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Introduction: Crying over Little Nell

Nicola Bown

Do you ever find yourself coming over all sentimental? And if you do, do you like it, or do you feel embarrassed by your sentimental proclivities? Is sentimentality a pleasurable indulgence, a minor vice, or a lapse of aesthetic and moral taste? That Victorian culture is steeped in sentimentality is axiomatic. Its cast of pathetic children, fallen women, faithful animals, lachrymose deathbeds, hopeless sunsets and false dawns, fated quests, angelic mothers and innocents betrayed – to name only the most obvious topoi of literary and visual sentimentality – is familiar to the point of parody. (Or perhaps, thinking of Wilde’s witticism on the death of Little Nell, it is beyond parody already.) The taste for Victorian culture’s sentimentality, like the taste for Victorian culture more generally, has waxed and waned, yet whereas a fascination for kitsch or a delight in melodrama’s excesses can sit happily with serious scholarly interests, it has rarely been respectable to stand up for sentimentality. Sentimentality is excessive feeling evoked by unworthy objects; it is falsely idealising; it simplifies and sanitises; it is vulgar; it leads to cynicism; it is feeling on the cheap; it’s predictable; it’s meretricious. In short, it’s an emotional and aesthetic blot on the landscape.

I am borrowing terms here used in the denunciation of sentimentality by among others I. A. Richards, the philosophers Michael Tanner and Mary Midgeley, F. R. Leavis and Aldous Huxley.¹ Victorian sentimentality is easy to identify, and just as easy to condemn. It has been harder, though we may fall prey to its lures in our own reading and viewing, to speak about it critically yet sympathetically. What, after all, is there to say about it – other than that it is there, like it or not?

In the field of American studies, however, a fierce debate has raged about the value and importance of sentimentality. This has centred on the restitution of a central place in nineteenth-century American fiction to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. The debate’s originators, Ann Douglas and Jane Tompkins, set terms for thinking about the place of sentimentality in American culture which have continued to influence not only readings of that novel but also wider discussions of nineteenth-century American literary culture. The rise of sentimentalism in the eighteenth century as a cultural translation of Adam Smith’s brilliant

popularising of Hume's moral philosophy in *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments* has also been extensively studied in recent years. The wide influence of the cult of sensibility, embodied in such figures as the man of feeling and the sentimental prostitute, through cultural forms as various as the novel, genre painting and the Foundling Hospital, has given eighteenth-century sentimentalism enough scholarly credibility to distinguish it sharply from Victorian sentimentality.

Michael Tanner ends his essay on sentimentality by noting that 'sentimentality deserves to be taken more seriously than it takes itself.'² This edition of *19* originated in a conference I organised with the aim of taking sentimentality seriously but doing so from a starting point of sympathy with the Victorians', and our own sentimentality. One of the most memorable moments of that day was the clip shown by Emma Mason from *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, with Michael Caine as Scrooge being shown the Cratchits' Christmas by the Ghost of Christmas Future. It's a scene of astonishing sentimental power: there were many people furtively wiping away their tears as they watched. But how is one to take seriously the tears so occasioned? The essays collected here attempt, in different ways, to consider how we might answer that question, and to open up public discussion of an aspect of Victorian culture that is too often ignored or maligned (even if surreptitiously enjoyed in private). I hope that they may bring a renewed conversation about the sentimental qualities in Victorian culture and of its original readers' and viewers' taste for and enjoyment of them. It may even, I hope, help us to understand and enjoy our own sentimental tears.

The writers in this edition of *19* consider some complex and pressing questions about the nature and role of Victorian sentimentality. Three of the essays discuss the greatest sentimentalist of his time, Charles Dickens, and show that Dickens's sentimentalism is central to our appreciation of his novels. Heather Tilley, in a subtle reading of the *Christmas Books*, reminds us of the roots of Dickens's fiction in the eighteenth-century philosophy of sensibility, and argues that the motif of sight and blindness in these stories embodies, literally speaking, the redemptive potential of the moral sentiments. Sally Ledger discusses the melodramatic matrix of what she terms Dickens's affective mode, and shows how the sentimentality of such famous scenes as the deaths of Jo the Crossing Sweeper from *Bleak House* and of Paul Dombey from *Dombey and Son* gains its power from the juxtaposition of pathos with comedy and the grotesque which is typical

of melodrama. Emma Mason draws on recent theoretical studies of the indivisibility of reason and emotion in our ability to make judgements about the world. She uses *A Christmas Carol* to argue that Dickens provides us with a model of sentimental reading that can illuminate and, indeed, reform our reading practices in the same way that feeling, in that story, reforms the world.

The other essays explore the workings of sentimentality in other cultural forms than the novel. Kirstie Blair investigates the operation of sentimentality in narrative poetry, which was one of the major conduits for sentimentality in Victorian culture, but carries feeling much less strongly nowadays. She explores the failures of the sentimental ideal, arguing that Tennyson in 'Enoch Arden' and Longfellow in *Evangeline* both present, though in different ways, the difficulty of achieving the communion of feeling hearts that sentimentality promises. Sentimentality is not as easy as some of its harsher critics suggest. Sonia Solicari's essay comes out of her work curatorial work on the V&A exhibition, *A Show of Emotion: Victorian Sentiment in Prints & Drawings*. She discusses the production and reproduction of sentimental images in the period. Drawing on a wide range of paintings and mass-produced visual imagery, Solicari argues that the taste for sentimental images was driven by the expansion of the market for art, and that it was at least partly created by the need to expand the available audience for artistic production. Finally, Marie Banfield's survey of dictionary definitions of the word sentimental and its cognates offers a useful corrective to the associations the term has gained from later writers. Rather than being freighted with negative meaning from its proximity to words such as cynicism, kitsch and vulgarity, Banfield shows that the primary understanding of sentimentality until at least the mid-nineteenth century derived from the Humean idea of the moral sentiments.

In this introductory essay I argue that sentimentality should be central to our appreciation of Victorian literature and art.³ Rather than seeking to understand sentimentality in primarily historical terms as a feature of texts, images and objects whose meaning is temporally governed by factors such as market capitalism, urbanisation or social class (important though all those things are), I argue that sentimental emotion works across time, collapsing the distance between reader or viewer, text or object or image, and the past worlds of thought, emotion, people and things she or he inhabited.⁴ Sentimentality is not simply a textual figure for a something else that can be discovered by archival research or diligent searching in the literary undergrowth. Nor is it

a quality we can simply label and take for granted. Rather, the pull of sentimental art, its ability to make our eyes prick with tears or call a lump to the throat, is a feature of the way we experience it in the here and now, but one that brings us physically and mentally close to long-dead readers and viewers in the past. Sentimental art and literature invites us sympathetically to share the emotional world of those distant from us in time and circumstance. As June Howard has argued,

[a]s emotion, embodied thought that animates cognition with the recognition of the self's engagement; as sympathy, firmly based in the observer's body and imaginatively linking it to another's; as domestic culture, in the peculiar intimacy of the print culture; sentimentality at the same time locates us in our embodied and particular selves and takes us out of them.⁵

In that sense, sentimentality is an important part of the historical imagination.

But I go further than this. Sentimentality in literature and art, I contend, gives us an opportunity to know more about what it means to be human ourselves, and helps us to feel and act rightly as human beings and moral actors. Here I follow the thinking of the philosopher Robert Solomon, who in his important essay 'In Defense of Sentimentality' has mounted a case for seeing sentimental emotions, both in response to literature and art, and in life more generally, as 'the precondition for ethical engagement'. Solomon argues that

no conception of ethics can be adequate unless it takes into account such emotions [as pity, sympathy, fondness, adoration and compassion], not as mere 'inclinations' but as an essential part of the substance of ethics itself. It is thus that I want to defend sentimentality as an ethical virtue and suggest that sentimentality in literature might best be conceived as the cultivation and 'practice' of our moral-emotional faculties'.⁶

As such, I am suggesting that we take seriously the ideas about the value of literature and art of those Victorians who championed sentimentality (rather than those, like Oscar Wilde or Fitzjames Stephen, who condemned it).⁷ Fred Kaplan comments that for writers such as Dickens and Thackeray, producing sentimental tears was a central part of the novelist's purpose, because these expressions of feeling in response to literature are 'a moral force for individual rebirth and for communal health.' For them, literature has higher purposes than merely giving its readers a good time – important, of course, though that is.⁸

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Literary or artistic sentimentality, I shall argue, has a vital function to play in our moral lives, and in this sense I want to defend sentimentality against those critics and philosophers who see it as vitiating our moral beings and as a sign of aesthetic failure or vulgarity. In particular, I argue that sentimental art, far from being shallow or predictable, has tremendous importance for its readers and viewers as human beings, as the anthropologist Robert Plant Armstrong has said: ‘Affecting works ... are the most relevant, most critical, most profound, most radical in their significance to the whole of man.’⁹ My discussion will centre on the *locus classicus* of sentimentality, the death of Little Nell from Dickens’s *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and I will argue that if this is a sentimental scene (and there may be an argument that it is not), both its aesthetic power and its moral virtue lie in its ability to make its readers weep sentimental tears.

The death of Little Nell in the last installment of *The Old Curiosity Shop* has elicited strongly contrasting reactions from its readers – so much so that it is sometimes difficult to credit that they are reading the same book. Here is the philosopher Mary Midgeley, passing a judgement typical of Dickens’s detractors:

[Little Nell] was well-designed to provoke a delicious sense of pity and mastery, and to set up further fantasies where this could continue ... [this portrayal] distorts various expectations; it can make people unable to deal with the real world, and particularly with real girls ... it can so absorb them that they cannot react to what is genuinely pitiful in the world around them.¹⁰

The charges against the sentimentality of Nell’s death are that it is pleasurable to feel such pity and mastery, that it leads its readers to fantasise instead of dealing with reality, and inures them to the proper objects of emotion in the world. This judgement betrays a prejudice against fiction, for underlying it is a sense that the emotions we feel in response to fictions are factitious, without proper objects and thus unable to lead to actions. However, the most telling charge here is that readers enjoy the emotions they feel when reading the death of Little Nell, so much so that they come to prefer them to emotions called up by real objects. In short, the death of Little Nell makes them feel more than the death of a real child. Sentimentality is thus a moral disorder of the most serious kind.

Let’s contrast this with a very different response to Nell’s death, this time from Dickens’s friend, the actor William Macready:

I do not know how to write to you about the papers I read last night ... I have

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suffered so much in reading them I have a recurrence of painful sensations and depressing thought. ... You have crowned all that you have ever done in the power, the truth, the beauty and the deep moral of this exquisite picture. ... I have had thoughts and visions of angelic forms and pictures of the last sad truth of our being here, in constant succession through the night. — I cannot banish the images you have placed before us. — Go on, my dear, excellent friend — make our hearts less selfish.¹¹

Macready had very recently lost a child when he read the account of Nell's death, and his letter bears witness to the overwhelming emotions he felt in response to it. Clearly, Macready was in no danger of feeling less grief for his own daughter because Nell's death made him suffer, for in fact the reverse is true: the tears he shed for Nell were in great part for his own child. Yet painful though it was to read, he also regards the episode as a consolatory, for after reading it he saw 'thoughts and visions of angelic forms' interspersed with 'pictures of the last sad truth of our being here'. Writing as one who has witnessed the death of his child recently, he does not castigate Dickens for falsifying or idealising the scene, instead praising Dickens for the truth of his depiction. Finally, he praises Dickens for the moral effects of the episode, calling on him to 'make our hearts less selfish'. Another of the early readers of Nell's death, John Forster, also emphasises the moral power of the scene, saying that he 'felt this death of dear little Nell as a kind of discipline of feeling and emotion which would do me lasting good'.¹² For both Macready and Forster, Nell's death possesses a virtue which helps them to feel properly not only in relation to fictitious objects but also towards real ones, and that virtue lies in its sentimentality.

Perhaps it is unfair to set the reaction of two of Dickens's friends both of whom are well known sentimentalists as a counterpoint to a philosopher's condemnation of sentimentality. However, Robert Solomon reaches a remarkably similar position through his arguments in defence of sentimentality to that which Macready and Forster imply in their letters. Of Nell he writes that '[a]llowing oneself to become teary-eyed about the tragic death of an impossibly idealized girl does not make us 'unable to deal with the real world' but rather activates our sensitivity to lesser as well as equal tragedies': that is, even though we know very well that Nell is not real or even realistic, weeping over her death helps us to feel more keenly in response to real objects and events. He argues further that to suggest that we should not succumb to sentimental feelings in response to works of art on the grounds that our emotions should be saved

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for the 'real world' is a grave error, concluding that:

The sum-total vision of our emotional economy according to which we have only so much sympathy to spend seems to me to be a particularly ill-considered and corrupting doctrine. ... It is true that a single trauma can exhaust our emotional resources, but it is unlikely that reading about Little Nell or Little Eva and experiencing 'melting compassion' will do that to us. Indeed, that is precisely the virtue of sentimentality, that it stimulates and exercises our sympathies without straining or exhausting them. So considered (as a sort of spiritual exercise) sentimentality is not an emotional vice but a virtue.¹³

The tears of sentimentality, then, are in Forster's words a 'discipline of feeling', and in Solomon's a 'sort of spiritual exercise' that enables us to feel more powerfully and more appropriately the emotions which we should feel in response to terrible events such as the death of a child.

Those who disdain sentimentality, Solomon contends, are frequently motivated by embarrassment or unease at what he terms 'tender' or 'sweet' emotions, such as pity or compassion. Equally, anti-sentimentalists make the demand of others that they force themselves to remember fully or to experience vicariously the tragedy and horror that attends death in real life rather than in the sweetened form of a sentimental fiction or a sentimentalised recollection.¹⁴ As Michael Tanner puts it, 'the feelings that are worth having are those which it costs an effort to have'.¹⁵ But what kind of a demand is this? In denying others the consolatory power of sentimentality, anti-sentimentalists place the highest moral value on the raw, unmediated contact with terrible experiences. I argue that this demand is inhumane and immoral: even if we could bear them, would such experiences really be good for us? And how could we demand that others are ennobled by experiencing and remembering their suffering in its most terrible form rather than seeking consolation for it?

After a visit in April 1850 to the home of James Lee, the Anglican Bishop of Manchester, Elizabeth Gaskell wrote a letter describing a picture she had seen there:

Well! when the call was ended the Bishop took us into his library and that brings me to the picture. Over the door being an exquisitely painted picture of a dead child perhaps Baby's age, – deathly livid, and with the most woeful expression of pain on its little wan face, – it looked too deeply stamped to be lost even in

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Heaven. He made us look at it and then told me the history. It was painted by some friend or pupil [of] Maclises and was so true to the life that an anatomist of that sort of thing on seeing it said ‘that child lost its life by an accident which has produced intense pain’ – and it was true, – it had been the child of the people with whom the artist lived, and had been *burnt*, had lingered 2 days in the greatest agony, poor darling – and then died! I would not send my child to be educated by the man who could hang up such a picture as that for an object of contemplation; for it was not the quiet lovely expression of angelic rest, but the look of despairing agony. Not all his kind pleasant tat[t]le with Florence set him right with me. He’s got something wrong with his heart.¹⁶

It’s hard to imagine what this picture must have looked like – indeed, the mind turns from doing so, as it does from those few pictures of dead faces that find their way into newspapers to convey the impact of some especially terrible act of violence. But the scene painted so realistically by the artist and described here must have been a familiar sight to Gaskell and her contemporaries. In an age of horrific child mortality the deaths of children were commonplace, and the agonies stamped on this baby’s face – in a period before antibiotics or analgesics – must have been usual. Yet nineteenth-century representations of dead children do not feature faces marked by the ‘despairing agony’ of death. On the contrary, they overwhelmingly depict the ‘quiet lovely expression of angelic rest’ Gaskell misses in this picture. The picture Gaskell thinks the artist should have painted is, doubtless, sentimental; but who, having watched a child suffer such torments, could bear to have such an image as the bishop had in his house? As Gaskell says, he would have to have something wrong with his heart.

In the early 1850s Catherine and Archibald Tait (later Archbishop of Canterbury) saw five of their seven children die from scarlet fever within the space of four weeks. Catherine Tait’s memoir of that period was written for consolatory purposes and was published only after her death.¹⁷ It is terribly painful to read how the agonised parents watched one child after another die in great pain and torment, unable to offer any medical help (despite numerous doctors in attendance) other than nursing and watching. Though deeply religious, both parents struggled hard to reconcile themselves to God’s will in taking away their children. The only thing that could sustain them was their faith that they would meet their daughters again in heaven. The memoir, written very soon after the events it recounts, veers between dreadful details of the girls’

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illness and idealised accounts of their beauty and goodness, their patience in enduring their sufferings, and their simple and unwavering Christian faith. Can the children really have been that saintly? Of course not: but who would demand of Catherine Tait that she should remember her beloved children ravaged by fever instead of full of freshness and beauty, or delirious and raving instead of trusting and cheerful? There would have to be something wrong with the person's moral nature who would make the demand that she should not sentimentalise her children's memory.

It's time to look again at the death of Little Nell in the context of these two stories. Dickens does not make us see Nell die: unlike the deaths of Paul Dombey and Jo, there are no last words, and the reader does not witness the moment of her death. Instead, we enter the cottage where she has been living with Kit, who from outside hears her grandfather sobbing. In a very moving scene thick with echoes of *King Lear*, he believes her to be asleep and tells Kit she is so:

She was not wont to lie-abled; but she was well then We must have patience.
When she is well again, she will rise early, as she used to do, and ramble abroad
in the healthy morning time. ... Shut the door. Quick! — Have we not enough to
do to drive away that marble cold, and keep her warm?¹⁸

Even the arrival of his long-estranged brother cannot distract him from the apparently sleeping Nell.. This prologue in the ante-room shows us the heartbreaking denial of death (no! it cannot be so!) that is a clichéd reaction to death because it is so nearly universal. The scene is drawn out for pathetic effect: the death-bed that the reader must know is in the next room is hidden from us so that we come to it – as so often in life – belatedly, and already in the half-knowledge of what we must find there. In the following chapter there is in fact a short description of Nell's death, but this is not Dickens's emotional focus. Instead he gives us at the end of chapter seventy-one the famous description of Nell's dead body, which I am going to quote at some length.

For she was dead. There upon her little bed, she lay at rest. The solemn stillness was no marvel now.

For she was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death.

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Her couch was dressed with here and there some winter berries and green leaves, gathered in a spot she had been used to favour. ‘When I die, put near me something that has loved the light, and had the sky above it always. Those were her words.

She was dead. Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell, was dead. Her little bird – a poor slight thing the pressure of a finger would have crushed – was stirring nimbly in its cage; and the strong heart of its child mistress was mute and motionless for ever.

Where were the traces of her early cares, her sufferings, and fatigues? All gone. Sorrow was dead indeed in her, but peace and perfect happiness were born; imaged in her tranquil beauty and profound repose.

And still her former self lay there, unaltered in this change. Yes. The old fireside had smiled upon that same sweet face; it had passed like a dream through haunts of misery and care; at the door of the poor schoolmaster on the summer evening, before the furnace fire upon the cold wet night, at the still bedside of the dying boy, there had been the same mild lovely look. So shall we know the angels in their majesty, after death.¹⁹

The description of Nell’s dead body erases the pain of illness, the traces of the death agony, the marks of her arduous journey and the sorrows of her life, leaving her in a perfectly still and beautiful repose. The comparison between Nell’s faithful and strong heart, now stilled, and the tiny one of her pet bird works to emphasise the pathos of the scene, as does the contrast between the berries and green leaves and Nell’s cold, still body. The repetition of ‘she was dead’, and the conversational tone – as if the narrator were talking to himself – suggest the profound emotional weight of seeing Nell’s dead body. The effect is of a halting voice, broken by tears, whose eloquence is tested by the scene in front of him. The final sentence, ‘so shall we know the angels after death’ includes his readers in the experience, marking this as not merely a textual event but a communal feeling of grief, pity and sorrow.

Is this scene sentimental? Wayne Booth has suggested that perhaps we should not think of it as such: that to the Victorians ‘who lost so many more children than we do’ it must have seemed ‘quite consoling and even restrained and justified by the facts’.²⁰ I think he is right to see that many of those who condemn the sentimentality of Nell’s death are protected from the

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dreadful experiences of child mortality so common in the nineteenth century and which occasioned the kinds of descriptions of dead children that Nell epitomises. But I would still want to think of this scene as sentimental, because its power lies in its ability to make us feel, and if it does not do that, it is not doing what Dickens has set out to do. He wanted to make his readers cry, and I have little doubt he wept himself. There is no shame, in my view, in finding this passage extremely moving: it is sentimental and it should make its readers feel sentimental feelings.

These emotions bring us closer to Dickens's original readers than we can come merely by historical imagination. The anthropologist Michelle Z. Rosaldo has described feelings as embodied thoughts in which we are fundamentally engaged. Emotions, she argues, 'are thoughts somehow 'felt' in flushes, pulses, 'movements' of our livers, minds, hearts, stomachs, skin. They are *embodied* thoughts, thoughts steeped with the apprehension that 'I am involved'.'²¹ The final sentence of Dickens's description with its first person plural pronoun marks the fact that when we cry at the death of Little Nell, 'we are involved'. Through the 'movements' of emotion through our bodies we come nearer to the grief and sorrow of all those in the past who mourned their own and others' children through the death of Dickens's heroine. Weeping at her death collapses the distance in time and circumstance between us and them, and allows us sympathetically to share their emotional world: it is, as Phillip Davis rightly says, 'a secular bearing of witness'.²² We are involved in the griefs and sorrows they had to bear, and the lump in the throat and the pricking in the eyes that portend our sentimental tears are a sign of our human involvement with others to whose sufferings we can pay only the tribute of sympathy. It's a testament to the greatness of Dickens's sentimental art that he can still make us cry, and in doing so we respond to the moral power of his work. Sentimentality, then, is not cynical, nor cheap, nor trivial, nor vulgar, nor meretricious. Crying over Little Nell is not a luxurious expenditure of feeling on a wasteful and unworthy object. On the contrary, it is one of the things that helps us to be properly human.

1. See Laurence Lerner's discussion of sentimentality in *Angels and Absences: Child Deaths in the Nineteenth Century* (Nashville and London: Vanderbilt University Press, 1997) for thoughts on the topic from Leavis and Huxley; Michael Tanner, 'Sentimentality', in *Art and Morality* eds. José Luis Bermúdez and Sebastian Gardner (London: Routledge 2003, 95-110) quotes Richards on the topic; Mary Midgeley, 'Brutality and Sentimentality', *Philosophy* vol. 54 (1979): 385-89.

2. Tanner, 'Sentimentality', 110

3. Appreciation is not a term much used in literary scholarship. My interest in it was awakened by Susan Feagin's book *Reading with Feeling: An Aesthetics of Literary Appreciation* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), which argues that the feelings we have when we read a novel are an essential part of appreciating it, a process she defines as 'getting the value out of it'. This, I take it, is something rather different from the literary critical activity of interpretation. The term 'appreciation' gestures towards an affectively richer idea of what reading means, in which 'what the book means to us as readers' and the emotional experience of reading it are also important parts of its value.

4. See Miriam Bailin, 'Dismal Pleasure', *ELH* vol. 66 (1999): 1015-1032, and Phillip Davis, 'Victorian Realist Prose and Sentimentality' in *Rereading Victorian Fiction* eds. Alice Jenkins and Juliet John (London: Macmillan, 2000), 13-28, for arguments linking the presence of sentimentality in the novel with the status anxiety caused by the social pressures of market capitalism, and as a means of recuperating the social dislocation and loss of community caused by urbanisation.

5. June Howard, 'What is Sentimentality?', *American Literary History*, vol. 11 (1999): 63-81, 77.

6. Robert C. Solomon, *In Defense of Sentimentality* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 4, 9.

7. 'The spread of moral or intellectual luxury in our days is marvellous and portentous. It is the great standing temptation to which almost every person is exposed; and there is every reason to fear that it is on the increase. In the immediate pleasure of pleasing the intellect and soothing the feelings, we are perpetually losing sight of those higher and more permanent satisfactions which are the proper objects of rational human creatures – the satisfaction of investigating the truth, and applying true principles I all their force to human affairs.' 'Sentimentalism', *Cornhill Review* vol. 10 (Jul-Dec 1864), 67-75, 75. Tanner's essay on sentimentality enlarges on Wilde's dicta about the cheapness of sentimental emotion and identity of sentimentality and cynicism.

8. Fred Kaplan, *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 40.

9. For Laurence Lerner, sentimentality is characterised by simplification and predictability. See *Angels and Absences*, pp. 207-9; Robert Plant Armstrong, *The Affecting Presence: An Essay in Humanistic Anthropology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 23.

10. Midgeley, 'Brutality and Sentimentality', 385.

11. Macready to Dickens, 25 January 1841, *Letters* vol. 2, 193, cited in Lerner, *Angels and Absences*, 176.

12. Forster to Dickens, 16 Jan 1841, *Letters*, vol. 2, 187, cited in Lerner, *Angels and Absences*, 176.

13. Solomon, *In Defense of Sentimentality*, 19.

14. For an example of this demand, see Rick Anthony Furtak, 'Poetics of Sentimentality', *Philosophy and Literature* vol. 26(2002): 207-15. Furtak argues that only the most unsparing accounts of WW1, of which he takes Wilfred Owen's poetry to be an example, have any moral claims. Nostalgic accounts which remember only

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comradeship instead of bloody horror are, for Furtak morally reprehensible.

15. Tanner, 'Sentimentality', 107.

16. Gaskell to Eliza Fox, 26 April 1850, in *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* eds J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 112-13. I am most grateful to Ella Dzelzainis for drawing my attention to this letter.

17. *Catherine and Craufurd Tait, Wife and Son of Archibald Campbell, Archbishop of Canterbury, A Memoir* ed. Rev. William Benham (London: Macmillan, 1879). There is a longer account of the deaths of the Tait children in Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

18. Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), ed. Norman Page (London: Penguin, 2000), 535-6.

19. Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, pp. 539-40.

20. Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 69.

21. Michelle Z. Rosaldo, 'Towards an Anthropology of Self and Feeling' in *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self and Emotion* eds. Richard A. Schweder and Robert A. Levine (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 137-57, p. 143, cited in Howard, 'What is Sentimentality', 69.

22. Davis, 'Victorian Realist Prose and Sentimentality', 16.