

absence of this love from moralities based upon compassion and other sentiments. For it is plain that philosophers who argue that morality ought to be based upon sentiment and who insist that the ideal moral viewpoint is one that is rich in feeling, including a lot of what Kant would call *pathological* feeling, still find romantic love morally problematic in a special way. They still hold that it is to be left out of the moral point of view (not counted as a part of what animates someone who sees from that point of view), for reasons that have nothing to do with a general rejection of passivity. So if we want to understand what is uniquely troublesome about *love* in our moral tradition, we would do best to examine those arguments. It is also plain to me that if our interest is in the absence of love from modern writing in the Anglo-American tradition, it is this sentiment-based line of argument that explains our current situation—and our related ambivalence about the relationship between moral philosophy and the novel—to a far greater degree than does the Kantian tradition. Finally, if we need one further inducement to examine these arguments against love, I suggest that we have one in their power and cogency. I believe that they perspicuously describe a tension that really exists between love and morality, and, in this way, they advance our understanding of the question: What role might romantic love play, or not play, in the good life for a human being?⁶

I shall turn first of all to a succinct philosophical statement of the argument in which I am interested, in Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.⁷ Smith himself suggests that we develop our sense of the objection and its force by considering our experience as readers of works of literature or as spectators at plays; so we shall investigate the parallel. But the experience of readership has, it seems, as a moral experience, a more complicated character than Smith allows. In pursuit of this complexity, we shall return to *David Copperfield*, which I take to be one of the most profoundly interesting treatments in the English novel of the tension between the point of view of romantic love and the point of view of moral sentiments. We shall ask about the relationship between Agnes' arm, which points morally upward, and the opposing gesture of Steerforth, who lies with his head reclining easily on his arm. And this will lead us to wonder what the relation of the narrator might be to both morality and romance, and how his narrative moves, and moves both him and us, between these two opposing viewpoints.

III

In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith argues that the ideal moral point of view, the point of view of the "judicious spectator," is a viewpoint rich in feeling. Not only compassion and sympathy, but also fear, grief, anger, hope, and certain types of love are felt by this spectator, as a result of his active, concrete imagining of the circumstances and aims and feelings of others.⁸ The spectator's

6. There are, of course, many varieties of love, and even of romantic love; the rubric "romantic/erotic," and the descriptions and discussions to follow, will make more concrete the type I have in mind.

7. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1st ed. 1759; 6th ed., extensively rev., 1790, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford, 1976). Hereafter *TMS*.

8. *TMS*, esp. Part I Sections i-ii. "... the spectator must ... endeavour, as much as he can, to put himself in the situation of the other, and to bring home to himself every little circumstance

feelings are not just willed attitudes of concern, they are really passions; and Smith clearly believes that it is both possible and essential to cultivate the passions, making people not less but more responsive and, so to speak, passive, in certain ways at certain times. Correct feeling is, for Smith, both morally *useful*, in showing us what we ought to do, and also morally *valuable* in its own right, as a kind of proper recognition of the ethical character of the situation before us. For Smith, who refers back to the Greek Stoics here,⁹ the passions have a cognitive dimension—they are at least partially made up out of beliefs—so that it is natural for him to think of them as both guides and as pieces of recognizing.

The link between passion and the deliberately undertaken is forged by the imagination. By cultivating our ability to see vividly another person's distress, to picture ourselves in another person's place—and this, he makes clear, is something that we *can* set ourselves deliberately to do—we make ourselves more likely to respond with the morally illuminating and appropriate sort of response. It is clear that Smith attaches considerable importance to literature as a source of this kind of moral development; and literature is also, for him, an artificial construction of ideal spectatorship, which leads us into the morally good viewpoint naturally, and offers us in that way a model we can refer to in real life. For frequently, in order to show his reader what he means by a certain claim about the ideal spectator's responses, or in order to support his assertion that the spectator in a certain case will respond this way and not this, he refers to our experience as readers of stories and watchers of plays, asking us to notice what sentiments we experience in that role.¹⁰ He proceeds as if readership and spectatorship are more familiar to us, more securely and concretely grasped, than the moral problems of life, concerning which he wishes to persuade us. He also assumes that we will agree that literary readership is structurally isomorphic to the spectator's moral role, so that a dubious issue in the real-life moral sphere can legitimately be pinned down by appeal to literary experience. The experience of readership is a moral activity in its own right, a cultivation of imagination for moral activity in life, and a test for correctness of real-life judgment and response.

What is, however, very remarkable, in the midst of this tremendous emphasis on the cultivation of the passions, is that two types of passion that play a prominent role in our lives and (or so we might have suspected) our literary experiences are considered by Smith to be totally absent from the judicious spectator and therefore totally to be omitted when we describe the limits of moral propriety. Whereas most passions are moderated and channelled, but still assiduously cultivated within the moral point of view, these two sorts are omitted from it altogether. The two are the bodily desires, including sexual desire, and the so-called

of distress which can possibly occur to the sufferer. He must adopt the whole case of his companion with all its minutest incidents; and strive to render as perfect as possible, that imaginary change of situation upon which his sympathy is founded" (I.i.4.6).

9. The Stoics are referred to prominently throughout, and Part VII contains extensive discussion (and some criticism) of their views. The cognitive nature of the view of passion is made clear from the start: see I.i.1.8, and many other places. Smith is critical of the Stoics for urging the extirpation of the passions, which he regards as elements in complete virtue.

10. Literature is first mentioned very near the beginning of the argument, in I.i.1.4 ("tragedy or romance"), and these references form an important part of the account of the spectator throughout Part I.

"passions which take their origin from a particular turn or habit of the imagination." The salient example in the latter category is romantic love. If we combine the two passages, we have a sweeping rejection from morality and the moral viewpoint both of love and also of the erotic desire that is, Smith himself emphasizes, a prominent component of it. We also have, as I think we shall see, a claim in its own way as uncompromising as Kant's concerning the subversive relation between love and morality—though this claim is defended with arguments that have nothing to do with the rejection of passivity.

How does the argument work? Let us take the bodily passions first. Smith asks us, first, to imagine his judicious spectator looking on at someone else's hunger for food. The spectator, as elsewhere, is imagined as someone who is a concerned friend of the parties, emotionally involved with their good and ill, able to imagine vividly what it is like to be them. At the same time, he lives a life distinct from theirs and connects himself to theirs primarily through imagining rather than interacting. As I have said, Smith's frequent way of getting us to see what such a spectator is like and what he will feel is to ask us to think of him as like us when we read a novel or see a play, caring about the characters and vividly responding to their predicament. And seeing what this spectator will feel gives us a test to determine the proper sort and degree of feeling for us to have in our own real lives, in situations where we are not spectators but actively involved as moral agents. (For example, we will learn not to have excessive anger in a personal case of our own by reminding ourselves that the friendly spectator would feel anger for our situation only up to a certain limit.)

Smith now argues as follows. When we read a story about hungry people (in, he says, "the journal of a siege, or of a sea voyage") we can sympathize with, both respond to and assume in our empathetic imagining, their grief, fear, and "consternation" at being in such a predicament. What we can't take on as readers is the hunger itself, since that is based on a physical condition that we are not in. Therefore hunger is not, by itself, a moral response, or a part of the moral point of view.¹¹ We could better convey the centrality of this point of view in Smith's account of human agency by saying that hunger is not a constituent part of a fully and adequately human response to the world. This doesn't mean that we should never feel hunger, or should feel guilty about our hunger; it just means that we should not identify ourselves with it, think of it as a good human thing or any part of our true humanity.

The same, Smith now continues, is true of "the passion by which Nature unites the two sexes."¹² It is a very strong passion—in fact, "naturally the most furious of the passions." But, unlike other strong passions such as anger and grief, it proves altogether improper and extramoral, when we apply the spectator test. The claim seems to be that we do not become sexually aroused when we look, as spectators, at people who are themselves sexually excited by one another. The closest we get to their excitement in our own state is, says Smith, a spirit of "gallantry" and "sensibility" toward them. As in the food case, Smith would presumably wish to say that reading about erotic arousal does not cause us to become, ourselves, aroused—although the absence here of any explicit remark to that effect (in con-

11. *TMS* I.ii.1.1.

12. *TMS* I.ii.1.2

trast to the hunger case, where literature is prominent) may indicate that he is familiar enough with pornography to sense a difficulty in his argument at this point. In any case, the conclusion, as before, is that sexual desire is outside of the moral viewpoint on the world, and to be judged improper when we look at the world from that viewpoint. "All strong expressions of it are upon every occasion indecent, even between persons in whom its most complete indulgence is acknowledged by all laws, both human and divine, to be perfectly innocent."¹³

Smith now adds a further point. The ancient philosophers, he says, hold that the reason these bodily passions are problematic is that we share them with "the brutes." Not so he replies: for we share with "the brutes" many passions:

such as resentment, natural affection, even gratitude, which do not, upon that account, appear to be so brutal. The true cause of the peculiar disgust which we conceive for the appetites of the body when we see them in other men, is that we cannot enter into them. To the person himself who feels them, as soon as they are gratified, the object that excited them ceases to be agreeable: even its presence often becomes offensive to him; he looks round to no purpose for the charm which transported him the moment before, and he can now as little enter into his own passion as another person. When we have dined, we order the covers to be removed; and we should treat in the same manner the objects of the most ardent and passionate desires, if they were the objects of no other passions but those which take their origin from the body.¹⁴

In other words, there is a point of view that we are deeply committed to, which expresses something very fundamental about our humanity. And it is because the bodily passions do not appear in us, when we assume that viewpoint, that we must reject them from morality, not because they arise from some brutish element in us.

There are some problems with Smith's account of the spectator in this passage: a tendency to blur the distinction between empathy and sympathy; a tendency to confuse propriety in feeling with propriety in the public expression of feeling.¹⁵ But we see the general shape of the argument well enough. What a concerned friend or a reader cannot respond to out of friendly concern (and I think that the point can be made without Smith's assumption that all sympathetic response involves having the *very same* feeling), what the reader can't, as a reader, be moved by, is somehow morally suspect. We turn now to the next group of banned passions: for it is here that romantic love itself gets rejected.

Among the passions derived from the imagination, Smith writes, are some that "take their origin from a peculiar turn or habit it has acquired." And these are always morally problematic:

The imaginations of mankind, not having acquired that particular turn, cannot enter into them; and such passions, though they may be allowed to be almost

13. Ibid.

14. *TMS* I.ii.1.3.

15. See, for example, I.ii.1.2, discussed above; there are many other such passages. But perhaps this is, after all, not such a confusion, since the moral world is, for Smith, the world of the publicly expressible, and whatever cannot with decency be publicly expressed would be ipso facto suspect; see below.

unavoidable in some part of life, are always, in some measure, ridiculous. This is the case with that strong attachment which naturally grows up between two persons of different sexes, who have long fixed their thoughts upon one another. Our imagination not having run in the same channel with that of the lover, we cannot enter into the eagerness of his emotions. If our friend has been injured, we readily sympathize with his resentment, and grow angry with the very person with whom he is angry. If he has received a benefit, we readily enter into his gratitude, and have a very high sense of the merit of his benefactor. But if he is in love, though we may think his passion just as reasonable as any of the kind, yet we never think ourselves bound to conceive a passion of the same kind, and for the same person for whom he has conceived it. The passion appears to every body, but the man who feels it, entirely disproportioned to the value of the object; and love, though it is pardoned in a certain age because we know it is natural, is always laughed at, because we cannot enter into it. All serious and strong expressions of it appear ridiculous to a third person; and though a lover may be good company to his mistress, he is so to nobody else. He himself is sensible of this; and as long as he continues in his sober senses, endeavours to treat his own passion with raillery and ridicule. It is the only style in which we care to hear of it; because it is the only style in which we ourselves are disposed to talk of it. We grow weary of the grave, pedantic, and long-sentenced love of Cowley and Petrarca, who never have done with exaggerating the violence of their attachments; but the gaiety of Ovid, and the gallantry of Horace, are always agreeable.¹⁶

We can, he continues, enter into the lovers' hopes of happiness, or their fear of disappointment—but not into the love itself, making its seriousness real and vivid for ourselves.

Smith's point seems to be that romantic and erotic love is based upon a strong response to morally irrelevant particularities, in such a way that it can't be explained, it retains always an element of the surd, the mysterious, the impenetrably arbitrary. We can't imagine *why* it has happened between these two people in this way at this time—and so we can't see the love from the lovers' own viewpoint. This is all the more so, presumably, because this romantic love contains within it the bodily arousal that Smith's argument has already rejected, and which Smith here calls "perhaps, the foundation of love."¹⁷

Smith now returns to the issue of literary spectatorship. For it would appear to be a natural objection to his argument that romantic and erotic love are a staple of literature, and among the things that, in literature, most move and engage the

16. *TMS* I.ii.2.1.

17. *TMS* I.ii.2.2. Smith is here discussing the origin of our interest in pastoral poetry and other related literary works, and is arguing that we are drawn by the depiction of the lovers' wish for serenity and contentment, not by their love:

We feel how natural it is for the mind, in a certain situation, relaxed with indolence, and fatigued with the violence of desire, to long for serenity and quiet, to hope to find them in the gratification of that passion which distracts it, and to frame to itself the idea of that life of tranquillity and retirement which the elegant, the tender, and the passionate Tibullus takes so much pleasure in describing; a life . . . free from labour, and from care, and from all the turbulent passions which attend them. Even scenes of this kind interest us most, when they are painted rather as what is hoped, than as what is enjoyed. The grossness of that passion, which mixes with, and is, perhaps, the foundation of love, disappears when its gratification is far off and at a distance; but renders the whole offensive, when described as what is immediately possessed.

reader's imagination. This Smith now denies. The lovers' wish for happiness and their fear of reversal—*these* are certainly staples of literary experience; and these are the foundation of our interest, he claims, both in pastoral poetry and in "modern tragedies and romances." But the *love itself* is not the object of the reader's interest, except in the comic manner already mentioned:

The author who should introduce two lovers, in a scene of perfect security, expressing their mutual fondness for one another, would excite laughter, and not sympathy. If a scene of this kind is ever admitted into a tragedy, it is always, in some measure, improper, and is endured, not from any sympathy with the passion that is expressed in it, but from concern for the dangers and difficulties with which the audience foresee that its gratification is likely to be attended.¹⁸

Smith adds that romantic love, since it is frequently mixed with "humanity, generosity, kindness, friendship, esteem," is not, despite its extravagance and its mysteriousness, found actually revolting or odious—only, perhaps, a little ridiculous.

In order to understand Smith's argument here, we must first attempt to say more plainly what romantic love *is*, as he sees it. Unlike his Stoic predecessors, unlike, as well, Descartes and Spinoza, Smith does not offer definitions of the passions; so this is a little hard to do. But I think that we can infer from his examples and descriptions in this passage that he takes romantic love to contain, as necessary ingredients, at least the following elements:

1. Mutual feelings of sexual attraction and arousal.
2. Beliefs (on both sides, presumably) about the supreme importance of the object, beliefs that go beyond any reasoned justification that the lover could articulate to others—even though they may contain, as well, some articulable element of esteem.¹⁹

We can add that the romantic love Smith describes appears to connect these two elements closely: sexual arousal is felt towards the person *seen as* supremely valuable and important.

3. A complex intimate way of life that involves the exchange of affectionate communications, both verbal and erotic; a way of life in which lovers are totally wrapped up in one another, attending for long periods of time to nobody else, and in which, characteristically, they take themselves off into privacy, not inviting or wanting any scrutiny or even company, seeking a "perfect security."

18. *TMS* I.ii.2.3.

19. Smith has spoken of the disproportion between the passion and the value of the object, as seen from the spectator's viewpoint. But this and other passages depicting the intimate habits of loving exchange and conversation indicate, I think, that the problem is not an *illusion* on the lover's part; it is, rather, a strong response to what cannot be justified as admirable in the public world—to glances, gestures, habits of intimacy. What we are dealing with is a "peculiar habit" of the lovers' imaginations, entrenched ways of seeing and valuing that are idiosyncratic and not publicly communicable. It is not that the lover makes these things up when they aren't there; rather he or she endows them with an importance that the spectator cannot find in them.

For the lovers, this life has the charms of mystery, secrecy, and intimacy; from the outside it is simply mysterious.

Once again, we can add that the third element is closely connected with the other two: sexual desire is felt toward the person seen as part of an intimate way of life, apart from others; intimacy enhances the sense of importance; and at the same time sexual desire and the belief in importance are strong motivations to undertake the way of life in the first place.

I should add that by insisting on this last, very complex, element, Smith seems to me to go beyond his philosophical predecessors on this topic, who all seem to define love as some sort of combination of feeling and belief,²⁰ without sufficiently taking account of the fact that love cannot exist in a single instant, but requires a pattern of exchange and mutuality, of mutual attention evolving over time. In this way he brings to the analysis of romantic and erotic love the insight first introduced in the sphere of friendly love by Aristotle:²¹ love is fundamentally a relation, not something *in* a single person at all—a relation that involves the give and take, over time, of feeling, thought, benefits, conversations. Smith adds that this relation, where romantic love is concerned, evolves its own mysterious habits and delights in the charm of its secret routines, so inscrutable to the nonparticipant.

Smith's objection to this relation seems to be based, precisely, on its mysteriousness and exclusivity. We might expand his point about the spectator as follows. Lovers wrapped up in loving conversation (and it is, I think, significant that his paradigm scene of love is a scene of conversation) are not, insofar as they are lovers, also spectators. Being in love is altogether different, as a kind of attention, from being a judicious spectator; for lovers do not look around at the entirety of their world, but are exclusively wrapped up in one another. They do not enter into anyone else's predicament; their imaginations do not see out. By the same token, if we imagine the judicious spectator looking at his world, he will not be able to find in it, no matter how fine his imagination, the passion that they feel for one another. It is a mystery to him; he can't see into it. Lovers, then, neither see nor are seen with the judicious eye of sympathetic moral concern.²²

We now must confront an ambiguity in Smith's account. For there are two ways in which the moral function of the spectator might be understood. (These two possibilities arise in interpreting most ideal-judge views, beginning with Aristotle's.²³) On one reading, the judicious spectator is merely heuristic: moral appropriateness and propriety in passion exist independently, can in principle be specified independently of his response, and imagining his response is a useful device for us in finding out the appropriate response. On this reading, there is something inappropriate about love, something that demands apology, apart from the spec-

20. R. Descartes, *Les Passions de L'Âme*, Part II, Art. VI; Spinoza, *Ethics* "Definitions of the Passions," Def. VI. For Stoic definitions, see *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, ed. J. von Arnim, Vol. III., 397–420.

21. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII–IX; cf. *Fragility*, chap. 12. For a related account of romantic love, see "Love's Knowledge."

22. Compare the discussion of Henry James's *The Ambassadors* in "Perceptive Equilibrium."

23. On Aristotle, see *Fragility*, chap. 10, pp. 311–12; there is an excellent discussion of this question in unpublished writing by Christine Korsgaard.

tator's inability to enter into it, and the spectator shows us the way to the correct conclusion. On the second, and stronger reading, however, the spectator's responses are themselves constitutive of what is and is not morally appropriate. The fact that he cannot enter into love is not a sign that points beyond itself to some independently existing inappropriateness in the relation. It is the very fact that he cannot enter in, that *makes* the passion inappropriate. It is what is deficient, or excessive, about it.

The second reading can, I believe, be strongly supported from a number of passages in the text. To confine ourselves to the sections we are discussing, we might recall Smith's vigorous insistence that the *reason* for the inappropriateness of bodily passion is not some separate brutishness in hunger and sexual desire; rather, the "true cause" of our negative view is "that we cannot enter into them." This may just be a psychological remark; but it looks like something more. Not just the cause, but the justification for our negative view, seems to be found in the fact of the spectator's incomprehension.²⁴

What, in that case, is the deeper significance of the spectator's failure to enter into these passions? What is the moral significance of the spectatorial stance?²⁵ I think that Smith's underlying point is this. Morality essentially involves thinking of oneself as one person among others, bound by ties of friendship and sympathy to those others. These ties, in turn, involve, essentially, two further things. First, they require us to look around us, taking thought, so to speak, for all that we can see. And they involve, too, general social conversation, the giving and receiving of justifications and reasons. Therefore, they require that we permit ourselves and our actions to *be seen*. These practices both express our concern for our fellow beings and bind them to us in a network of mutual concern. The presence of these features in the spectator explains why assuming, in thought, the spectator's position can be a way of assuming the moral point of view. We have built into the account of the spectator the most essential features of our moral humanity.

And that, we may now also add, thinking of Smith's reliance on literature, is why going to plays and reading novels and stories is a valuable part of moral devel-

24. There are many passages that point in this direction. Consider especially I.ii.1.12, where the fact that the spectator enters little into another's bodily pain is called "the foundation of the propriety of constancy and patience in enduring it." If the spectator were merely heuristic, he would be not the "foundation" of propriety here, but only a clue as to where propriety (specified in some independent way) was to be found. Similarly, when Smith asks what we ought to feel in a case where our own response to a personal calamity is inclined to be much more violent than that which the spectator would feel, he simply answers without further remark that we should keep our feeling down to that which the spectator would experience (rather than pointing to some independent moral value that the spectator helps us discover); and he specifies the desire of the agent for "a more complete sympathy" with others as the reason why he will be right to leave aside the special involvement he has with his own case (I.i.4.7-8). The passage culminates in a praise of "society and conversation" (I.i.4.10). Similarly, in asking what we should feel for the dead, Smith grants that there is no independent thing there to inquire about—for the dead are dead; but it is the fact that the judicious spectator will grieve that makes such grief appropriate.

25. By asking for the "deeper significance" of the spectator stance I am not returning to the first (heuristic) sort of view. What I am asking is why this particular stance, described as Smith describes it, should be thought to be constitutive of moral appropriateness—why he has built up the spectator in this and not some other way.

opment: not because it points beyond itself to a separately existing moral realm, but because it is among the ways in which we constitute ourselves as moral, and thus as fully human, beings. For we find, as we read novels, that we quite naturally assume the viewpoint of an affectionate and responsive social creature, who looks at all the scene before him with fond and sympathetic attention, caring for all the people, and caring, too, for the bonds of discourse that hold them all together. Interpreting a novel or play involves one, indeed, in a kind of sympathetic reasoning that is highly characteristic of morality; for we ask ourselves, as we try to enter into the plot, why the characters do what they do, and we are put off if our inquiries lead to nothing but mystery and arbitrariness.

But mystery is what love is all about. And the fact that we cannot, where love is concerned, enter into the essential forms of moral give and take is the very thing that makes love, as a relation, inappropriate to our highest humanity, and subversive of the moral community.

IV

Smith's idea about the moral stance and his connection of that stance to the experience of the reader of fiction has had a long history (whether through direct influence or through a more general cultural dissemination) in the reflections of English novelists themselves about the moral role of their craft.²⁶ I have argued elsewhere that Henry James takes a very similar view about the reader's activity and its moral worth.²⁷ And James has related worries about the role, in the moral vision that sustains his novels, of personal love, and of related emotions such as jealousy and the desire for revenge. Love, as James sees it, requires both hiddenness and a willful self-blinding, both a turning from the good of others and a request that others turn away their eyes. For these reasons it threatens a valuable norm of moral attention. And I have suggested that it is for this reason that strong personal love, in James, occurs only, so to speak, in the margins of the novel—in the silence beyond the ending of *The Golden Bowl*, after Maggie has buried her eyes in her husband's embrace, tragically surrendering her equal vision of the claims of all; in the boat where Chad and Marie de Vionnet are sailing, *before* that boat has been recognized by the spectator Strether and become a part of his, and the reader's, vision; in the trip of Charlotte and the Prince to Gloucester, where they step out of the novel's vision into a silence prefigured by their determination to "go" for that one day, only "by" each other. As readers, we are not encouraged to fall in love with any of James's characters, nor are we at all encouraged to take up a stance toward them that would make this a possible response. We are not seduced, not led, ourselves, into their silences. In this way we are borne up morally, held as "participants by a fond attention"²⁸ in the adventures of all the characters, even when we are reminded that there are silences into which the morality of fine-tuned social perception has no entry.

26. Other authors who should be considered in this connection are Jane Austen and George Eliot.

27. See "Perceptive Equilibrium," "Flawed Crystals" (with Notes), this volume.

28. Henry James, *The Art of the Novel* (New York, 1907), 62.

But Smith's nonerotic idea of readership, and James's similar but more complex idea, which complicates the austerity with erotic silences, are not all that novel-reading has morally to offer us. For if Smith's claim that we don't get seduced by fictional characters seems, up to a point, correct as an account of certain novels, for example the novels of James, we know well, also, that there are other experiences of novel reading that are, while still profoundly moral, also disturbingly erotic. And perhaps by investigating the relationship between moral community and erotic privacy in the novels that do have a seductive dimension we can better understand the tension between love and the moral viewpoint. And we might even discover, as Smith did not discover, a path between them, a way in which morality itself, most richly and generously construed, leads beyond itself into love.

I shall, then, for the balance of this essay turn to Dickens's *David Copperfield*, and to the question with which I began: Why is it that, morally attuned as the reader of this novel is made to be, the reader nonetheless falls in love, as David also falls in love, with James Steerforth? Why, and how, does this novel, which begins with an open question about who the hero of David Copperfield's life actually is, and which ends (apparently) with the upward-pointing gesture of morality, lead us, at times, outside of morality into the "shadowy world" of moonlight and love, of magic, and an arm curved along the pillow?

V

I shall begin by enumerating, simply, certain facts.²⁹ That David Copperfield was born with a caul—which signifies that he would never drown at sea (p. 49). That the hour of his birth, midnight on a Friday, signified that he would be unlucky in life, but be "privileged to see ghosts and spirits." That it is his persistent fantasy that he himself was born as a traveller out of that "shadowy world" (p. 60). That, in consequence of Betsey Trotwood's conjecture that he would be born a girl, he has, as well, the persistent fantasy that he has, in the spirit world, a sisterly double: "Betsey Trotwood Copperfield was for ever in the land of dreams and shadows, the tremendous region whence I had so lately travelled" (p. 60). That this shadowy world is associated with his longing for his dead father, above whose grave the light that lights such ghostly travelers shines its mysterious nocturnal light (p. 60). That David's father left David a collection of novels that he avidly read and reread, "reading as if for life" (p. 106). That Dickens, in his Preface to the novel, speaks of his own sorrow at finishing the novel, comparing the entire world of the novel to David's imagined spirit world: "An Author feels as if he were dismissing some portion of himself into the shadowy world, when a crowd of the creatures of his brain are going from him forever" (p. 45). (I regard this less as an autobiographical statement than as a part of the fiction: Dickens in this way puts himself into his own text as a character.) That David Copperfield expresses, at the novel's close (a novel he has written) a similar sorrow—"subduing my desire to linger on" he dismisses "the shadows" (p. 950) until only Agnes' solid reality remains.

29. All references to *David Copperfield* will be taken from the Penguin Edition, ed. Trevor Blount (Harmondsworth, 1966).