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**"THE SENTIMENTAL TRIBUTE OF A TEAR": SELF-REGARDING  
EMOTION, WRONG SYMPATHY, AND SENTIMENTAL IRONY IN  
HENRY MACKENZIE'S THE MAN OF FEELING**

**Keywords:** *sentimentalism, self-regard, sympathy, private feeling, public action.*

**Abstract.** *Considered the paragon of (ironic) sentimentalism, Mackenzie's Man of Feeling strengthens the idea that the "Age of Sensibility" is narrowly and vaguely defined by scholars and historians of ideas as a proposal, not as a historical label. A coinage of the eighteenth century, "sentimental" brought major changes in meaning at the time, implying both physical and mental perception. A community of feeling was thus possible by analogy with a community of sense (sensus communis). The paper aims to demonstrate how the sensus communis is ironically dismantled and seen as idiosyncratic through the lens of the refined sensibility advocated by Harley, the main character of the novel, who mingles joy and grief when facing public action. His sentimental benevolence and sympathy, in Adam Smith's terms, appear as an endeavour to reshape manners, a project which fails because Harley can only deplore the social customs of the time. Harley's sentimentalism is best expressed by tears. His benevolence runs parallel with the sceptical view of society and the world that prevents him from acting virtuously. Filtered through the history of ideas (sentimentalism as a case in point), the paper tackles sentiment and self-regarding emotion as "outraged" morality.*