and Revisions:**  
A Critical History of the Sentimental ......................... 11

I. “The Most Exquisite Sensibility”: The Eighteenth-Century Origins of Sentimentalism .................................... 11
II. Sentimentalism and Literary Criticism ...................... 23
III. Mixed Feelings: “Extraordinary” Women and Traditional Feminist Criticism of the Sentimental .................. 32

**Chapter Two: Preaching Pity:** Women Writers and the Development of a Victorian Cultural Discourse of Social Reform .................................................... 45

I. The Death of the Moral Economy: Social Change and the Need for a New Cultural Discourse .................. 48
II. The “Two Nations” and the Women Writer .................. 53
III. “The Talent of Female Influence”: The Power of Sentimental Morality .................................................. 60

**Chapter Three: “Mr. Popular Sentiment”: Dickens and the Gender Politics of Sentimentalist Discourse** ............... 77

I “My glance at the New Poor Law”: Pathos and Parish Boys in *Oliver Twist* ........................................ 83
II. “Sentimental Philanthropist,” “Humanity-Monger,” and “Feminine” Genius: the Struggles of a Literary Cross-Dresser .................................................. 93

**Chapter Four: “I Know Nothing of Political Economy”: Elizabeth Gaskell’s Call to Sympathy** ...................... 109

**Conclusion** ............................................. 135

**Bibliography** ........................................... 143

**Index** ................................................ 155