The sentimental novel has long been noted not only for its liberal and humanitarian interests, but also for its predilection for refined feeling, the privilege it accords emotion over reason and its preference for the private over the public sphere. In *The Politics of Sensibility*, however, Markman Ellis argues that sentimental fiction also consciously participated in some of the most keenly contested public controversies of the late eighteenth century, including the emergence of anti-slavery opinion, discourse on the morality of commerce, and the movement for the reformation of prostitutes. By investigating the significance of political material in the fictional text, and by exploring the way in which the novels themselves take part in historical disputes, Dr Ellis shows that the sentimental novel was a political tool of considerable cultural significance.
CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN ROMANTICISM 18

THE POLITICS OF SENSIBILITY
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THE POLITICS OF SENSIBILITY

Race, gender and commerce in the sentimental novel

MARKMAN ELLIS

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Contents

List of illustrations  page x
Acknowledgments  xi

Introduction  1
1. Sensibility, history and the novel  5
2. ‘The house of bondage’: sentimentalism and the problem of slavery  49
3. ‘Delight in misery’: sentimentalism, amelioration and slavery  87
4. ‘An easy, speedy and universal medium’: canals, commerce and virtue  129
5. ‘ Recovering the path of virtue’: the politics of prostitution and the sentimental novel  160
6. ‘The dangerous tendency of novels’ and the controversy of sentimentalism  190

Notes  222
Index  259
Illustrations

1. The Lady's Magazine, or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex, Appropriated Solely to their Use and Amusement, iv (1773). Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of the Cambridge University Library.

2. James Gillray, “New Morality;—or the promis’d installment of the high-priest of the Theophilanthropes, with the homage of Leviathan and his suite”, Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine; or Monthly Political and Literary Censor, no. 1 (1 August 1798), i. (BL cat. no. 261.i.1). Reproduced by permission of the British Library.
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