

INNER ACTION IN THE NOVELS OF GEORGE MEREDITH
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO "ONE OF OUR CONQUERORS"

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of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

My case for Meredith is that a discussion of his novels in terms of his acknowledged concern for analysing and representing inner action shows him as a more interesting and significant figure than is generally allowed. The usual ways of regarding his work, in terms of his ideas about the Comic Spirit or Nature, tend to overlook his conscious and responsible exploration of the capacities of fiction throughout a career which spanned half a century.

In his earlier works Meredith modified various popular forms of fiction, always resisting what he took to be conventional expectations of excitement in external action in favour of stressing the complex reality of the inner life. From The Egoist on his independence was even more strikingly manifested, and in both the themes and the techniques of his late novels he experimented further with "reading the inner as well as exhibiting the outer".

Meredith's idiosyncratic style has always been subject to criticism and abuse because of its elliptical tortuosity. While it is both a dense and a mercurial mode, it is by no means ungoverned : the voice of Meredith as omniscient narrator is always present in his narrative,

but subtle and rapid stylistic variations are used to project attitudes in his characters and evoke atmosphere. This ventriloqu^{al} technique is one of his main methods of representing inner action : to the same end he also makes more than mechanical use of documentary devices such as tutelary books and letters; and his congenital allusiveness leads him to some peculiar exercises with imagery.

As well as presenting Meredith's stylistic excesses in an extreme form, One of Our Conquerors provides a particular opportunity for considering Meredith's aims and methods since the manuscript of the novel survives, as well as an early draft. Consideration of Meredith's revisions points to a pressure to intensify his treatment of inner action, to modify the national theme, and to continue his expatiations on the purpose of fiction.

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REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations and cue-titles have been adopted.

Coolidge	<u>Bertha Coolidge, A Bibliography of the Altschul Collection of George Meredith in the Yale University Library (New Haven 1931).</u>
<u>ELH</u>	[A journal of English Literary History]
<u>JEGP</u>	<u>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</u>
<u>Letters</u>	W.M. Meredith, ed., <u>Letters of George Meredith (2 vols., 1912).</u>
<u>MFS</u>	<u>Modern Fiction Studies</u>
<u>MLQ</u>	<u>Modern Language Quarterly</u>
<u>MLR</u>	<u>Modern Language Review</u>
<u>NCF</u>	<u>Nineteenth Century Fiction</u>
<u>NQ</u>	<u>Notes and Queries</u>
<u>PMLA</u>	[Publications of the Modern Language Association of America]
<u>REL</u>	<u>Review of English Literature</u>
<u>RES</u>	<u>Review of English Studies</u>
<u>SEL</u>	<u>Studies in English Literature</u>
<u>VNL</u>	<u>Victorian News Letter</u>
<u>VS</u>	<u>Victorian Studies</u>

Page references to the works of George Meredith are to the Memorial Edition (27 vols., 1909-11), unless otherwise indicated.

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P A R T O N E

MEREDITH'S CAREER AS A NOVELIST

I. INTRODUCTION

Most people who have heard of George Meredith, do not confuse him with George Eliot, and have sufficient notion of his work to realise that he wrote both poetry and prose, can produce a standard account of his career. Meredith is regarded as the author of two novels, The Ordeal of Richard Feverel and The Egoist; a handful of poetry, from which Modern Love is culled as worthy of attention; and the essay on "The Idea of Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit"; and there the historians stop, apparently feeling no compunction to place his achievement once it has been described in these terms. Hence there emerges the image of Meredith as a jovial and harmless eccentric, urging his somewhat idiosyncratic notions about the Comic Spirit in more than slightly idiosyncratic language; and this figure has been hailed with awe (by his more infatuated contemporaries), with delight in this simple healthy world-view (an attitude fairly common in the first decades of this century), or, most recently, with scorn at his involutions and preciousness.

None of these possible attitudes - and they are possible, each emphasising a particular aspect of the man and his work - does Meredith justice. Indeed, as

so many have found, it is no simple matter to give him his due. Even so warm an admirer as R.L. Stevenson wrote of Meredith to Henry James in 1888 "He is not an easy man to be yourself with; there is so much of him, and the veracity and the high athletic intellectual humbug are so intermixed."¹ I can only concur with Stevenson's mixture of affection and exasperation, and suggest that so individual a writer as Meredith, one whose work produces such vehement reactions, must merit more than a summary dismissal.

My claims for him are based on his fiction - a hard fate for a man who thought himself pre-eminently a poet - and proceed from the assertion that while he is not a great novelist, he is an important major one who wrote a great novel, The Egoist, and approaches greatness in his other works, notably Diana of the Crossways. His thirteen complete novels among their other achievements reflect the recognition in the latter part of the nineteenth century that men do have an inner life which is as proper a subject for prose fiction as their observable actions; and it was primarily this recognition along with the allied understanding of the nature of consciousness deriving from developments in psychological theory, which

1. Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of Friendship and Criticism, ed. Janet Adam Smith (1948), p.170.

conditioned the emergence of the characteristic concentration of the twentieth-century novel on what Lawrence called "putting the action inside". This is not to suggest that the twentieth century discovered the inner life: the discovery was rather that it was possible systematically to analyse and represent its workings. And I maintain that to regard Meredith's fiction in terms of his awareness of such possibilities is to see him as at once more representative of tendencies in the novel, and more intrinsically interesting, than his reputation would appear to allow.

Any critical rehabilitation of Meredith must in the first instance be directed towards modifying the judgement generally implicit, and specifically laid down for example in The Great Tradition, that Meredith as a poet may be disregarded, and as a novelist ignored. The grounds for his dismissal are apparently that his matter is naive and his manner awkward, especially when set against Jamesian norms. Dr. Leavis localises his charges: he is talking of the déraciné James, for whom

the congenial soil and climate were in Europe rather than in the country of his birth. There is still some idealizing charm about his English country-house in The Portrait of a Lady, but that book is one of the classics of the language, and we can't simply regret the conditions that produced something so finely imagined. It is what The Egoist is supposed

to be. Compare the two books, and the greatness of Henry James as intellectual poet-novelist of 'high civilization' comes out in a way that, even for the most innocently deferential reader, should dispose of Meredith's pretensions forever.²

There is much here to demand instant acquiescence, at least in terms of the initial positive statements on James; but the assumptions about Meredith are rendered suspect merely by their tone. Meredith's supposed pretensions are defined negatively in a series of assertions which provoke dissent on other scores as well: "James's wit is real and always natural, his poetry intelligent as well as truly rich, and there is nothing bogus, cheap, or vulgar about his idealizations."³ If further blasts are needed, the reader is referred to a passage in Aspects of the Novel which Forster might almost have written for Leavis:

Meredith is not the great name he was twenty or thirty years ago, when much of the universe and all Cambridge trembled... His philosophy has not worn well ... And his visions of Nature - they do not endure like Hardy's, there is too much Surrey about them, they are fluffy and lush ... When he gets serious and noble-minded there is a strident overtone, a bullying that becomes distressing ... most of the social values are faked ... What with the faking, what with the preaching, which was never agreeable and is now said to be hollow, and what with the home counties posing as the universe, it is no wonder Meredith now lies in the trough.⁴

2. The Great Tradition (1948; Peregrine edn. 1962), pp.20-1).
3. Ibid., p.21.
4. Aspects of the Novel (1927), pp.120-1.

Forster adds a conciliatory "And yet he is in one way a great novelist. He is the finest contriver that English fiction has ever produced" and goes on to talk about Meredith's ability to deal with plot⁵ - not a virtue with which Meredith is very often credited.

Now while Leavis is content to resign "the necessary demolition work"⁶ to Forster, it is interesting that he has signalled out Meredith from "the ruck of Gaskells and Trollopes and Merediths",⁷ by descrying an attempt in his writing to do the same kinds of thing as James. For there is indeed a similarity in the work of the two, and Meredith suffers in the comparison since his concerns, dealing with a restricted cast and delineating with some care the mental processes of his characters and the psychic undercurrents of their situations, are in certain respects akin to James's. However the kinship of the two writers is strongest not in such areas, which each marks out characteristically - Meredith in the interests of expounding a vitalist ethic, James with the almost agnostic aim of examining and construing the nuances of behaviour - but in the championing of the status and capacities of the novel form which is very differently motivated and manifested in each.

5. Ibid., p.122.

6. The Great Tradition, p.33.

7. Ibid., p.24.

Some of the differences are indicated by James himself. Edith Wharton in her autobiography recounts one of James' tea-time pontifications on Meredith's deficiencies. He spoke of

... the central weakness of Meredith's art, its unconscious insincerity. Words - words - poetic imagery, metaphors, epigrams, descriptive passages! How much did any of them weigh in the baggage of the authentic novelist?... Meredith ... was a sentimental rhetorician, whose natural indolence or congenital insufficiency, or both, made him, in life as in his art, shirk every climax, dodge around it, and veil its absence in a fog of eloquence. Of course, he pursued, neither I nor any other reader could make out what Meredith's tales were about; and not only what they were about, but even in what country and what century they were situated, all these prosaic details being hopelessly befogged by the famous poetic imagery.⁸

This is evidently overstated, whether in utterance or reporting, but James in his own fiction was committed to the principle of total relevance and his concept of the dramatic scene, and these premises granted, the sheer gratuitousness and apparent evasiveness of much of Meredith's writing were bound to offend. James appears to have made his judgement on the basis of reasonable acquaintance with Meredith's novels: his copies of them all except The Shaving of Shagpat, Vittoria, and The Tragic Comedians are in the Houghton Library at Harvard.

8. A Backward Glance (New York 1934), pp.232-3.

Unfortunately, if James in fact read the books, he did not give vent to marginal expostulations which could have been amusing or illuminating, although there is a record of his reaction to Lord Ormont and His Aminta. This novel produced another diatribe like the one already quoted, and Leavis footnotes the passage in support of Forster's attack. The phrases fall savagely: "insufferable and unprofitable ... obscurities and alembications ... not a difficulty met, not a scene constituted ... there are pretty things, but for what they are they come so much too dear, and so many of the profundities and tortuosities prove when threshed out to be only pretentious statements of the very simplest propositions."⁹

His irritation is to some degree offset towards the end of the letter in a couple of sentences which Leavis does not quote: "Enough, and forgive me... There is another side, of course, which one will utter another day." That utterance seems to have waited nearly twenty years, when on the publication of Meredith's Letters in 1912 James wrote to Edmund Gosse in terms which to some extent explain his earlier outburst:

9. The Letters of Henry James, ed. P. Lubbock (1920), I, 224-5.

They make one, it seems to me, enormously like him - but that one had always done... But the whole aesthetic range, understanding that in a big sense, strikes me as meagre and short; he clearly lived even less than one had the sense of his doing in the world of art - in that whole divine preoccupation, that whole intimate restlessness of projection and perception. And this is the more striking that he appears to have been far more communicative and overflowing on the whole ground of what he was doing in prose and verse than I had at all supposed; to have lived and wrought with all those doors more open and publicly slamming and creaking on their hinges, as it were, than had consorted with one's sense, and with the whole legend, of his intellectual solitude.¹⁰

Characteristically, the fatal deficiency is not only propounded but imaged: Meredith's house of fiction is much more ramshackle than that so meticulously erected and fastidiously inhabited by James. Later in the letter, James describes his attitude another way:

I had with him no sense of reciprocity; he remained for me always a charming, quite splendid and rather strange, Exhibition, so content itself to be one, all genially and glitteringly, but all exclusively, that I simply sat before him till the curtain fell, and then came again when I felt I should find it up. But I never rang it up.¹¹

The tribute is complemented with another Jamesian insight further on in the correspondence:

Meredith was an admirable spirit even if not an entire mind; he throws out, to my sense, splendid great moral and ethical, what he himself would call

10. Ibid., p.260.

11. Ibid., p.261.

"spiritual", lights, and has again and again big strong whiffs of manly tone and clear judgement. The fantastic and the mannered in him were as nothing, I think, to the intimately sane and straight; just as the artist was nothing to the good citizen and the liberated bourgeois.¹²

The backhanded approval of 'the good citizen and the liberated bourgeois' puts Meredith in a different class of householding altogether from James's; and while this is not a definitive estimate of Meredith, it gives a more just proportion to the righteous indignation of James's response to Lord Ormont and His Aminta, and emboldens the suggestion that Meredith is not, after all, a failed precursor of the Master, nor even, perhaps, a uniquely grotesque phenomenon, for James himself realises how differently Meredith operates. In seeing the 'charming, quite splendid and rather strange, Exhibition' as sui generis, despite his mixture of responses James cannot however connect Meredith's act with a broader pageant. "His whole case is full of anomalies",¹³ he comments, without perceiving (why should he?) that the first of these is that Meredith's unique effects depend on the intrinsic involvement of his career as a novelist with developments in the novel in the later part of the nineteenth century.

12. Ibid., p.266.

13. Ibid., p.260.

James' abusive rhetoric is not of course totally unfair. In a way it is Meredith's own fault, largely because of the sheer difficulties of access to his novels, that he has been the subject of so much abuse, and so rigidly and inaccurately characterised as a phenomenon occurring somewhere around 1860 to 1880. The difficulties, which obscure the range of his work and especially militate against an acceptance of the later novels, are usually traceable to some kind of ellipsis, whether in narrative sequence or in stylistic manoeuvre; and while in essence this cryptic utterance is congenital, it is also in part deliberately perverse. A statement defiantly proclaiming that a novel is to provide "a strong dose of the most indigestible material"¹⁴ - Meredith was referring to One of Our Conquerors - testifies to the author's marked masochistic streak: he seems almost to will his own rejection in the way he taunts his readers. Whatever Meredith's avowed intention in One of Our Conquerors, the novel turned out to be quintessentially Meredithian, the problems of his manner and matter being raised in the most intense forms - a point which may be incidental in this particular context though certainly not

14. C. Photiadès, George Meredith His Life, Genius and Teaching (tr. A. Price, 1913), p.9.

for my thesis as a whole since it is the basic reason for according such attention to this novel.

Antagonism is the keynote in the history of attitudes of contemporary reviewers to Meredith, and of Meredith to them. He undertook the writing of fiction with the private proviso that since he was really a poet, tales were to be a source of revenue rather than committed artistic ventures, and at the end of his life he felt much the same way: "Chiefly by that in my poetry which emphasizes the unity of life, the soul that breathes through the universe, do I wish to be remembered... Only a few read my verse, and yet it is that for which I care most... I began with poetry and I shall finish with it".¹⁵ His letters frequently include remarks like "The worst is, that, having taken to prose delineations of character and life, one's affections are divided... in truth, being a servant of the public, I must wait till my master commands before I take seriously to singing" (1861: Letters, p.45) or "To save myself from writing poetry (which I haven't done) I am writing a few stories" (1864; pp.140-1). Nonetheless he was bitterly disappointed by hostile reviews, though his reception was not always as

15. E. Clodd, Memories (1916), p.146.

generally unfavourable as he made out.¹⁶ With the publication of The Egoist in 1879, after long years of striving for critical and popular acclaim, trying to adapt various fashionable models and modify his writing in response to reviewers' attacks, Meredith achieved a less equivocal success. His rise to the eminence accorded him by the time of his death in 1909 was accelerated by the success of Diana of the Crossways in 1885, though even during this quarter-century of increasing esteem Meredith had to survive much hostile mockery - which by then was at least a concession that he had a reputation to deflate. Inevitably, the pros and cons of any discussion were those I mentioned earlier - the Comic Spirit, the nature descriptions, the heroines; versus obscurity and absurdity due to or unrelieved by the stylistic pyrotechnics - but it is rather by eschewing such alignments, I think, that the interest and significance of Meredith's work is now to be found. Meredith the nature poet, wielder of the Comic Spirit, defender of women, need not be set aside, since there has been much valuable

16. For detailed discussion, see L.T. Hergenhan, "A Critical Consideration of the Reviewing of the Novels of George Meredith from The Shaving of Shagpat to The Egoist", unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of London 1960; and subsequent articles.

interpretation of his works in terms of these themes; but a different emphasis on his handling of such interests demands a revised image.

In framing a fresh approach, there are some obvious assertions to be made. First, the significance of the length and scope of Meredith's career is real. He was very much a participant in the literary scene, and while in certain respects he can be seen as highly representative of his age, he is at once more and less than an epitome of it, as the most summary consideration of his various activities and his relation to mutations in the novel during his creative life indicates. A perspective on his achievement is attained by the simple expedient of considering the variety in Meredith's work, no surprise to anyone who has read more than two of his fictions, but disconcerting to those who regard him as the author only of The Egoist and Richard Feverel. There is his first published fiction, the Arabian Nights-like allegory The Shaving of Shagpat; the comic picaresque Evan Harrington; the political Beauchamp's Career; The Tragic Comedians which is semi-historical; One of Our Conquerors, parts of which can be read as a stream-of-consciousness novel - to labour the point no further. Moreover if the span of his

career is considered, ranging from the production of a volume of Poems in 1851 (the year of Lavengro and Moby Dick and The Stones of Venice, when Dickens and Thackeray were at the height of their fame), through Shagpat in 1855 (two years before Scenes of Clerical Life, and the same year as Little Dorrit, North and South, Hiawatha, Leaves of Grass, Maud and The Warden) to his last novel, The Amazing Marriage of 1895 (by which time the stars of the literary firmament were Stevenson and James and Wilde, Misses Braddon and Broughton, Hall Caine and Marie Corelli; and in the same year were published Almayer's Folly, The Red Badge of Courage, The Time Machine and Yeats' Poems) and the last volume of poetry to appear in his lifetime, A Reading of Life in 1901, just half a century after his first; and if in addition we recall the ways in which during that half-century Meredith as journalist, reviewer, author, reader for Chapman and Hall, friend of Rossetti, Leslie Stephen, John Morley and R.L. Stevenson, was peculiarly in touch with the literary temper of his time, the case assumes a proportion which would enhance the significance of a less capable and original writer than Meredith.

Not that contact with the world of letters automatically serves as a defence against the charges which might be levelled at Meredith. To point out his associations with such areas of literary activity, however, is to point to his necessary involvement in an atmosphere of debate on issues like the morality of fiction, the basis of realism, and technical problems raised by characterisation and so on. As Richard Stang in The Theory of the Novel in England 1850-1870 (1959), Kenneth Graham in English Criticism of the Novel 1865-1900 (1965), and others have by now amply demonstrated, theoretical discussion in the mid-Victorian periodicals was considerably more sophisticated and far-reaching than used to be recognised or acknowledged, but for all that Meredith embarked on the writing of fiction in this milieu, and with experience as a reviewer behind him, unlike George Eliot he does not appear to have evolved a comprehensive theory of fiction before he began to write. Yet as James recognised, Meredith did reside in the house of fiction; clearly he had ideas about the nature of fiction, and opinions about particular fictions; and equally clearly he had a sense of integrity and responsibility concerning the profession of letters, though, being Meredith, this was sometimes displayed in perverse

ways in his novels. Again, unlike men of letters such as G.H. Lewes or practitioners such as - pre-eminently - James, Meredith did not engage in full-scale theoretical polemic; indeed it might be thought he shared with Trollope somewhat less than exalted ideas of the status of the novel. It is not only self-deprecation which lies behind Trollope's account of his entering on the life of letters: "Pens and paper I could command. Poetry I did not believe to be within my grasp. The drama, too, which I would fain have chosen, I believed to be above me. For history, biography, or essay-writing I had not sufficient erudition. But I thought it possible that I might write a novel."¹⁷ Later, he maintains that while the genre is of course inferior to poetry, the taste for reading novels is "neither vicious or vain".¹⁸ He adds "The writer of stories must please, or he will be nothing. And he must teach whether he wish to teach or no."¹⁹

Trollope's remarks serve as a reminder that it was only in the 1870s and '80s that the novel gained general acceptance as a reputable literary form, not

17. A. Trollope, An Autobiography (1883; W.C. edn., 1961), p.45.

18. Ibid., p.187.

19. Ibid., p.190.

dismissed as mere entertainment, nor on the other hand requiring the justification of a moral purpose. In turn, it is worth recalling that Meredith takes his own stand in this situation. Although his aesthetic may not have been precisely formulated when he began to write fiction, his ethic of Nature and Earth was clear in his mind and had already found expression in the Poems of 1851. His evolutionary meliorist outlook informs all his writing: there is an insistence on living life to the fullest, on developing the fundamental instincts and energies of man along with the powers of mind and spirit, in the hope of achieving personal fulfilment and an advance to a higher form of existence for mankind at large; and so Meredith does teach, both wittingly and willingly. He develops the personification of the Comic Spirit as one of the prime agents of man's progression, and in his lecture on comedy, delivered on 1st February 1877, he gave a formal elucidation of its operation in literature.

The "Essay", of course, is Meredith's most extended statement on a theoretical topic; but has I think been overrated as far as its relevance to the novels is concerned. Clearly it provides a most eloquent account

of the moral position which had always informed his fiction, and has considerable bearing on his aims and achievements in The Egoist especially, but his brief after all was to discourse "On the Idea of Comedy and of the Uses of the Comic Spirit", which while central to his work does not represent the limits of its concerns. However apart from the intrinsic interest of his discussion of comedy, the occasion is noteworthy for Meredith's clear acknowledgement of prose fiction as being as appropriate a medium for the invocation of the Comic Spirit as any other: "O for a breath of Aristophanes, Rabelais, Voltaire, Cervantes, Fielding, Molière!" (p.33), he cries, giving his personal testimony to the status of fiction. The attitude is confirmed in a comment recorded late in his life: "My thought unites itself spontaneously to prose and poetry, even as my flesh to my brain and my soul."²⁰ In the light of Meredith's persistent emphasis on his role as a poet - on the evidence of his letters a stress less apparent from the end of the 1870s on - the testimony in the "Essay" is important and to some extent prepares the way for his coming into his own as a novelist with The Egoist.

20. C. Photiadès, George Meredith His Life, Genius and Teaching (tr. A. Price, 1913), p.9.

Most of his overt theorising on fiction comes in the novels themselves. There are occasionally important statements in his letters, such as that on realism and idealism ("Between realism and idealism there is no natural conflict. This completes that. Realism is the basis of good composition..." - Letters, p.156); or on the method of his dramatic scenes ("My method has been to prepare my readers for a crucial exhibition of the personae, and then to give the scene in the fullest of their blood and brain under stress of a fiery situation" - p.398): but generally his remarks to correspondents are confined - not unilluminatingly - to comments on particular novels or the exigencies of his situation.²¹ Similarly, there are his reports as publisher's reader for Chapman and Hall, in which, as R.A. Gettmann has pointed out, Meredith operates something of a double standard, being constantly alive to the commercial demands of publishing and so recommending unpretentious books of non-fiction and run-of-the-mill novels while dealing more severely with works of greater aspirations.²² He was generally consistent in his

21. C.L. Cline's edition of the letters may eventually give a different impression from that based on W.M. Meredith's two-volume edition of 1912.

22. "Meredith as Publisher's Reader", JEGP, XLVIII (1949), 50.

judgements and preferences, frequently insisting, for instance, on the importance of a good plot which presents events in a causal sequence and does not merely accumulate sensational happenings. Some of his pronouncements are legendary: he twice rejected East Lynne, one of the best-selling novels of the century ("Opinion emphatically against it")²³ and also advised against Hardy's The Poor Man and the Lady, Ouida's Villiers, and Shaw's Immaturity and Cashel Byron's Profession - though to correct the balance his encouragement of younger writers like Gissing and Hardy should be recalled. Again, his reviews in the Westminster Review in 1857-8 and the Fortnightly in 1867-8 contain nothing in the way of a credo and little evidence for a coherent underlying set of critical premises, though there are some interesting remarks. In a generous review he hailed Barchester Towers as "decidedly the cleverest novel of the season",²⁴ and he discussed Madame Bovary with an understanding of Flaubert's aims and methods which is to some extent premonitory of Meredith's own practice as a novelist:

23. Coolidge, p.11.

24. "Belles Lettres and Art", Westminster Rev., n.s.XII (1857), 595.

All is severe matter of fact painfully elaborated... The Author is right: if an adultery is to be treated at all (and England cannot deny that such things really are in France), it should be laid bare - not tricked out in meretricious allurements: subjected to stern analysis - not made solely to present the passion, thereby to awake the sympathies of a vulgar prurience. No harm can come from reading Madame Bovary; but it is physic for adults, as the doctors say.²⁵

Throughout the novels, however, implicitly and explicitly in the variety and experiment of his work, there appears a strong and insistent pressure to examine the capacities of fiction. Almost every book contains some discussion of matters like the management of narrative, the reader's expectations and so forth, gradually evolving the personification of the Comic Spirit as one of the prime agents for implementing the ethic of Nature and Earth. The ethic is most clearly enunciated in the poetry, but as manifested in the novels these ideas can be considered in terms which are more compatible with an orthodox midtwentieth-century critical vocabulary and more illuminating of Meredith's achievement as a novelist. "The Comic ... is the perceptive, ...the governing spirit" ("Essay", p.41), and operates to correct pretensions and exaggerations: "the test of true Comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful

25. Ibid., 600-1.

laughter" (p.46). In a note made during the preparation of his lecture, he wrote

The act of laughter expresses a want of
confesses
language otherwise to convey the perception
of sudden contrasts.²⁶

Meredith, then, is using the personification as a metaphor for the ability to discern falsity and incongruity; and extends this kind of discrimination beyond what is necessary for the prescriptive reform of erring man and less frequently erring woman, to a virtually amoral dissection of discrepancies between the elements of situations as they are and as they appear to be, and beyond this again to a delineation of the complex but barely observable motivations and pressures which operate in any set of human relationships.

Meredith's most vehement apologia comes in the first chapter of Diana of the Crossways, where his discussion "Of Diaries and Diarists Touching the Heroine" (in manuscript, more fully and accurately, the title continues "... a Chapter written to warm the author to his work, & in apology for his turn of mind") moves from

26. Portfolio headed "Original MS notes on Aristophanes", &c., in the Yale University Library.

quoting various memoirs of Diana to considering the truthfulness of their accounts. Only when realism is fortified by philosophy, he says, will the chronicler produce "a realistic revival of the time" (p.15), and goes on to explain what he means by philosophy - a state of having perceived and comprehended total truth. In this millenium, there will be different attitudes from those now prevailing:

Then, ah! then, moreover, will the novelist's Art, now neither blushless infant nor executive man, have attained its majority. We can then be veraciously historical, honestly transcriptive. Rose-pink and dirty drab will alike have passed away... Philosophy bids us to see that we are not so pretty as rose-pink, not so repulsive as dirty drab; and that instead of everlastingly shifting those barren aspects, the sight of ourselves is wholesome, bearable, fructifying, finally a delight. Do but perceive that we are coming to philosophy, the stride toward it will be a giant's - a century a day... Honourable will fiction then appear; honourable, a fount of life, an aid to life, quick with our blood... Worse than that alternative dirty drab, your recurring rose-pink is rebuked by hideous revelations of the filthy foul; for nature will force her way, and if you try to stifle her by drowning, she comes up, not the fairest part of her uppermost! Peruse your Realists - really your castigators for not having yet embraced Philosophy. As she grows in the flesh when discreetly tended, nature is unimpeachable, flower-like, yet not too decoratively a flower; you must have her with the stem, the thorns, the roots, and the fat bedding of roses. In this fashion she grew, says historical fiction; thus does she flourish now, would say the modern transcript, reading the inner as well as exhibiting the outer.

And how may you know that you have reached to Philosophy? You touch her skirts when you share her hatred of the sham decent, her derision of sentimentalism... Get to her, if in no other way, by the sentimental route...

... You may count full many a thousand by this route before you are one with divine Philosophy. Whereas a single flight of brains will reach and embrace her; give you the savour of Truth, the right use of the senses, Reality's infinite sweetness; for these things are in philosophy; and the fiction which is the summary of actual Life, the within and without of us, is, prose or verse, plodding or soaring, philosophy's elect hand-maiden. To such an end let us bend our aim to work, knowing that every form of labour, even this flimsiest, as you esteem it, should minister to growth ... especially be wary of the disrelish of brainstuff. You must feed on something. Matter that is not nourishing to brains can help to constitute nothing but the bodies which are pitched on rubbish heaps. Brainstuff is not lean stuff; the brainstuff of fiction is internal history, and to suppose it dull is the profoundest of errors (pp.15-17).

It is evident that Meredith does not hesitate to practise what he preaches, here and elsewhere, and makes the reader work for his meaning. Lady Butcher, who knew Meredith from her earliest years, recorded "He used to declare sarcastically that the general reading public wanted all their thinking done for them, and would refuse themselves to contribute any effort to understand."²⁷ But the obscurities of Meredith's style raise issues which I am postponing for the time being to concentrate on the idea he is propounding here.

27. Memories of George Meredith O.M. (1919), p.44.

In Meredith's view, the relation of fiction to the ultimate state of serene philosophic contemplation is an important one, for fiction has a distinct moral function: to develop the capacity for awareness in both reader and writer by straining to understand the experience of life as fully as may be, 'reading the inner as well as exhibiting the outer'. Later in Diana of the Crossways, he has the heroine, herself a novelist, define the writer's responsibility in this process:

Set descriptions are good for puppets. Living men and women are too various in the mixture fashioning them - even the "external presentment" - to be livingly rendered in a formal sketch... Such literary craft is of the nursery... The art of the pen (we write on darkness) is to rouse the inward vision, instead of labouring with a Drop-scene brush, as if it were to the eye (ch.xv, p.170).

If Meredith's prescriptions for growth were not so general, there might emerge a greater tension in his novels between his moral aims and the dissection of the inner man which is so significant a part of his method; but when he proceeds to internal analysis he generally preserves an adequate detachment to the extent of holding his ethical preoccupations in reserve - and this is quite consistent with the ethic since truth is the goal, and detailed study of any situation at close quarters as well as at a remove a means to its attainment.

With such concerns, Meredith anticipates the more extensive investigation and representation of consciousness generally considered to have been inaugurated in the English novel by James and Joyce; but it would be as much a distortion of his achievement to allow him significance simply as a precursor, as to overstress his stature as an innovator. The talk of Nature and Comedy, however, has rather obscured Meredith's part in the emergence of the novel form from its concentration on the proper moral basis of human conduct to its obsession with the motivation of man's behaviour, and the problems of interpreting by linguistic means the content of pre-verbal areas of consciousness.

I cannot pretend to do more than gesture towards the intricacies of this process. To account for it in any way fully would involve for a start investigation of such issues as the influence on the English novel of French writers like Flaubert and Zola, or the Symbolist poets, and Ibsen, and the Russian novelists; developments in psychology - obviously William James, who coined the term "stream of consciousness", and Bergson and Havelock Ellis and Freud himself, would have to be considered, especially since these men were generally connected with the world of letters; and the relationship of literary phenomena to the impact of Impressionism and Post-impressionism in the visual arts

examined. This would practically be a diagnosis of the late-Victorian frame of mind, and my subject is rather a particular manifestation of the Zeitgeist in the novels of George Meredith. It is in terms of his awareness of the reality of the inner life as well as of observable action, and his forays into the analysis and representation in fiction of appearances and what underlies them, that I propose to discuss his writings. Along with the thoroughly nineteenth-century didactic assumptions goes a thoroughly twentieth-century sensibility, more engrossed in presenting and explaining manners than in preaching morals. This tension was hardly one which Meredith was able to express in such terms, but his dissatisfaction with and instinctive rebellion against what he saw as the expected and accepted modes of fiction was manifest from the outset, conditioning his development as a novelist.

II. EXPECTATION AND INNOVATION

In suggesting that the variety of Meredith's fiction is an important aspect of his achievement, there is more than sheer versatility to be considered. The diversity of genres which he undertook in his novels before The Egoist was I think neither fortuitous nor purely exhibitionist. Meredith began to write fiction with the conviction that he was a poet at heart, and novels and tales a means to the end of obtaining a livelihood. Accordingly, he appears very consciously to have experimented with various popular forms of fiction in an attempt to gain a success which would provide both the financial benefits and the renown he hoped would be his due. His chameleon efforts, while on the one hand seeming to be in the vein of the writers he purports to despise in Diana of the Crossways as "gallant interpreters of popular appetite" (ch.1, p.12), can almost be construed as issuing from contempt for the form he was using. Certainly he constantly inveighs through the novels against what he took to be popular expectations from fiction, though at the same time he asserts what he considers to be its proper function, to explain events through their motive force in character. In the last paragraph of his last novel he was still proclaiming his position:

So much I can say: the facts related, with some regretted omissions, by which my story has so skeleton a look, are those that led to the lamentable conclusion. But the melancholy, the pathos of it, the heart of all England stirred by it, have been - and the panting excitement it was to every listener - sacrificed in the vain effort to render events as consequent to your understanding as a piece of logic, through an exposure of character! Character must ever be a mystery, only to be explained in some degree by conduct; and that is very dependent upon accident: and unless we have a perpetual whipping of the tender part of the reader's mind, interest in invisible persons must needs flag. For it is an infant we address, and the story-teller whose art excites an infant to serious attention succeeds best; with English people assuredly, I rejoice to think, though I have to pray their patience here while that philosophy and exposure of character block the course along a road inviting to traffic of the most animated kind (The Amazing Marriage, ch.xlvii, pp.510-11).

These are the same concerns as he had declared in his first novel, The Ordeal of Richard Feverel: the foregoing of the excitement of external action for the subtler satisfaction of exploring the inner life - and 'exposure of character' for Meredith means principally the depiction of inner action, processes in the character's mind which explain otherwise baffling personality traits or unaccountable overt behaviour.

The other avowed aim of his fiction, exposure and correction of affectation, became less important towards the end of his career. However, in the experience of writing fiction and carrying on the battle against its misuse, Meredith had been led to acknowledge the separate and not inferior capacities of prose as a medium for

depicting the Comic Spirit in operation - the personification of this force for correction also having developed in the course of his writing. The manifesto represented by the lecture "On the Idea of Comedy and of the Uses of the Comic Spirit" (1877), where his ideas are argued formally, was followed by The Egoist (1879), which has the ideas put into novelistic practice: "The Comic Spirit conceives a definite situation for a number of characters, and rejects all accessories in the exclusive pursuit of them and their speech. For, being a spirit, he hunts the spirit in men..." (p.1).

But The Egoist is more than a demonstration of the principles of the "Essay on Comedy", for it really marks Meredith's coming into his own as a novelist, proclaiming the triumph of his personal prejudices and practice over his attempts to work within the conventions he thought to be dictated by popular demand. As a happy irony, justifying his independence, it also enjoyed a distinct critical success after twenty years of what seemed to him misunderstanding of his novels.

Tracing the evolution of Meredith's work through those years reveals a good many of the preoccupations in fiction at the time. Probably only Lytton among the nineteenth-century novelists surpasses Meredith's versatility, and Lytton through his long career seemed rather to

be able to anticipate trends than, like Meredith, to recognise and partially resist them.

I would argue that while Meredith's talent in prose fiction emerged from the beginning as a distinctive and wilful one, in the first part of his career he goes very much with the prevailing fashions in certain respects, though vociferously proclaiming his dissent in others. So a casual series of observations might note that The Shaving of Shagpat (1855) belongs with a burst of Oriental extravaganzas in mid-century, deriving from Vathek seventy years earlier, continuing for example in Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh and the romances of J.J. Morier in the first decades of the nineteenth century, and finding its best-known manifestation in Edward Fitzgerald's The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam in 1859. Indeed one of the happier vignettes of nineteenth-century literary history is provided by the story of Swinburne's discovery of the Rubaiyat, and his proceeding with Rossetti and Meredith to chant the poem aloud in the country near Meredith's cottage at Copsham one weekend in June 1862. Meredith's own venture in the Oriental vein of course anticipates this, and insofar as it had any specific impulse, was perhaps due to the renewed currency of the Arabian Nights following E.W. Lane's translation, published by Charles Knight in 1840 and frequently reprinted; though native

antecedents for Shagpat such as the Mabinogion have also been suggested, and such archetypal situations as impotence resulting from the cutting of hair also occur.

Meredith acknowledged his indebtedness in a general way in a Preface to the first edition, subsequently deleted:

It has seemed to me that the only way to tell an Arabian Story was by imitating the style and manner of the Oriental Story-tellers. But such an attempt, whether successful or not, may read like a translation: I therefore think it better to prelude this Entertainment by an avowal that it springs from no Eastern source, and is in every respect an original Work (Bibliography and Various Readings, p.1).

"Original work" this clearly is, but the author's own originality is curbed by his self-imposed condition of 'imitating the style and manner of the Oriental Story-tellers'. The imitative element is most apparent at the beginning of the tale, where Meredith tries every conceivable trick of the "eftsoons" variety, and succeeds in making the first page, for instance, read just like the Arabian Nights. As the narrative gets under way, the author becomes less self-consciously meticulous about the niceties of expression, though from time to time he remembers and throws in an archaism, like "after-morrow" (p.67), or a periphrasis like "Ere the shadow of the acacia measured less than its height" (p.39), or in

a more extended passage like that which relates "The Burning of the Identical" (pp.280 ff.) intensifies the Oriental cast of his prose. The whole structure, of separate incidents with interpolated tales, derives from the Eastern models, and the snatches of song and gnomic rhymes are used to reinforce the Oriental effect, though they also foreshadow Meredith's frequent use of commenting devices.

For all this effort devoted to pastiche, Shagpat does however yield to the questing critic clear signs of characteristic Meredithian concerns. He never again wrote so overt an allegorical story, though the values represented in this tale, like the power of illusion and the dangers of egotism, preoccupy him subsequently. The broad thematic pattern of the ordeal immediately rewards the search for similarities with later work. Indeed, Shibli Bagarag's trials and tribulations in the process of shaving the Identical and so winning power, prosperity, happiness and the princess, present a much more literal diagram of a hero's being tested and attaining to some kind of maturity or at least acquiring the insignia of it than in any of the later novels, and similarly the burlesque of the conventional romantic ordeal is already evident.

But without wishing to deny these premonitions, I cannot feel that the likenesses should be too heavily stressed. True, there is thematic relationship; and introduction of such subsidiary themes as the healing power of laughter. The capacity to roar at themselves is to save Shibli and Evan Harrington, while inability to laugh is a specific deficiency in Sir Austin Feverel (pp.194-5). Sandra Belloni shows the same emphasis in discussing the power of mirth to correct sentimentalism: "laughter ... the best of human fruit, purely human, and sane, and comforting" (p.215); but the quality of self-knowledge represented by laughter is considered in a more searching manner from Harry Richmond on, with the simple physical act of mirth becoming progressively less efficacious as the dimensions of humourlessness become more apparent, and as the characters become more able to articulate their deficiencies. Sir Willoughby Patterne appropriately provides the prime specimen of the ultimate complexity of the problem of humourlessness in Meredith's fiction, but it is the kind of progression evident in the mere coupling of the names of Shibli Bagarag and Willoughby Patterne which indicates the caution that I think should be exercised in discussions of Shagpat which see the tale as a product of Meredith fully-fledged. Sir Willoughby's

ordeals are not purely physical, like Shibli's, but inward, of the heart and head. Processes of mind in The Shaving of Shagpat are of the same order as any other event, since in the allegory the emphasis is on what happens to a set of lay figures with given attributes and not on the determination of events by character as Meredith is later to insist.

The reception of The Shaving of Shagpat was quite cordial, notable praise coming from G.H. Lewes:

"George Meredith, hitherto known to us as a writer of graceful, but not very remarkable verse, now becomes the name of a man of genius - of one who can create"¹ - an encomium which George Eliot echoed: "a work of genius, and of poetical genius ... Mr. Meredith has not simply imitated Arabian fictions, he has been inspired by them",² adding elsewhere "The author is alive to every element in his models; he reproduces their humour and practical sense as well as their wild imaginativeness."³ The authentic Meredithian genius, however, does not really

1. Saturday Rev., I (1856), 216.
2. The Leader, VII (5 Jan. 1856), 15-7, in M.B. Forman, ed., George Meredith: Some Early Appreciations (1909), p.26.
3. George Eliot also reviewed Shagpat in similarly enthusiastic terms for the Westminster Rev., n.s. IX (1856), 638-9: Forman, op.cit., p.39.

pervade Shagpat, for all the manifold idiosyncrasies of of the tale. While the content can be identified with some of the novelist's recurrent concerns, and so can certain aspects of the technique, neither the kinds of situation which most fully engage Meredith, nor the manner of regarding them, has fully evolved.

Meredith's next work of fiction, "Farina" which appeared in 1857, is derivative in much the same way as Shagpat. Lionel Stevenson connects it with the comic grotesque tradition of The Ingoldsby Legends and Thomas Love Peacock's Maid Marian and The Misfortunes of Elphin,⁴ and its kinship with the whole vogue of the medieval manifested variously by the pre-Raphaelites - Rossetti and Morris were then publishing in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine - and Tennyson - the first of the Idylls of the King being two years off - is evident, though mainly existing only in the diction used to present a story of legendary aspect. Otherwise, the tale is marked as a product of Meredith's hand mainly by the unlikeliness of incident and expression. The climax, the invention of eau de Cologne, is absurd, and difficult even to grasp at first, though both the obscurity and the absurdity may be ascribed to the elements of parody. As well as burlesquing heroic romance in the incidents and manner of the

4. The Ordeal of George Meredith (1953), p.55.

tale itself, Meredith parodies both his tale and the usual style of reviewers in a notice for the Westminster Review in which he also treats Barchester Towers and Madame Bovary - incidentally, allowing Flaubert half a page to the two each he accords Trollope and himself: "Mr Meredith has been very successful in setting before us a vivid picture of the coarse, rough manners, the fierce, war-like habits, and the deep-seated superstition of the 'good old times' of chivalry", he writes, and goes on to complain that the novel lacks completeness and that "the Author has sacrificed euphony, and almost sense, to novelty and force of expression". Despite this, "'Farina' will be read with pleasure by all who prefer a lively, spirited story to those dull analyses of dull experience in which the present school of fiction abounds".⁵ It is in the same interest that he proceeds to further disruption of conventional expectations in The Ordeal of Richard Feverel.

For Richard Feverel first displays what are ultimately Meredith's distinctive qualities, and intimates a reaching towards new capacities in the forms of prose fiction. By the side of the other productions of its year of publication, the annus mirabilis of 1859, the

5. "Belles Lettres and Art", Westminster Review, n.s. XII (1857), 598-9.

the technique and style of Richard Feverel are striking. In many ways it is as conventional a novel as its contemporaries A Tale of Two Cities and Adam Bede: indeed Richard Feverel is a novel decidedly eighteenth-century in feeling, of a line of treatises on education descending perhaps from Tom Jones and Tristram Shandy, though also having connections with such nineteenth-century productions as Sartor Resartus (in the kind of spiritual crisis undergone by the hero), and appearing in an era of active concern about education (as witness the writings of Herbert Spencer, or of Dickens in Hard Times, or of Thomas Hughes in Tom Brown's Schooldays).⁶ Reviewers also saw similarities with Bulwer Lytton's The Caxtons and the writings of Meredith's father-in-law, Thomas Love Peacock.

But despite this traditional cast, in several respects the novel challenges the barely-acknowledged conventions of its genre. The account of the ordeals of the Feverels does more than mock the romantic chivalric terms in which it is conceived: after all, satire of that particular convention had arisen virtually with the romance

6. Such aspects of Richard Feverel are discussed e.g. by P.D. Edwards, "Education and Nature in Tom Jones and The Ordeal of Richard Feverel" MLR, LXIII (1968), 23-32; and H.O. Brogan, "Fiction and Philosophy in the Education of Tom Jones, Tristram Shandy, and Richard Feverel", College English, XIV (1952), 144-9.

itself and became thoroughly sophisticated in the hands of Chaucer and Cervantes. There is also in Richard Feverel a positive movement towards an expansion of the novel-form, which was barely recognised as respectable, and hardly considered as a vehicle for representing any other kind of event than a series of externally observable ones. The dictum of Mill represented the extreme of orthodoxy on this point at the beginning of the Victorian period: "the novelist ... has to describe outward things, not the inward man; actions and events, not feelings".⁷

By 1879, when Arabella Shore wrote on "The Novels of George Meredith", a very different attitude was evident. She argued that poetry and the drama had ceded their functions as "the interpreter of thought and feeling and passion, the teacher of the lessons of life, the mirror of humanity"⁸ to prose fiction. Of the novel, she claimed "it is not only as a picture of outward life, with its varied action and passion, that it serves us. It gives us

7. "What Is Poetry? The Two Kinds of Poetry" (1833), in Mill's Essays on Literature and Society, ed. J.B. Schneewind (New York 1965), p.106. Mill's statement is referred to by R. Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England 1850-1870 (1959), p.9, in the course of a detailed account of debate on the novel's moral status.

8. British Quarterly Rev., LXIX (1879), 412.

also the springs of that action and the elements of that passion; it gives us, more or less truly, the thought of the age as to the meaning of the social and moral phenomena amidst which we live."⁹ Pre-eminent among novelists in Miss Shore's view was George Eliot, and next to her, Meredith¹⁰ - a judgement which anticipates D.H. Lawrence's giving George Eliot the credit for "putting the action inside", credit in which Meredith should share, I think, and be further recognised for the degree to which he began to exploit the ways of telling a tale.

In Richard Feverel, twenty-six years before the manifesto in Diana of the Crossways, Meredith declares a concern for explaining the true nature of events despite the expectations of his readers, making explicit an attitude which had been dormant in his earlier fiction:

At present, I am aware, an audience impatient for blood and glory scorns the stress I am putting on incidents so minute, a picture so little imposing. An audience will come to whom it will be given to see the elementary machinery at work: who, as it were, from some slight hint of the straws, will feel the winds of March when they do not blow. To them will nothing be trivial, seeing that they will have in their eyes the invisible conflict going on around us, whose features a nod, a smile,

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p.413.

a laugh of ours perpetually changes. And they will perceive, moreover, that in real life all hangs together: the train is laid in the lifting of an eyebrow, that bursts upon the field of thousands. They will see the links of things as they pass, and wonder not, as foolish people now do, that this great matter came of that small one (ch.xxv, pp.233-4).

The commitment to 'a picture so little imposing' has something of the spirit of George Eliot's similar commitment in chapter xvii of Adam Bede to "these faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence"¹¹, though Meredith perceives a different significance in the apparently insignificant from hers. He too is saying that things are not what they seem, but in proclaiming his concern with 'the invisible conflict' he demands awareness of the limitations of any individual's knowledge, and of the dangers of ascribing motives and developing interpretations on the basis of what is necessarily only a partial view, rather than stressing as George Eliot does unsuspected heroic qualities in the ordinary and everyday.

The phrase, 'the invisible conflict', defines a common factor in all of Meredith's fiction. He continually expostulates in the same vein in the novels, and develops

11. Adam Bede (1859; Blackwood's Stereotyped edn., n.d.), p.151.

more completely his capacity to depict what can be evident only to the inward eye, either because the situation hardly manifests itself at all on the surface, as in The Egoist, or because the true situation is other than surface indications suggest, as in Diana of the Crossways.

For all the talk of 'the invisible conflict' in The Ordeal of Richard Feverel however there is a good deal of action of the external kind - a rick-burning; elopement; journeys to London and the Isle of Wight, and further afield to Germany and South America (though the scene never shifts quite so far); seduction; a duel; threats of disinheritance, and ultimate reconciliations - which is positively swashbuckling by comparison with the facial tics which are almost the only externalisation of events in The Egoist. Yet while the characters' various interior disturbances are neither so finespun nor so universal as in the later novel, Meredith is continually insistent on the need to explain the pressures operative at any point, and to demonstrate, in propria persona if need be, the importance of a seemingly trivial event. Just as it is an important part of George Eliot's undertaking in Adam Bede to show in detail the unexpected motivations and complexities of behaviour in a traditional squire-and-milkmaid

story, so in Richard Feverel Meredith is determined to expound the thoughts and feelings of a cast of characters in a situation which has aspects familiar to any reader of novels, and even more familiar to anyone versed in the stock situations of New Comedy, such as a father and son falling out over the son's involvement with a girl. So Sir Austin's motive force, his wounded pride, is analysed throughout, from his wife's desertion, through his plans for bringing Richard up in accordance with the System, his sense of betrayal when Richard seems to him to break with the System, and his final sorrow in the death of Lucy and illness of his son - and all the while in public "he preserved his wonted demeanour, and made his features a flexible mask" (ch.i, p.4). Similarly the development of Richard is closely represented; Lady Blandish's growing awareness of Sir Austin's inhumanity delineated; and attitudes of minor characters more sporadically indicated.

I have postponed to a later stage discussion of Meredith's methods of presenting inner action in Richard Feverel. For now, I would point out that he is already adept in many of the modes used throughout his career, particularly the stylistic projection displayed in his earlier fiction; and that while in Richard Feverel at

least he rarely surrenders his privilege of authorial omniscience, he operates with great virtuosity within the convention to present his narrative in varying perspectives. It is in his elevation of 'the invisible conflict' to the status of a major concern in his novel, and his then 'reading the inner as well as exhibiting the outer', that Meredith's originality and innovation in his first novel are to be found.

Objections to Richard Feverel came from clergymen and others (apparently on the grounds of Richard's adultery), and led to Mudie's Library withdrawing the novel from circulation: the final blow to the author, who chose to think himself less favourably treated by readers and reviewers than was in fact the case. L.T. Hergenhan concludes that as far as the reviewers were concerned, "Moral disapproval of the novel was far outweighed by a misunderstanding of Meredith's purpose and methods."¹² In any case, such objections may have been partly responsible for Meredith's curbing his scintillating displays of originality until the self-assertion of The Egoist - which is not to say that the intervening novels lacked inventiveness, but that its manifestations were somewhat less apparent.

12. "The Reception of George Meredith's Early Novels", NCF, XIX (1964), 218.

Certainly such is the case with Meredith's next novel, Evan Harrington; or, He Would Be A Gentleman, which shows a similar mixture of motivations and concerns to those in Richard Feverel, though it is a considerably more orthodox book than its predecessor. Both novels deal with the moral development of the titular hero, but the issues of education and environment, and the methods used to present them, are markedly less complex in Evan Harrington. From chivalric aspirations Meredith turns to gentility, and delineates the stages of Evan's progress to a state of grace which permits his becoming enough of a gentleman to accept the idea of being a tailor, while being spared the difficulties of having to continue in the role.

There can be little doubt that the relative orthodoxy of Evan Harrington is largely due to the pressures of writing for weekly serial publication. Meredith's correspondence reveals that he was much exercised by such problems as providing episodes of suitable length, and with a proper amount of action and a provocative conclusion for each.¹³ Nor were his problems merely mechanical, for he had also to contend with the aim of

13. R.A. Gettmann, "Serialization and Evan Harrington", PMLA, LXIV (1949), 963-75, discusses such matters in detail.

Once a Week, stated by the publishers in their "Prospectus" (1859) as "to be popular without vulgarity, and pointed without affectation" - and since vulgarity and affectation were among the charges that had been levelled at Richard Feverel, Meredith's concern to be acceptable led him to take refuge in tried formulae. Accordingly, he chose a comic picaresque form, harking back ultimately to Fielding and Smollett, though there were plenty of nineteenth-century precedents in a similar vein, in which to debate social class and moral development in terms of what constitutes true gentlemanliness, a theme almost endemic in the bourgeois novel genre and enjoying a current vogue, having been touched on for instance by Thackeray in Pendennis (1848-50) and The Newcomes (1853-55), by Mrs. Craik in John Halifax Gentleman (1856), and by Dickens in David Copperfield (1849-50) and Great Expectations (1860-1).

Meredith's technique, too, is influenced by his interpretation of these models and of the demands of his audience. He perpetuates the morality tradition of allegorical nomenclature which persists in Restoration drama and the eighteenth-century novel, with Conning the maid, the village of Fallowfield, Mrs. Shorne, the Uplotts and the Laxleys and so on; and resorts to tactics

like lengthy descriptive chapter headings to point up comic and moral aspects of the action. The characterisation of stereotypes like the buffoon John Raikes, or the mysterious eccentric Tom Cogglesby, has a Dickensian quality which betrays a closer relationship than that engendered simply by traditional modes of farce. Meredith, like Dickens, has an exuberance of invention with a tendency towards exaggeration and the grotesque; and his capacity for full-blown comic creation is seen in this novel in the Great Mel, for instance, whose death opens the story and whose spirit pervades its development, and in his incomparable daughter the Countess de Saldar de Sancorvo, who as well as being more original in conception than Raikes and Cogglesby are not merely funny, and demand a more complex response at each appearance as the author expounds the preposterousness of the lady born Louisa Harrington and examines the memory of Mel. For Raikes and Cogglesby, who are simply comic, Meredith imitates Dickens' method of producing subordinate characters by belabouring a single attribute - what one reviewer called "their ever-gravitating principle of action"¹⁴ - but there is an inevitable strain in the performance since neither the kind of character nor the method of procedure is

14. Review of Hard Times in "Belles Lettres", Westminster Rev., n.s. VI (1854), 606.

natural to him. His kind of humour is anyway more verbal and less visual than Dickens', and especially he lacks Dickens' prodigality, so that he tends to force the characters to function as comic relief, thematic contrast and plot contrivance all at once (for instance in having Jack Raikes' pretensions to gentility burlesque Evan's progress). In passing, it is interesting to note that L.T. Hergenhan, considering Meredith's revisions of Evan Harrington for its English publication in book form in 1861 and for the De Luxe edition in 1896, concludes that Meredith regretted having tried to cater to the popular taste, tending to play down in revising the apparently "popular" elements, like Raikes' antics and the various mysteries developing from Evan's anonymous benefactor.¹⁵

However Meredith was by no means prepared entirely to capitulate to popular trends. Wilkie Collins' The Woman in White was currently being serialised in All the Year Round, and Meredith constantly compared his work with Collins'. He wrote to Lucas on 20th December 1859:

15. "Meredith's Use of Revision: A Consideration of the Revisions of Richard Feverel and Evan Harrington", MLR, LIX (1964), 542-4. An unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Jo Ray Cotton, "Evan Harrington: An Analysis of George Meredith's Revisions", Univ. of Southern California (1968), concludes that mostly the revisions are adroit and purposeful, though sometimes clumsy or illogical.

"And please don't hurry for emotion. It will come. I have it. But - unless you have mysteries of the W. Collins kind - interest, not to be false & evanescent, must kindle slowly, & ought to centre more in character - out of which incidents should grow."¹⁶ His principles caused him some difficulty, as the whole correspondence shows. Towards the end he became almost frantic: "This cursed desire I have haunting me to show the reason for things is a perpetual obstruction to movement. I do want the dash of Smollett & know it. But remember that full half the incident of Smollett touches an amusing matter not permitted me by my public."¹⁷

Such self-consciousness in the author as is revealed in these letters carries over into his voice in the novel. Meredith keeps his story within the control of an omniscient narrator, who in accordance with the jocular eighteenth-century comic vein of Evan Harrington is more overtly manipulative and more nearly characterised than the narrator in Richard Feverel. It is in the tradition of Trollope and Thackeray¹⁸ that Meredith in

16. ALS (20th December 1859), Yale University Library.

17. ALS ("Thursday" [1860]), Yale University Library.

18. I am thinking of such authorial sleights of hand as Thackeray's in dealing with Sir Pitt's proposal to Becky and the revelation that she is already married to Rawdon - Vanity Fair, chs. xiv-xvi; or Trollope's discussion of "The Widow's Suitors", Barchester Towers, ch.xv.

Evan Harrington perpetually draws attention to his entrepreneurial performance in asides such as "(since the occasion demands a pompous simile)" (ch.vii, p.70), or "But heroes don't die, you know" (ch.xx, p.259), which mock the very mechanisms of fictional representation. In the same way, remarks like "So ends the fourth act of our comedy" (ch. xxxviii, p.479), and "This is a comedy, and I must not preach the lessons of life here" (ch.xliv, p. 546), draw attention to important aspects of the particular illusion he is engaged on. There are, however, some addresses to the reader which include a little preaching: thus "Are you impatient with this young man? He has little character for the moment... And indeed a character that does not wait for circumstances to shape it, is of small worth in the race that must be run... Where the Fates have designed that he shall present his figure in a story, this is sure to happen" (ch.vi, p.61); or later, a cry which further echoes the letters to Lucas, "Action! - action! - he sighed for it, as I have done since I came to know that his history must be morally developed" (ch.xxxvi, p.457).

It is clear that there is still an emphasis on 'the invisible conflict' and 'the reason for things', but less often is there an illusion of direct contact with

the character, and more frequently reliance on the narrator is required for information, and interpretation too. So we are instructed in the divergence between what appears to be and what is in the behaviour of Tom Cogglesby: "It is not fair to go behind an eccentric; but the fact was, this old gentleman was slightly ashamed of his month's vagrancy and cruel conduct, and cloaked his behaviour toward the Aurora, in all the charges he could muster against it. He was very human, albeit an odd form of the race" (ch.viii, p.91). A paragraph later occurs one of the passages where Meredith is obviously imitating an earlier writer, when he attempts to establish his own eccentricity with a digression managed very much in Fielding's manner: "One would like here to pause, while our worthy ancient feeds, and indulge in a short essay on Habit, to show what a sacred and admirable thing it is that makes flimsy Time substantial..." Of course, the essay follows, until the thread of narrative can eventually be resumed with "But the old gentleman has finished his dinner..." (p.92).

Such claims as are to be made for the novel rest where Meredith undoubtedly hoped that they would, in the eventual working out of the theme of gentlemanliness through Evan's development. The centring of interest in

character may be somewhat laboured in this novel, but is at least coherent and even vital compared with the ways Trollope, who also professes the primacy of character, sometimes blithely expounds another dimension of his personages as required by the exigencies of events - as with George Vavasor in Can You Forgive Her?, whose villainies really seem to be exposed to the reader when Trollope has decided how bad he is to be rather than the exposure being delayed for reasons of drama or suspense. In writing Evan Harrington, Meredith does not succumb to dictates of orthodoxy, but his own distinctive notions of what a novel should be emerge rather as resistance than aggression as they had in Richard Feverel. Even so, he is confirmed in his stress on all aspects of the 'invisible conflict', and proceeds to a fresh phase of formulation in a flurry of literary activity.

Meredith throughout the 1860s was engaged in a constant struggle to make a living and a reputation. His notebooks contain stocktaking lists of possible works,¹⁹ and his letters refer to various projects in hand without prevarication concerning his financial needs. At the time of his second marriage in 1864, his expression was

19. These lists and their implications are discussed below, in "A Note on Meredith's Notes".

"I have laid lines right and left ... and in short spread traps for money everywhere" (Letters, p.154); and still in 1868 he complained to his son Arthur "My novels have been kept back by having had to write on newspapers - the only things that paid. - So take this as a moral: don't think of literature as a profession" (p.194).

While not all of the projected undertakings appear to have eventuated, the actual volume of his output during the decade, heralded by "A Story-Telling Party", published anonymously in Once a Week on 24th December 1859, is impressive enough. Beginning with Evan Harrington, which appeared in book form in January 1861 after serialisation during 1860, he published four novels - Emilia in England in 1864, Rhoda Fleming in 1865, and Vittoria in 1867 (serialised in the Fortnightly Review during 1866) - and almost completed a fifth, The Adventures of Harry Richmond, which commenced serial publication in the Cornhill in October 1870. Modern Love and Poems of the English Roadside, with Poems and Ballads came out in 1862, and a number of other poems appeared at intervals in journals such as Once a Week, the Fortnightly Review and Macmillan's Magazine. "The Parish Clerk's Story" appeared anonymously in Once a Week in 1861, and another tale, "The Friend of an

Engaged Couple", seems to have been accepted by Lucas in 1862 but not published. He began "Van Dieman Smith" in 1861, though the story, which became "The House on the Beach", was not completed and published until 1877, when "The Tale of Chloe", probably written in 1868-9, also appeared. It is likely that the unfinished story "The Gentleman of Fifty and the Damsel of Nineteen" dates from this early period (on the evidence of Meredith's meticulous early hand in the manuscript). In 1861 he refers to a play, The Sentimentalists, to which he returned later but apparently never finished. He wrote the first and final chapters for a book on the Alabama's last fight published in 1864, and contributed reviews and essays to various periodicals, including the Morning Post (for which he was war correspondent in Italy in 1866), the Fortnightly (of which he was acting editor from November 1867 to January 1868, during the absence in America of John Morley), and the Pall Mall Gazette. In addition, he continued to provide leading articles for the Tory Ipswich Journal ("the one serious moral dereliction of his life", declares Jack Lindsay);²⁰ to be publisher's reader for Chapman and Hall, and apparently also with Saunders and Otley for a short time; and gentleman reader for the

20. George Meredith: His Life and Work (1956), p.158.

wealthy eccentric Mrs. Benjamin Wood.

Obviously a good deal of Meredith's production in this period was of the pot-boiling order; but his energies were not expended mindlessly. He was actively experimenting with various forms both of prose and verse, and constantly hammering at certain themes and situations, all the time forging his own distinctive ethic and ideas of literary technique. Many of his letters display his bubbling enthusiasm, with a very characteristic mixture of excitement, responsibility, self-dramatisation and mockery, endearingly revealed for instance in this to Maxse:

Now that Emilia's off my mind, alas! Poetry presses for speech! I fear I am, unless I make great effort, chained to this unremunerative business for a month or so. I am getting material for the battle-scenes in 'Emilia in Italy'. But, I have an English novel, of the real story-telling order, that must roll off soon and precede it. Minor tales, too, and also an Autobiography. Which to be at first, is the point, and while I hesitate comes a 'Wayside piece', a sonnet, a song - Ambition says - 'Write this grand Poem'. I smile idiotic and should act with all due imbecility but for Baker's bills and Boy (Letters, p.115).

The first substantial piece of fiction to emerge from the frenzy of activity which followed Evan Harrington was Emilia in England, eventually published by Chapman and Hall in April 1864, though mentioned as early as May 1861. Meredith's letters indicate that he took a good deal of trouble with Emilia in England, and also include his assessment of the finished work: "The novel has good points, and

some of my worst ones. It has no plot, albeit a current series of events: but being based on character and continuous development, it is not unlikely to miss a striking success" (Letters, p.137). As it happened, this foreboding was warranted, since the novel was little reviewed though favourably and up to a point perceptively received.²¹ Meredith's demurs about the novel are much in his usual vein, and accurate enough: the psychological analysis in Sandra Belloni is certainly its strength, even though the psychology is almost entirely governed by the moral dichotomy of sentimentalism and natural feeling which structures the novel.

Emilia in England presents the common Meredithian situation of the author reworking certain aspects of the preceding book. This habit would seem to arise partly from a consistency in general concerns, and partly from a new attitude or possibility having presented itself during the earlier work. Here it is a formal possibility. So Meredith takes up the values of false gentility and true feeling discussed in Evan Harrington, and even repeats in the Pole family the circumstance of three socially ambitious sisters, though in this case the brother has none of Evan's

21. L.T. Hergenhan, "The Reception of George Meredith's Early Novels", NCF, XIX (1964), 229.

integrity and is less the vehicle of his sister's aspirations, and Mr. Pole, idiosyncratic in his own way, has none of the splendour of the deceased Mel. In the earlier novel Meredith depends on his plot for the development of theme: the story of Evan's adventures represents a moral progress which is partly defined by contrasts with the attitudes and situations of other characters. In this novel however he works out his theme through a spectrum of characters, in a manner distinctly premonitory of The Egoist. The diagram centres on the large-souled simple heroine Emilia (a not uncomplicated conception), contrasting her spirituality with the hypocrisy and false feeling of the Pole family, Wilfrid in particular being used as a demonstration of the insidious effects of sentimentalism. Other manifestations of sentimentalism are carefully discriminated and placed: there is morbid Purcell Barrett, for instance; and Merthyr Powys and his half-sister Georgiana Ford - "these were sentimentalists who served an active deity, and not that arbitrary projection of a subtle selfishness which rules the fairer portion of our fat England" (ch.xlviii, p.510).

The epithet 'subtle selfishness' is probably as precise a definition as the novel affords of the prevailing

vice of sentimentalism. There is much discussion of the values presented, and also of the means of presentation, with the emphasis firmly on comedy as correction, laughter being the outcome of awareness of incongruity rather than simple amusement (again in this respect Sandra Belloni points towards The Egoist). Meredith splits the narrator's personality, a tactic he adopts again in The Amazing Marriage, referring to the authority of the Philosopher to expound some of the moral burden, as in the passages on the Hippogriff (for instance, ch.xliv, pp.482 ff., and ch.li, pp.527 ff.) which concentrate on defining sentimentalism. The narrator himself steps forward in chapter xiii, "Contains a Short Discourse on Puppets", and proclaims

This curious retreat of my hero belongs to the order of things that are done 'None know why'; a curtain which drops conveniently upon either the bewilderment of the showman or the infirmities of the puppet.

I must own (though I need not be told what odium frowns on such a pretension to excess of cleverness) that I do know why. I know why, and, unfortunately for me, I have to tell what I know. If I do not tell, the narrative is so constituted that there will be no moral to it (pp.110-1).

After more discussion in the same vein on Wilfrid as a puppet hero, Meredith ends with a further manifesto rejecting what he sees as Thackeray's mode of operation:

"I do not wait till after the performance, when it is too late to revive illusion. To avoid having to drop the curtain, I choose to explain an act on which the story hinges, while it is advancing" (p.114). For all the avowed dissent from Thackeray, there are good grounds I think for seeing Meredith making this novel his own version of Vanity Fair, since he too is clearly modifying the "silver-fork" tradition as well as its variant in Vanity Fair, converting a recognised type of novel to his own ends. While it is a feature of the kind of comedy of manners novel that he is imitating, and hence part of his design to dwell on the authorial manipulation of narrative, Meredith is at once so intense and so anxious to appear flippant, that these pronouncements generally seem awkward and ungainly, rarely either instructive or amusing.

There are many occasions when Meredith is faithful to his claim "I know why, and... I have to tell what I know" (p.111). He proceeds inexorably to the conclusion about which he is characteristically wry: "What will the British P. say to a Finis that holds aloft no nuptial torch? All she does, at the conclusion, is to leave England" (Letters, p.135). This ending fulfils the requirements of the comic theme, in that Nice Shades and Fine Feelings have

been exposed, most minutely in Wilfrid, but in his sisters as well. "Emilia had been a touchstone to this family. They could not know it in their deep affliction, but in manner they had much improved" (ch.lix, p.605). The judgement on Emilia is less like a school report, and is dramatised in her letter which ends the novel. The heroine may not be rewarded with wedding bells, but being capable of true feeling and thus of growth, Emilia has completed a stage of maturation which promises even greater actions (and there are new opportunities hinted for Merthyr and Georgiana as well): "I hope to be growing; I fly like a seed to Italy" (p.609). From an early stage the novel is larded with omens of Emilia's awaking to her vocation, with Tracy Runningbrook making perhaps the most accurate prediction, "that she would be famous for arts unknown to her, and not for song" (ch.xxxviii, p.417).

Despite the awkwardness of the moral over-emphasis and the self-consciously derisive narration, Emilia in England marks an important development in Meredith's career as a novelist, being an advance in terms of his working out his subject in relation to the thematic focus, attempting to set up a tension among the various kinds and degrees of sentimentalism seen in the characters. Moreover there are many intimations in the novel of his subsequent concerns.

His formulation of a theory of comedy is significantly advanced, and the emergence of national and mercantile themes, especially in the outbursts of Mr. Pole, heralds similar treatment in Beauchamp's Career, Celt and Saxon and One of Our Conquerors. There are character-types, too, who reappear - Lady Gosstre and her social set, for example, are stock for Meredith - though the treatment of particular characters who survive into Vittoria has frequently been criticised on account of their apparent metamorphosis in the interim. However, while I would not particularly defend Meredith's execution, the conception of the relationship of the two books seems quite clear.

Though the demonstration is tacit rather than overt because of the suppression of authorial intrusions, Vittoria is given over to setting out various manifestations of honour in love and war in a structure similar to that of Emilia in England, with a range of characters illustrating the theme and the personal progressions of Emilia and Wilfred providing a continuing interest. However here the stress is more on the psychology of types than in the earlier book where the best writing presented an analysis of a mood or a moment of emotion. This is not to overlook the fresh start represented by Vittoria, but there is considerable intimation of the sequel in Emilia in England, and a good deal of the change in Vittoria can be accounted for in terms of the

shift of mode from comedy of manners to historical adventure.

When he was just beginning Emilia in England, Meredith described his plan for the two books: "The first is a contrast between a girl of simplicity and passion and our English sentimental, socially-aspiring damsels. The second (in Italy) is vivid narrative (or should be)" (Letters, p.130). The insistence on 'vivid narrative' was the same once he started the sequel: "All story ...: no philosopher present: action, excitement, holding of your breath, chilling horror, classic sensation. I hope to get finished in the Autumn" (1864; Letters, p.143). There are similar statements on pp. 145, 147 and 169; and a forecast in Emilia in England - the Philosopher "promises that when Emilia is in Italy he will retire altogether; for there is a field of action...where life fights for plain issues, and he can but sum results" - ch.xliv, p.484). But in the frenzy of work, Vittoria did not eventuate until 1866; and then, after publication, Meredith wrote regretfully to Swinburne:

'Vittoria' passes to the limbo where the rest of my works repose. You alone have hit on the episode of the Guidascarpi. I have not heard or seen another mention of it. I would have carried it into fulness, but the vast machinery pressed on me. My object was not to write the Epic of the Revolt - for that the time is yet too new: but to represent the revolt itself, with the passions animating both sides, the revival of the fervid Italian blood; and the character of the people: Luigi Suracco, Barto Rizzo, etc. Agostino Balderini is purposely made sententious and humorously conscious of it: Carlo Ammiani is the personification of the youth

of Italy of the nobler sort. Laura Piaveni and Violetta d'Isorella are existing contrasts. - I am afraid it must be true that the style is stiff; but a less condensed would not have compassed the great amount of matter (Letters, p.189).

The talk of putting aside the Philosopher and having 'all story' points to the change in mode after Emilia in England. Meredith is not exactly writing a romantic adventure story, though the elements of intrigue, abduction and such excitements, especially set-pieces like the battle scenes, obviously have kinship with popular fiction of this type, and with the historical novels of Charles Reade, Charles Kingsley and Charlotte Yonge currently in vogue. As he says, however, he is not concerned to write either a history or an epic glorification of the revolt - though it is interesting to observe his use of recent historical events in view of the way he later takes the story of Ferdinand Lassalle and reworks it in The Tragic Comedians by providing motivation for the recorded events. For in Vittoria, too, he is primarily concerned with motivation, and despite his protestations of "all story", the plot never gathers much momentum, partly because it is so complicated, and partly because it is contingent on the manipulation of the dramatis personae to fulfil the demands of historical fact at any given point.²²

22. The accuracy of Meredith's account is attested by N. Kelvin, A Troubled Eden (1961), pp.40-1. Kelvin points out that "What happens in the beginning, middle, and end of Vittoria is controlled by what did happen in Italy between 1848 and 1849", but says "the theme of the novel ... is the course of the war".

Emilia is again a touchstone for all the characters. Despite the change of name - and Vittoria Campa is her public name, a symbol of the role she plays in the world as well as on the stage - the character, distinguished by large-souled nobility, develops consistently from the earlier book.²³ She has maintained the sense of her destiny which had emerged by the end of Emilia in England, and now embodies the spirit of the struggle for Italian unity despite the personal problems of reconciling her various loyalties - to her old friends, her new allies, the cause of freedom, her art. There is some uneasiness in Meredith's handling of the heroine as a suffering individual as well as an inspiring symbolic figure, though the progress of her conflict is clearly scripted and focuses on her relationship with her lover and husband Carlo Ammiani who goes to his death because of his intense conception of personal honour which blinds him to all other considerations and admits of no compromise.

23. There is some explanation of the change of name in chapter xiii, p.140. Given the emphasis throughout both novels on names and how they are used, very consciously indicating concepts of identity, the question of Meredith's changes of titles appears even more vexed (Emilia in Italy became Vittoria in the course of composition, and in 1886, during a revision for Chapman and Hall's one-volume edition, Emilia in England became Sandra Belloni). Presumably Meredith found the initial geographical opposition unsatisfactory, and wished to stress personality development in the heroine who as the public figure Vittoria symbolises the spirit both of art and Italy and transcends the very human troubles of Emilia Alessandra Belloni.

Carlo's is only one manifestation of the possible attitudes to honour and duty, personal and public, which the novel illustrates. I do not propose to elaborate on Meredith's profuse yet minutely detailed scheme of the motivations of the many participants in the novel (which has the largest cast of any of his works - one hundred and nine characters were counted by Walter F. Wright²⁴), but the briefest of sketches indicates its ramifications.

The glowing description of the Chief in the opening scene sets up an ideal of dedication against which the other characters can be measured (ch.ii,p.10). By contrast, old Agostino is the supreme pragmatist, given to sage and gnomic utterances urging expediency. It is noticeable, by the way, what care Meredith expends on presenting speech patterns accurately and distinctively, though in other areas his stylistic versatility is curbed in this novel. Barto Rizzo's is "the language of a distorted mind" (ch.xliii, p.574), which Meredith depicts in some detail in the course of the novel, introducing the character with a case-history explaining the man's view of himself as an avenger and guardian of the conspiracy (ch.viii, pp.69 ff.).

There is a set of variations on the traditional themes of love and war, which meet in the person of the Austrian Captain Weisspreiss who "served neither Mars alone, nor Venus" (ch.xxvi, p.303), but serves both with integrity. There is a similar combination of personal elements with patriotism in the brothers Guidascarpi, both brave and loyal

24. Art and Substance in George Meredith (Nebraska 1953),p.92.

but caught up by the desire to revenge their sister, the situation of each being further complicated by their romantic entanglements.

The two Britons, the Welshman Merthyr Powys who is as dedicated to the Italian cause as the Chief himself, and Wilfrid Pole Pierson, now with the Austrian army, present opposed attitudes to national loyalty. Both men are deeply involved with Emilia, Merthyr ending in a close but unstated relationship to her.

Other concepts of honour and loyalty are seen in the minions - Luigi, whose devotion to Vittoria is assured by her act of kindness in getting him a cigarette after he has been spying on the conspirators, though otherwise he lacks conscience; and the wily Beppo, also true to Vittoria.

There is the same anatomising of allegiance among the women characters: old Countess Ammiani, truly noble, who having lost her husband "had given her son to her country" although haunted by a prophetic vision of his death (ch.xvi, pp.184-5); Laura Piaveni, her husband killed in the conspiracy then dedicated herself to the cause of Italy; Georgina Ford, a similarly self-denying figure, who is eventually sufficiently deflected from her devotion to Merthyr to be paired off with Captain Gambier; even Rizzo's wife is dumbly loyal both to her husband and to Rinaldo Guidascarpì whom she loves. Not all the women are noble: Violetta d'Isorella is a dangerous intriguer; the sisters

Von Lenkenstein are plotting and vengeful; the singer Irma di Karski, nicknamed "crabapple", is spiteful rather than evil.

This whole pantheon is more than simply a study of the psychology of revolution, which Lionel Stevenson sees as the real theme of the book.²⁵ It is rather a gloss on a comment of Agostino's, "A conspiracy is an epitome of humanity, with a boiling power beneath it" (ch.x,p.113), with an ingenious presentation of varieties of conflict between public and private duties and inclinations, revolving around themes of passion, of love for an individual and for one's country, and of honour, using the events of the 1848 rising as a framework. Nevertheless, of this excursion into reconstruction of Italian history the same memorable remark applies as was made apropos of Romola, George Eliot's attempt in the same direction: Vittoria "is undoubtedly a book which it is more interesting to analyse than simply ^{to} read."²⁶ An analysis shows Meredith writing a novel to continue and complement Emilia in England, with a further phase in the development of the titular heroine and concentration on themes of honour and valour to contrast with self-regarding sentimentalism in the earlier book. He is trying yet another genre, but still his restless inventiveness does not bring him either artistic satisfaction or public acknowledgement.

25. The Ordeal of George Meredith (1953), p.160.

26. Barbara Hardy, The Novels of George Eliot (1959), p.175.

By contrast with Vittoria, more interesting to analyse than to read, Rhoda Fleming is one of the most readable of Meredith's novels, and there is some external evidence relating to the writing of the book which again suggests that the novel was intended to conform to popular tastes. Indeed it is impossible to avoid recognising Meredith's attempt to emulate Adam Bede, commercially and critically one of the most successful novels of the last few years, in his version of the traditional squire-and-milkmaid story. Moreover, as Lionel Stevenson suggests, Meredith was probably developing his own "The Parish Clerk's Story", published in Once a Week in February 1861, which also used a story of seduction involving gentry and tenantry; and looking as well to The Heart of Midlothian and perhaps to The Scarlet Letter (he was reading Hawthorne in 1865 - Letters, p.168).²⁷ Beyond such conjecture, all the indications are that Rhoda Fleming was intended as "an English novel, of the real story-telling order" (Letters, p.115) and "a right excellent story" (p.159), which he hoped to dispose of in one volume. Moreover, the book was brought out by Tinsley Brothers,²⁸ a newer and more "popular" publishing house than Chapman and Hall who had been responsible for most of Meredith's prose to date.

27. The Ordeal of George Meredith (1953), p.145.

28. Apparently on commission terms, with Meredith bearing the expenses of printing in the hope of reaping greater profit: see R. B. Hudson, "The Publishing of Meredith's Rhoda Fleming", Studies in Bibliography, VI (1954), 254-7.

The subtitle was originally "A Plain Story", though eventually modified to "A Story", and this perhaps most of all testifies to Meredith's intention. Certainly in the interests of plainness he practically gainsays his by now customary discursions on the role of the narrator and the objects of his tale, and proceeds in a relatively crisp and limpid style, on a couple of occasions apologising for using more ornate language, as when he introduces the Fleming sisters ("In stature, in bearing, and in expression, they were, if I may adopt the eloquent modern manner of eulogy, strikingly above their class" - ch.i,p.4); or when he describes Dahlia's frantic state of oppression ("That was not a figure of speech, when she said she felt buried alive" - ch.xlii, p.440).

Generally however Meredith's protestations that he is conforming with expectations are less vociferous than in Evan Harrington, for example, and though he may have begun with the aim of reproducing the rustic charm and pathos usually associated with the excitement and intricacy of the seduction situation, inevitably his imitation turns to modification and he reworks the theme in terms of his own concern to read the inner as well as exhibit the outer. While the conventional story of Dahlia's involvement with Edward Blancove appears to run its allotted course - seduction, disenchantment, repentance of both parties, and

the ultimate death of the girl (after fever and an attempted suicide) - the outcome for the young man is a rejection of the traditional possibilities. He might have been expected to meet a violent death like Dickens' Steerforth or Meredith's own Edbury, or go into the Army, like Arthur Donnithorne, or, suitably chastened, take off for the Colonies (an alternative which would, incidentally, have fulfilled the utopian dreams of his cousin Algernon), or even resume his old ways; but Meredith has shown us a more complicated character than can be so summarily dealt with, and he rejects the categorising imposed by conventional formulae:

There is a sort of hero, and a sort of villain, to this story: they are but instruments. Hero and villain are combined in the person of Edward, who was now here to abase himself before the old man and the family he had injured, and to kneel penitently at the feet of the woman who had just reason to spurn him ...

He had grown to love her with the fullest force of a selfish, though not a common, nature. Or rather, he had always loved her, and much of the selfishness had fallen away from his love. It was not the highest form of love, but the love was his highest development (ch.xlvi, p.483).

This of course is the climax of a development in the character which Meredith has all along been suggesting, and indicates the manner of his resistance to providing only the expected thrills of plot: Edward is simply left, sadder and wiser. The inwardness of treatment in such passages as that in which like Fleetwood after him Edward reflects on the impossibility of taking the girl into society (ch.xii, p.213), or later when he rushes dramatically to try to forestall

Dahlia's marrying Sedgett (ch.xxviii), is marked by comparison with Dickens' handling of the character of Eugene Wrayburn in Our Mutual Friend which was appearing in monthly parts in 1864-5 while Rhoda Fleming was being written. Like Edward, Eugene is saved by the love of a girl of a lower class, but for all Dickens' compassion and insight, he does not so closely portray the anguished struggles of his character as Meredith does, nor is the predictable happy ending withheld. At the conclusion of Rhoda Fleming, Mrs. Lovell says "Edward will never marry any one. I do him the justice to say that his vice is not that of unfaithfulness. He had but one love, and her heart is quite dead" (ch.xlviii,p.497); and here Meredith is being more insistent on the irrevocableness of wrongdoing even than George Eliot, who has Adam Bede state "There's a sort o'damage, sir, that can't be made up for",²⁹ but Arthur Donnithorne's repentance has an element of miraculous conversion when set against Meredith's 'reading the inner' of Edward Blencrove.

Indeed, Rhoda Fleming turns out to be more of a rebuttal to Adam Bede than any kind of copy of it. For while George Eliot makes the seduction story much more than a melodramatic tale, and shows how Adam and Dinah must grow by softening their self-righteousness just as the errant Hetty and Arthur recognise their wrongdoing, ultimately she upholds conventional judgements even though showing the difficulties and presumptions of judging. Meredith makes a challenge even

29. Adam Bede (1859; Blackwood's Stereotyped edn., n.d.), ch.xlviii, p.403.

to the basis of judgement, at any rate in his depiction of Rhoda herself, where he shows how her harshness is due to sexual fear and lack of knowledge of her own nature. Her rigid moral position is clearly a defence; and Meredith discusses the character - of whom Diana Warwick is in some ways a later version - with greater frankness than George Eliot accords a comparable situation in Dinah, which is treated with a distinct ethical bias.

As W. E. Henley pointed out in a review, Rhoda Fleming is a "merciless impeachment of respectability",³⁰ a denunciation which continues in the strain of Evan Harrington and Sandra Belloni. At every turn Meredith sets values of honesty and affection against the hurtfulness and hypocrisy of the prevailing bourgeois morality (to the extent that Jack Lindsay is able to discuss the novel almost entirely in terms of class conflict and the cash-nexus),³¹ and his moral emphasis emerges almost entirely from his studies in character - the point of which he makes quite clear, as in the summary of Edward's progress I quoted earlier. He uses various symmetries in the structure of relationships in the novel - two sisters, two cousins, obdurate fathers and so on - to suggest some of the contrarities and complexities of character, rather as he does in Vittoria though with the important difference that Rhoda Fleming lacks both the cerebral completeness of the list of possibilities and the kind of

30. Quoted in C. J. Hill, "George Meredith's 'Plain Story'", NCF, VII (1952), 98.

31. George Meredith His Life and Work (1956), pp. 151 ff.

demonstrative aim which mark Vittoria.

For all the attention to the rural settings, the rustic characters and the machinery of plot, Rhoda Fleming turns out to be something more than the projected "Plain Story". Meredith is irresistibly drawn to serious exploration of the possibilities of fiction, no matter how he claims to be taking his work lightly.

After Vittoria finally appeared in 1866, Meredith did not publish another novel until The Adventures of Harry Richmond in 1871. Though the "Autobiography" had been on his mind at least since 1861-2, and he referred to it in 1864 as "a spanking bid for popularity on the part of this writer" (Letters, p.143), the book seems to inaugurate a fresh phase in his career as a novelist. The frenzy of activity during the 1860s died away as Meredith achieved greater emotional and financial security, and while he was still using traditional modes in Harry Richmond and Beauchamp's Career, he began to mould the narrative more confidently in his own fashion.

Although Harry Richmond belongs with the familiar nineteenth-century Bildungsroman tradition, and appeared about the time that the romance was undergoing one of its periodical revivals - Lorna Doone came out in 1869, and William Black's A Daughter of Heth was also published in 1871 - it is an extremely sophisticated example of both genres. Barbara Hardy describes the progression in Harry as "the nature and change of Harry's imagination, in part a special case,

fostered by special illusions, but basically the common human loss of young wonder."³² The circumstantial qualities of Harry's first person narrative to some extent conceal the brilliance of Meredith's rendition of development in the character. Indeed, the novel is virtually a metaphor of inner action, being Harry's account of his own growth.

Harry does not begin his narration until the second chapter, "An Adventure on my own account", and the title of the first, "I am a Subject of Contention", indicates his relative passivity in the opening episode when as a child he is borne off into the night by his father. This incident is told in the third person, in a style which projects the boy's awareness of the event as being like romance or fairytale. The use of babytalk at the beginning of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is a similar stylisation of the child's eye view, and just as Stephen's emergent awareness of himself and his environment is presented through the various manners Joyce adopts, so Harry's prose reflects his growth. By using an indirect mode of narration Joyce is able to suggest judgments on his protagonist, while Harry himself evaluates his past experience. His style is itself a means of evaluation, however.

32. The Appropriate Form (1964), p.85.

The continual process of reassessment primarily concerns Harry's relationship with his father, though naturally other attitudes are involved as well. Particularly important - and well-handled - is his feeling for Janet Ilchester, whom he dismisses in his youth as "a quaint girl" (ch.viii, p.107) but later he recognises her true qualities and ends by acknowledging his love for her. However I shall take a minor illustration of the way revaluation of experience operates through style, in a persistent recollection of the opening scene. The boy Harry is taken from his bed, and told that a gentleman wants to see him: downstairs he goes, and here is the account of his first view of his father giving a likely enough impression for an imaginative child:

It appeared to him that the stranger was of an enormous size, like the giants of fairy books: for as he stood a little out of the doorway there was a peep of night sky and trees behind him, and the trees looked very much smaller, and hardly any sky was to be seen except over his shoulders (p.10).

The course of the novel qualifies this image of Richmond Roy as heroically larger than life, and the particular visual memory recurs to Harry when he goes off with the gipsies, on an escapade which he hopes may lead him to his father.

An adventure befell us in the night. A farmer's wife, whom we asked for a drink of water after dark, lent us an old blanket to cover us in a dry ditch on receiving our promise not to rob the orchard. An old beggar came limping by us, and wanted to share our covering. My companion sank right under the blanket

to peer at him through one of its holes. He stood enormous above me in the moonlight, like an apparition touching earth and sky.

'Cold, cold,' he whined: 'there's ne'er a worse off but there's a better off. Young un!' His words dispersed the fancy that he was something horrible, or else my father in disguise going to throw off his rags, and shine, and say he had found me. 'Are ye one, or are ye two?' he asked. (ch.vii, p.91).

Harry's notion of his father's superhuman powers is still unchallenged: it is quite within the realm of possibility that the beggar may turn out to be Richmond Roy. By the time Harry finds his father in Germany, however, his attitude has undergone some change, and though in this instance the reaction is somewhat defensive, he has begun to weave his own illusions in addition to accepting his father's. He is flustered by the margravine's comment on his taste for the outdoors, and says

... plunging at anything to catch a careless topic, 'I was out in my father's arms through a winter night, and I still look back on it as one of the most delightful I have ever known. I wish I could describe the effect it had on me. A track of blood in the snow could not be brighter.'

The margravine repeated, -

'A track of blood in the snow! My good young man, you have excited forms of speech' (ch.xxvii, p.303).

It is precisely through Harry's changing forms of speech, however, that his development is traceable. A passing remark referring to the period of his twenty-first birthday gives the mature Harry's own awareness of this. He ends a description of Kiomi, "She was as fresh of her East as the morning when her ancient people struck tents in the

track of their shadows. I write of her in the style consonant to my ideas of her at the time" (ch. xxiii, pp.261-2). There are other reminders of the changed perspective of the narrator relative to his younger self - for instance:

"Perhaps it has already struck you that one who takes the trouble to sit and write his history for as large a world as he can obtain, and shape his style to harmonize with every development of his nature, can no longer have much of the hard grain of pride in him" (ch. xxxiii, p.346). Again, very near the end, Harry speaks of the turn of the tide which comes to him when he can write of others "instead of this everlastingly recurring I of the autobiographer", and goes on to a balanced summary of the position reached in his narrative and his understanding:

The pleasant narrator in the first person is the happy bubbling fool, not the philosopher who has come to know himself and his relations toward the universe. The words of this last are one to twenty; his mind is bent upon the causes of events rather than their progress. As you see me on the page now, I stand somewhere between the two, approximating to the former, but with sufficient of the latter within me to tame the delightful expansiveness proper to that coming hour of marriage-bells and bridal-wreaths. It is a sign that the end, and the delivery of reader and writer alike, should not be dallied with. (ch.lvi, p.674).

The retrospective regret of Pip in Great Expectations, also giving a first-person account of his moral growth, is much more laboured, taking the form of "if I had known then what I know now ...". Meredith's restraint saves his hero from the danger of protesting too much, and the comments on the processes of reassessment come appropriately in terms of the wisdom Harry has gained.

As "a spanking bid for popularity" Harry Richmond was not particularly successful. As an exercise designed, in the author's words, to "show you the action of minds as well as of fortunes" ³⁴ it is an exciting accomplishment. Meredith finally succeeds in working within the ambience of conventional expectations from romance and from Bildungsroman, but transcends and in some ways qualifies these expectations, partly by the process of disenchantment which the novel enacts, and largely through the subtlety of the technique employed. The style Meredith as ventriloquist adopts for Harry as narrator is considerably less involuted than the author's accustomed mode, and for this reason alone it is I think the more regrettable that The Adventures of Harry Richmond is so little read.

Meredith's next novel, Beauchamp's Career, is much better known, and is said to have been the author's favourite. J. M. Barrie puts the report in perspective: "He admitted on one occasion that he thought 'Beauchamp's Career' was his best novel, but that may have only been in a mood of the moment."³⁵ It is certainly a fine novel, and seems to me to be the culmination of the early phase of Meredith's career, when he experiments with various genres attempting to strike a balance between the pressures of convention and his own ideas about what fiction should be.

34. Coolidge, p.49.

35. The Greenwood Hat (1930; 2nd edn. 1937, p.193).

The book, published in 1876, is a political novel based on Meredith's experiences campaigning for his friend Captain Maxse at Southampton in 1868, but presumably written with an eye to recent popular works of this kind. The fourth of Trollope's Palliser series, The Prime Minister, also appeared in 1876; and in 1871 he had produced Ralph the Heir drawing on his unsuccessful parliamentary candidacy. Disraeli had published Lothair in 1870 after a lapse of some years since his preceding novel because of his practical involvement in politics; and George Eliot's political novel, Felix Holt, had come out in 1866. The political element is not unchallenged in Beauchamp's Career, however, since along with Harry Richmond it centres on the kind of study in character and preoccupation with moral dilemma which by this time was inevitable in Meredith's fiction.

Indeed as so often happens, Meredith appears to be reworking elements of the previous book: he takes almost the same reagents, but slightly alters the experiment. After his excursions with heroines in the Emilia books and Rhoda Fleming, he continues to focus on a hero who undergoes the now familiar pattern of an ordeal, but Nevil's trial is very much in the arena of practical events rather than the private fantasy world of Harry Richmond. The tragedy of Beauchamp however is that his idealism consorts ill with the world in which he finds himself, so that ultimately he dies in the same almost misguided spirit of heroism in which he had lived. His

situation is that of the Richard Feverel character placed in a setting of contemporary actuality, and just as boyhood happenings foreshadow later events in Richard's life, so there is a succession of incidents in Nevil's youth which point to his actions as a man. His letter of challenge to the French Guard is the first such occasion, followed by the episode with the poachers, his rescue of a drowning man, and his exploits in the Navy; and each time his high ideals of honour and duty are demonstrated. As in Harry Richmond, one of the central situations is the fascination of the young hero with a foreign lady imbued by him with all the hues of romance. In an important respect the situations differ, however, and that is the nature of the ladies in question. Where the Princess Ottilia is sensitive and responsible, aware of her duties to her country, Renée, for all her charms, lacks any moral sense. Nevil quite soon becomes aware of her deficiencies in courage, but this is provided for in his code - "She is a girl, and I must think and act for her" (ch. ix, p.83) - and once dedicated to the lady he obeys her bidding, even when during his election campaign she frivolously - as it turns out - summons him to Normandy. Because of his absence, he loses any chance in the election; and this is the epitome of his actions through the rest of his life. Meredith regards Nevil as heroic, and certainly he is in terms of his own verdict on Dr. Shrapnel: "The dedication of a man's life and whole mind to a cause, there's heroism" (ch.xxxii, p.351).

Early on, Meredith warns that

Beauchampism ... may be said to stand for nearly everything which is the obverse of Byronism, and rarely woos your sympathy, shuns the statuesque pathetic, or any kind of posturing. For Beauchamp will not even look at happiness to mourn its absence. His faith is in working and fighting. With every inducement to offer himself for a romantic figure, he despises the pomades and curling-irons of modern romance ... the exhibition of a hero whom circumstances overcome, and who does not weep or ask you for a tear, who continually forfeits attractiveness by declining to better his own fortunes, must run the chances of a novelty ... It is artless art and monstrous innovation to present so wilful a figure (ch. iv, pp.38-9).

The strain has been heard in Meredith's novels before; and once again he is concerned to read the inner. Comprehension of Nevil is achieved not by depicting his internal conflicts however, but by the gradual growth of understanding of his heroic qualities in Cecilia Halkett and Rosamund Culling particularly - a development in technique which Meredith was to continue exploiting in subsequent novels, shifting focus and perspective on his central figures.

It is as if Beauchamp's Career presents a resolution of Meredith's struggle to satisfy both popular expectation and his desire for innovation, so that in The Egoist he comes into his own and strikes out independently. For this novel - unquestionably his masterpiece - he drew rather on drama than on fiction for his model, especially the classical French theatre of Molière and Racine, and English Restoration comedy, though again perhaps there are similarities with the countryhouse novels of Peacock and the microcosmic settings of Jane Austen. But now the investigation of thoughts and

feelings which had been increasingly prominent in his work really generates his form. The external events of the novel are restrained, the gestures in the direction of plot practically cease, and he concentrates on the advances and retreats of a minuet of courtship which provides a much tauter structure than any he had so far used.

For The Egoist is a novel in which the action is that of mind and spirit, hardly evidenced at all in visible happenings. Garrod's crude account of the prime concern of Jane Austen's novels as "a husband hunt in a country village" might almost apply here, and certainly a recital of the actual events in The Egoist parodies the novel in the same way as a comparable process does Emma. Movements from cottage to manor house, walks in the park, occasional excursions to the railway station, social calls of various kinds, and a dinner party, form the substance of the plot, with a broken engagement as the pièce de resistance - though even this apparently sensational occurrence manifests itself mainly in internal agitation of the characters. What really happens is that characters analyse and appraise themselves and their fellows: they are extraordinarily self-aware, and highly conscious also of the motivations of others. The protagonists' awareness of self is not, however, complete, and they are impelled towards self-definition through their collisions in the course of the novel. It is the women characters who really make an acknowledgement of growth and change: towards the end both Clara and Laetitia declare

themselves as egoists and this is seen as a manifestation of an integrity which contrasts with Sir Willoughby's selfish egotism.

The diagram of relationships in the novel is almost a formal testing-out of possible combinations of characters, and definition of self is achieved through the participants' reflections on their lack of congruence and congeniality. There is a pattern provided by Willoughby's advances to Constantia Durham and Clara Middleton and Laetitia Dale, and their withdrawals from him, complicated by the involvement in the figure of the shadowy Captain Harry Oxford, Vernon Whitford, and Horace De Craye, and the other characters led by Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson. The possibilities are considered from various angles, as Meredith continues the experiment of Beauchamp's Career in presenting segments of the action through the filter of the consciousness of one character. This practice is by no means as much a matter of principle as in James, nor is Meredith as narrator "refined out of existence", but the technique is one he consciously and effectively employs.

Moreover Lubbock's interpretation of James' demands of form, that the matter is all used up by the manner, is fulfilled by The Egoist. It is as if Meredith needs a quite specific donnée, so that the outline of the work is in some way clearly present to him, neutralising the conflict between his dogmatism and the impromptu urgings of his lively mind.

Within the scope of such an outline, he can interpret as he chooses, shaping events according to his dominant notions of Nature and the operation of the Comic Spirit, and indulging in the intricate analysis that is his strength. Such a liberating limitation is provided by the Willow Pattern legend in The Egoist, and by the known stories on which his next novels, The Tragic Comedians (1880) and Diana of the Crossways (1885) are based. He explains the tale of the love of Ferdinand Lassalle for Hélène von Dönniges, and the gossip about Caroline Norton, in terms of his own ideas of human nature, giving detailed analyses of character and motivation.

Paradoxically, despite his claims at this stage that he was putting aside all thought of pleasing his public and setting out to please only himself, Meredith achieved the success he had for so long sought.

From now on, it is rather Meredith who leads and others follow. While The Egoist marks a high point in his career, his development did not cease there. His last five books must be the most neglected novels by any major nineteenth-century author. The late works of Dickens and George Eliot suffered eclipse for a time under the opprobrium of being idea-ridden, lacking the humour and charm which had been held to distinguish the earlier fiction of their authors, though recent criticism has triumphantly reinstated them as products of the writers' maturity. But if Meredith's other novels are generally ignored, The Tragic Comedians, Diana of the Crossways,

One of Our Conquerors, Lord Ormont and His Aminta, and The Amazing Marriage, are virtually consigned to oblivion. Yet they are fine works, Diana especially, and important ones, which merit serious and extended study in their own right and as the culmination of Meredith's career as a novelist.

In these novels Meredith's individuality is asserted even more strongly than before, markedly in The Tragic Comedians and Diana of the Crossways, and most definitively and deliberately in One of Our Conquerors (1891). This novel is of considerable consequence in Meredith's oeuvre since it presents so many of his concerns in extreme forms: his preoccupation with the basis of marriage is a dominant theme; so is the pitting of natural values against those of society, and also the crippling effects of egotism. Ambitiously, he sets all this in counterpoint to an analysis of the condition of England, dealing in terms of general decadence and specific ills; the whole being couched in his densest prose - as he said himself, "my most indigestible production". His emphasis is still on reading the inner as well as exhibiting the outer, to the extent that the novel has been seen as a forerunner of the twentieth-century stream of consciousness genre, since so much of the narrative takes the form of an exploration of "the entire area of mental attention, which includes the gradations leading to unconsciousness as well as the state of complete awareness."³⁶

36. This quotation is part of a longer definition of a stream of consciousness novel in M. Friedman, Stream of Consciousness: A Study in Literary Method (New Haven 1955), p.3.

In One of Our Conquerors, he continues to discuss popular expectations from fiction - this obsession had been made a theme in Diana of the Crossways - and the whole problem of fictional representation occurs again in The Amazing Marriage (1895) where as Gillian Beer has argued "The artistic debate between romance and realism is consciously wrought into the total structure of the book, until gradually the reader is led to see that it is not simply relevant to the story Meredith is telling but is the same story couched in other terms." 37

Again in his last two novels, Meredith was concerned with unconventional marital situations and with the rightness of adhering to Nature - though generally he used Nature as a notation rather than urging natural values as gospel. Perhaps less ostentatiously in Lord Ormont and His Aminta, his stylistic versatility is still flaunted; though other writers - pre-eminently James - had gone further than Meredith in formulating and implementing theories of how technical skill in such matters as use of point of view should be directed. Meredith's relation to his contemporaries is difficult to establish, however. I said earlier that he was in the van of new movements, but this absolute claim is somewhat distorting.

37. "The Amazing Marriage: a Study in Contraries", REL, VII (Jan.1966), 92.

The 1880s and '90s, though a period of consolidation for Meredith, were something of a watershed in the history of the English novel. The old generation of writers was thinned: George Eliot died in 1880, Disraeli and Borrow in 1881, Ainsworth and Trollope in 1882 (when Joyce and Virginia Woolf were born), Charles Reade in 1884, Arnold in 1888, Wilkie Collins and Browning in 1889; and no acknowledged giants filled their places. Continental influences began to affect the English literary climate: the French naturalist writers were translated, to the public clamour which culminated in the trial of Vizetelly in 1888 for putting out Zola's La Terre; the Russian novelists, previously known in French, were also translated into English; and Ibsen, first appearing in English in 1872, was promoted during the ensuing decades by Gosse and Archer and Shaw. Such infiltration had various consequences, affecting not only the kind of literature being produced but also theoretical attitudes.

Various tendencies became apparent in the novel. Realism flourished with writers like George Moore (an important figure throughout this period of flux), Gissing, Arthur Morrison, Mark Rutherford, Israel Zangwill and the like; but so did romance and adventure in the hands of Stevenson, Conan Doyle, Rider Haggard, Weyman and their ilk. Both strains developed from native traditions of realistic writing and historical fiction, as well as deriving impetus from foreign sources; and in addition the romance was in

part a reaction to and escape from much that realism forced to the attention. The situation was complicated, exciting, and as yet has hardly been examined by literary historians, who have not successfully disentangled the mingling of indigenous and exotic elements or accounted for the build-up to the Aesthetic Movement in the '90s.

Meredith can hardly be said to have been affected by such "influences", which did however have a significant consequence for him in that themes and emphases which had always been evident in his work were now issues of great moment: the role of woman in society and the nature of the marriage bond were political topics as well as literary concerns, for instance; and both psychologists and writers were considering more deeply mental processes and their relation to external action. Nor is it pointless to add that this was the era of the great English philologists of the rank of Skeat and Furnivall (whom Meredith knew), with more attention actually being directed to a study of the language. Hopkin's poetry is suffused by the resulting verbal intoxication; and so to some extent is Meredith's prose, I think. Such factors as these, together with his semi-martyr position of having been mocked by ignorant old-fashioned critics presumably militated towards readier acceptance of Meredith's work.

Of the new generation of novelists, Gissing and Hardy and Stevenson all revered Meredith rather than reviling him.

James, while impatient with Meredith as we have seen, had some respect for him. However Meredith never became influential, in the sense of having a school of imitators or apparently suggesting new directions for fiction. Stevenson's Prince Otto (1885) is written in crabbed prose unlike the author's usual much-admired lucidity, and may well have borne the Meredithian imprint in its subject, a sort of heroic burlesque, as well. Some of the Yellow Book stories of Lionel Johnson and Henry Harland, for instance, and the fiction of Richard Le Gallienne and Maurice Hewlett, and Aubrey Beardsley's prose fragment "Under the Hill", have a certain ornateness and complexity of language - but it would be rash to attribute this in every case to admiring imitation of Meredith, particularly since the coruscations of his style are so much a manifestation of "le style c'est de l'homme même".

There is however evidence of a general tendency towards adoption of an elaborate and florid style, and greater concern for the theory of style. Travis R. Merritt, in his discussion of "Taste, Opinion, and Theory in the Rise of Victorian Prose Stylism", selects as evidence Pater's 1888 essay on "Style", the critical writings of George Saintsbury, and the example of R. L. Stevenson.³⁸

38. "Taste, Opinion, and Theory in the Rise of Victorian Prose Stylism", in The Art of Victorian Prose, ed. G. Levine and W. Madden (New York 1968), pp.23 ff. Merritt's is a seminal article, opening the whole question of style in Victorian prose.

These were phenomena in part due to recognition of French finesse, in part to a repudiation through stress on individuality in style, of the prevailing utilitarian attitude which demanded plain unadorned language. And the positive concern for the artistic medium which was such a feature of the Aesthetic Movement also had its influence. However, Merritt adds that "During the last fifteen years of the century, prose stylism fully flowered and withered almost simultaneously".³⁹

A further perspective on the outbreak of stylistic elaboration is provided by Wylie Sypher, who, talking generally about nineteenth-century experimental art, observes how much of it is mannered or manneristic; and he proceeds to definition:

Mannerism is a result of different attempts to stylize, and is one symptom of the loss of a style, a revolt against a prevailing style, or a reformulating of style. It is prone to technical ingenuities, deliberate deviations, and every kind of unexpected emotional attack. John Donne is the great mannerist poet who uses most of these tactics.⁴⁰

Accepting Sypher's view of mannerist reactions, Meredith's eccentricity does appear to be more than personal idiosyncrasy. He sees a different kind of surface to life than his predecessors, and the complexity of his awareness is reflected kaleidoscopically in his language: the elements of revolt and reformulation are indeed evident. But while the phenomenon should be recognised, there is no sound basis I

39. Ibid., p.30.

40. Rococo to Cubism in Art and Literature (New York 1960), p.158.

think for claiming Meredith as an influential innovator such as Donne was. The paths he found were not those others followed, though they were heading for the same goals. Nevertheless his pioneering has its own significance, treating with conventional modes before moving more definitively into a manner most congenial to him. In the light of this broad outline of Meredith's development as a novelist, I now propose to examine his development more closely to discern how the experimenting with technique and isolating of themes and elevation of the importance of inner action proceeds - the oscillation between independence and conformity, reworking elements of one novel in its successor in the early stages, through a phase of self-determination in the 1870s, to the defiant assertion of the late novels.

PART TWO

REPRESENTATION OF INNER ACTION

III. THE PROBLEM OF MEREDITH'S STYLE

Not the least part of the accomplishment of all Meredith's writing is its extraordinary stylistic virtuosity and dexterity. The rapid and minute shifts and flickers of the controlling intelligence, for it is in this aspect that his presence as narrator is most apparent throughout his novels, conditions the reader to being unable to anticipate the direction of a sentence, let alone development of a paragraph. Meredith is evidently highly self-conscious as narrator, making a good deal of play with the authorial persona (especially in such instances as the constant contention with the Philosopher in Sandra Belloni, or with Dame Gossip in The Amazing Marriage), but in so doing distracting attention somewhat from his more engaging manipulations. It is not so much that he violates the expected distancings of the teller from his tale, and the narrator from his audience, as that he never allows any constancy to be assumed in the structure of this relationship, given the dominance of the author. Indeed, an important result of all the shift of focus and perspective is that a special intimacy and dependence of reader on author is engendered: Meredith's manner simply demands acceptance - almost as an act of faith - for comprehension. There can be no stability of assumption other than to expect the unexpected which duly occurs in some arcane fashion, and this I think is at the root of the undoubted difficulty

of reading Meredith. Where a difficult sentence of Henry James' can usually be solved by working out the embedded syntactic refinements, interpretation of Meredith may depend on recognising the associations he is making, which will very likely be concealed in dislocated syntax and an esoteric vocabulary (the "Prelude" to The Egoist probably provides as knotty an instance as any).

Meredith always acknowledges the framework of authorial omniscience, but is neither limited nor inhibited by its conventions. Indeed as has been seen, he frequently exploits the convention for the opportunity provided of drawing attention to his aims and methods, in general and in particular, insisting on the need to show thoughts and feelings as well as actions. His methods are not always so direct, however; and broadly speaking his techniques for rendering internal history and representing consciousness remain constant through his whole career. Accordingly I am basing my discussion of Meredith's narrative methods on his first novel, The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, since while the handling of a particular technique may be developed later, his main strategies are already operating. Moreover, criticism of Richard Feverel almost invariably fails to recognise the extent and significance of Meredith's use of stylistic techniques. There is an advantage in taking one novel as a basis since there is more chance of indicating the network of allusion which sustains

its texture; and further advantage in considering an early novel in some detail since One of Our Conquerors, a late book, is extensively discussed in Part Three, so that relevant comparisons of early and late can be made.

Certainly such a resistance as Meredith manifests to normal novelistic procedures may seem to imply some abnormal repugnance to conforming to expectation. The explanation in Meredith's case is almost certainly that the perversity is congenital, displayed in the various kinds of defence with which from an early age he saw fit to surround himself. Some biographers stress as cause his social pretensions deriving from his tailoring ancestry; others the wounds of rejection both publicly, by the critics; and privately, by his first wife. These aspects of the case-history are inaccessible and rather irrelevant: what is evident is that while Meredith was a man capable of strong and simple loyalties and affections - as his charming letters to Janet Ross indicate, or the delight which surges through his announcing to various friends that he is to marry Marie Vulliamy - very often his mode of expression was a protective sarcasm or an obscurity deriving from ebullience. All his letters display an irrepressible inventiveness, which suggests that the inability to resist a shaft of wit, his elliptical vision, the digressions, and mocking changes of tone, need not necessarily be interpreted simply as a stylised reaction to

normal narrative presentation, whether in formal or informal discourse, but as a spontaneous and indeed natural manner.

Nor should the frequent testimony concerning Meredith's gusto and delight in his fictions be forgotten. His storytelling was inveterate, and there are many accounts of the way he identified himself with his creations: even with the comic spirit - "Know that Marie is the wife of a Pantagruel; she is sublime in laughter. We sit on a humorous Olympus, and rule over the follies of mortals" (1864; Letters, p.159. cf. the closing paragraph of The Egoist, for example). Lionel Stevenson argues for Meredith's as a conversational style, having literary antecedents in the discursive essayists, and his case, so far as it goes, is valid enough:¹ it seems apparent that Meredith's strictly literary activity, the actual process of sitting down to write, is of a piece with all his other activity which is consummated in his writing. His writing therefore conveys a strong sense of personality - a set of traits of perception and utterance, which lead to the kinds of shifting references I began by discussing.

There I suggested that the most immediately striking feature of Meredith's style is the attention it draws to itself by

1. "Meredith and the Problem of Style in the Novel", Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, VI (1958), 181-9.

its virtuosity. Indeed a not inconsiderable aspect of Meredith's difficulty is that he has not one style but many, a whole repertoire of narrative voices which he adopts to set a scene, project a character's consciousness, or simply to vary the narrative texture. This Protean propensity may well have been natural, but there is no doubt that the natural tendency is deliberately cultivated and at times consciously intensified: equally there are times when, just as deliberately, it is subdued, as in Evan Harrington and to some extent in Harry Richmond. A comment made towards the end of his career indicates Meredith's awareness of this function of style:

He recommended authors to study the writings of Lafcadio Hearn, as he considered that 'his style was so admirably adapted in every case to the impression he wished to convey.' He thought some of his special faculty was due to his cosmopolitan origin and environments, as his father was Irish, his mother a Greek, and he was educated and lived in America during his early life, and afterwards² married a Japanese lady and lived and taught in Japan.

The attribution of Hearn's facility to his cosmopolitan experience is nicely Meredithian, perhaps glancing back to the linguistic odyssey, "The Rival Tongues", in One of Our Conquerors, and anyway indicating Meredith's admiration for eclecticism in style as well as content.

2. Lady Butcher, Memories of George Meredith O.M. (1919) pp.98-9. Lady Butcher gives no date for this anecdote, but the recommendation cannot be earlier than the '90s since Hearn did not go to Japan until 1890.

His aims with his own style were no doubt precisely the qualities he admired in Hearn, the ability to adapt his manner to the impression he wished to convey - which is, after all, a fair enough general definition of style. Other of Meredith's pronouncements give more specific insights, however, some of the earliest coming in Sandra Belloni, where Purcell Barrett remarks

The point to be considered is, whether fiction demands a perfectly smooth surface. Undoubtedly a scientific work does, and a philosophical treatise should. When we ask for facts simply, we feel the intrusion of a style. Of fiction it is part. In the one case the classical robe, in the other any mediaeval phantasy of clothing (Ch.viii, p.63).

And phantasies are certainly what Meredith produces. What is interesting is that this texture of surface is a conscious part of a program: as he implies in the first chapter of Diana of the Crossways, density of expression is an inevitable accompaniment to strenuous thought, and interpreting it beneficial to the reader besides. Such at any rate is the rationalisation of the author's practice that Barrett is being made to utter. This character is given a further statement over the page, which evidently emanates from Meredith the poet who is turning his hand to prose: "Our language is not rich in subtleties for prose. A writer who is not servile and has insight, must coin from his own mint." (p.64). Later on in the novel, Tracy Runningbrook describes his artistic procedure: "In composition, mind, always strike out your great

scene, and work from it - don't work up to it, or you've lost fire when you reach the point. That's my method" (Ch.xxiii, p.225); and this advice is repeated by Meredith years later in a letter: "My method has been to prepare my readers for a crucial exhibition of the personae, and then to give the scene in the fullest of their blood and brain under stress of a fiery situation" (Letters, p.398). The same letter also has some reflections on style:

Concerning style, thought is tough, and dealing with thought produces toughness. Or when strong emotion is in tide against the active mind, there is perforce confusion. Have you found that scenes of simple emotion or plain narrative were hard to view? When their author revised for the new edition, his critical judgment approved these passages... The verdict is with the observer.

... high notes and condensings are abandoned when the strong human call is heard (Letters, p.399).

This letter is particularly interesting for its indications of how Meredith himself regarded his style, especially since he obviously believed that powerful human emotion leads to a simplification in manner (there is a similar comment made with reference to criticism of One of Our Conquerors: "One fancies that a cultivated man might perceive in a writer a turn for literary playfulness, when strong human emotion is not upon him. To find this taken seriously, as an example of my 'style', is quaint" - Letters, p.444).

Meredith's most extended statement on the problems of style has the same interest of suggesting how he regarded his own

practice. This passage comes from his contribution to a symposium of leading authors advising aspiring writers, beginning with a disarming disclaimer:

I have no style, though I suppose my work is distinctive. I am too experimental in phrases to be other than a misleading guide. I can say that I have never written without having clear in vision the thing put to paper; and yet this has been the cause of roughness and uncommonness in the form of speech.

... Impress on your readers the power of the right use of emphasis, and of the music that there is in prose, and how to vary it. One secret is, to be full of meaning, warm with the matter to be delivered. The best training in early life is verse. That serves for the management of our Saxon tongue... Explain that we have besides a Saxon, a Latin tongue in our English, and indicate where each is to be employed...

... there is one point I should add: That, granting a certain capacity in the writer, he will do wisely, while schooling his nature, not too violently to compress or restrain it...

The highest examples of style are in Greek and Latin, following them, and derived from the classics, French. A study of French prose is useful, even needful. But some knowledge of the classical masterpieces is absolutely necessary to the writer who would pour copiously, yet not overwhelm; be condensed, yet not obscure. In German the English find their own natural faults exaggerated, and Italian prose is verbose, a coil of sounding phrases... Writing is an art as painting is,³ and in both we must begin by reverent study of the masters.

Evidently these are the precepts on which Meredith has been proceeding throughout his writing career. His phrases give his own explanation of the tumbling energy of his writing: certainly he

3. The Art of Authorship, ed. G. Bainton (1890), pp.130-2.

succeeds in avoiding violent compression of his nature, though 'warm with the matter to be delivered' he does not always avert overwhelming or obscurity.

Throughout the novels, of course, he has been proclaiming about style and narrative technique; and sometimes his pronouncements are taken up and used as hostile descriptions. Commentators favour a remark emanating from Gower Woodseer, "style is the mantle of greatness; and say that the greatness is beyond our reach, we may at least pray to have the mantle" (The Amazing Marriage, Ch.xxxix, p.404); or the account of Carlyle's style early in Beauchamp's Career, "a style resembling either early architecture or utter dilapidation, so loose and rough it seemed; a wind-in-the-orchard style, that tumbled down here and there an appreciable fruit with uncouth bluster..." (Ch.ii, p.22). Whatever the terms employed, however, Meredith's style is frequently the subject of abuse or lament.

A gentle regret pervades an anecdote from Lady Butcher's girlhood diary, recounting an occasion on which Meredith picked up one of Charlotte Yonge's novels,

... read a few sentences, and then continued to read on out of his head a sustained conversation between the characters, calling out: 'This woman does contrive dialogue well!' I was glad he said this, as I do like Miss Charlotte Yonge's books... Mother says she wishes Mr. Meredith would copy Miss Yonge's method of telling a tale so that it can be understood, in his own books.⁴

4. Memories of George Meredith O.M. (1919), p.16.

Mrs. Brandreth's rueful remark echoes over and over in comments by Meredith's readers and critics: James took the same line, with less charity; while Oscar Wilde's summary is brilliantly epigrammatic.

His style is chaos illumined by flashes of lightning... Somebody in Shakespeare - Touchstone, I think - talks about a man who is always breaking his shins over his own wit, and it seems to me that this might serve as the basis for a criticism of Meredith's method ... even if the man's fine spirit did not revolt against the noisy assertions of realism, his style would be quite sufficient of itself to keep life at a respectful distance. By its means he has planted round his garden a hedge full of thorns, and red with wonderful roses.⁵

The implications of something precious within to be released from evil enchantment soften the image of the thorn-hedge, and ameliorate the devastation wrought by the witty accuracy of 'a man who is always breaking his shins over his own wit', and of another annihilating sentence which I did not quote above: "As a writer he has mastered everything except language: as a novelist he can do everything, except tell a story: as an artist he is everything, except articulate." But the barrier of Meredith's manner is neither so impenetrable nor so magical as Wilde makes out, and while his method is not justified by a demonstration that he was operating in accordance with his own theories, the kind of explanation he suggests, together with an awareness of the general situation of revolt against a prevailing style outlined by Wylie Sypher, must certainly modify judgement.

5. "The Decay of Lying" (1888), repr. in Intentions (1894), pp.16-7.

IV. TECHNIQUES : DOCUMENTARY DEVICES

The Ordeal of Richard Feverel submits quite successfully to a thematic analysis (in terms of the ordeal, which is principally discussed in relation to the titular hero, though recognised in other characters as well; or of the system, enshrining the values of science which irrevocably corrupt or injure natural feelings); and equally well conduces to the tracing of image patterns (of chivalry; the elements and other natural imagery; various myths, including the classical Battle of the Gods, and the Fall). Frequently, too, the novel is discussed in terms of genre, with much argument over its aspects of New Comedy or the tragi-comic mode. But any of these lines of approach, no matter how scrupulously pursued and satisfactorily concluded, may well traverse the surface of the novel and not engage with its coruscated texture; yet one of Meredith's most striking achievements in this book is his mastery of heterogeneous narrative methods. In depicting his 'invisible conflict', Meredith develops a propensity for authorial commentary through stylistic virtuosity which had been intimated, though not very extensively, in his earlier tales.

Meredith sustains the conventional control of the omniscient author throughout the novel, hardly ever relinquishing the narrative to one of the characters, and relatively rarely obtruding the authorial persona. On the whole he plays fair with the reader,

and does not devise mysteries soluble only with his superior knowledge. Concealing until after the wedding (Ch.xxxix, p.317) Mrs. Berry's identity as the nursemaid dismissed for having seen Sir Austin weep by his son's bedside (Ch.i, pp.4-5) is a harmless deception; and Meredith makes some play with the coincidence, and with her role both as a wronged wife and a victim of Sir Austin's pride. There are a few minor bafflements to be cleared up in the course of events: for instance, how Lucy came to have possession of Richard's verses (which are burned on p.101, Lucy's possession of a leaf of them being revealed on p.123, and accounted for on p.161). There is some case for suggesting a certain realism here - explanations in everyday life do get made in a random way - though later in Meredith's career the unexplained reference becomes a mannerism, a heightened form of verbal allusiveness. The hints of the happenings on the Fleetwoods' wedding night, which are unequivocal but diffused and concealed, are somewhat of this order, though perhaps qualifying as a special case because of the delicacy of the subject as suggested by jokes about "The Amazing Baby". At the same time, inferential communication of information may be meaningful in terms of Meredith's priorities, which are always the delineation of causes and effects of events rather than the events themselves - for instance in the lead-up and reactions to Beauchamp's duel (Chs. xxv-xxvi); or in the account of Diana's behaviour before her engagement to

Augustus Warwick, which is largely from Lady Dunstane's point of view: on the evidence of Diana's letters, she "conceived that the unprotected beautiful girl had suffered a persecution, it might be an insult" (Ch.iv, p.51), a conjecture which is confirmed for the reader much later, when Wroxeter's advance is revealed making Diana's apparent over-reaction to the pass made by Sir Lukin and her hasty acceptance of Warwick more explicable. To some extent this habit of the author is simply a variation on a narrative device which is readily accepted, that of presenting a symbolic or emblematic scene of which the full significance is only gradually recognised - for example the values of innocence and corruption embodied in the situation in the opening chapter of Rhoda Fleming; and it is a habit related to what is seen as his frequent failure to present big scenes - in Rhoda Fleming, he is accused of shirking such events as Robert's attack on Algernon at Warbeach and his subsequent waylaying, or the wedding of Dahlia to Sedgett, but in each case the circumstances surrounding the incident are more integral to Meredith's purpose than the incident itself, and he takes advantage besides of the opportunity to establish the Warbeach setting by village gossip about Robert's action (Ch.xvii), present the maternal character of Mrs. Boulby as she tends his injuries (Ch.xix), and give the horrified realisations of both Robert and Edward which send them rushing to the church, too late to stop the ceremony (Ch.xxxviii).

However while it is the narrator's voice which is heard throughout Richard Feverel, Meredith does adopt different means of varying and distancing his presentation. The most obvious of these are forms of direct speech which are given documentary status, like letters, Clare's diary, or, notably, The Pilgrim's Scrip, which is essentially a projection of Sir Austin's attitudes. The epigrams clearly must be read in the light of the baronet's character, not regarded as reliable comment (the same warning applies with other aphorists, like Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson in The Egoist, whose bons mots are not always definitive judgements). This does not, of course, deny that Sir Austin may be commenting very pertinently on the action, it only urges awareness of the many comments which are simultaneously made. It is very much in character that Sir Austin should rationalise, generalise and attempt to institutionalise his own hurts, and in so doing solicit sympathy, and indeed in the course of the novel we come to see the production of an epigram as being the outward manifestation of an inward disturbance.

At the very beginning, we learn "Some years ago a book was published under the title of 'The Pilgrim's Scrip'. It consisted of a selection of original aphorisms by an anonymous gentleman, who in this bashful manner gave a bruised heart to the world" (p.1). The quality of this bashfulness is elucidated gradually; and similarly the causes and effects of the bruising. So, to take an early citation from the Scrip, "I expect that Woman will be

the last thing civilized by Man" (p.1), which as well as having a certain axiomatic truth, and an ironic aptness in the light of what follows, indicates assumptions about the battle of the sexes and the power of any individual over another, that reveal something of the fatal presumption of the man who will try to act Providence to his son. It is noteworthy that in the first edition, most of these assumptions were spelt out: Meredith, revising the novel for the Tauchnitz edition of 1875, condensed the first four chapters into one, cutting fairly savagely his opening disquisition on The Pilgrim's Scrip. His intention can only be surmised, but one result was to render allusive what was initially stated with obvious irony:

Some years ago was printed, and published anonymously, dedicated to the author's enemies, a small book of original aphorisms, under the heading, The Pilgrim's Scrip. The book was noticeable for its quaint earnestness, and a perversity of view regarding Women (Vol.I, p.1).

Only one paragraph survives from the next three pages, and then

He gravely declared, as one whose postulate was accepted universally:

'I expect that Woman will be the last thing civilized by Man.'

And from this tremendous impertinence, he stalked on like a Colossus to treat of other matters, wordly and spiritual, with the calm of a superior being who has avowed a most hopeful opinion: as indeed it was (Vol.I, p.4).

Sarcasm like that of 'an anonymous gentleman, who in this bashful manner gave a bruised heart to the world' is a faint vestige of such censure.

Generally citations from The Pilgrim's Scrip operate in a similar way, to indicate Sir Austin's gross misconstruction of situations and his belief in his inalienable power to legislate; and almost always some irony develops from the distortion. In later novels, Meredith frequently returns to the device of quotation from a tutelary book, though the Book of Egoism and the Old Buccaneer's Maxims for Men in The Amazing Marriage, for instance, are not such active projections of a character as The Pilgrim's Scrip. Often, too, Meredith quotes various supposed records of events: Dame Gossip uses snatches of ballads, pieces from Captain Kirby's memoirs, Nymney's Letters and Correspondence and such to introduce her tale, and at various points to continue it with the aid of popular rumour; and in Diana of the Crossways diarists' recollections and public report are similarly important not only for providing a distanced account of the protagonists' actions but for their thematic significance in presenting seemingly accurate versions of events which are shown to be misleading since fiction presents the true 'internal history'.

Diaper Sandoe's poetry (culled from Meredith's own early unpublished work, just as some of the aphorisms draw on his notebooks¹) is used like the aphorisms, to reflect on the writer and on the situation. Thus various ironies are engendered when Richard, packed off to London with Hippias after Lucy has been despatched from Blaize's farm, quotes stanza after stanza of sentimental verse,

1. Phyllis Bartlett, "Richard Feverel, Knight Errant", Bulletin of the New York Public Library, LXII, 1 (1959), 339, mentions the identification of poems in the novel with those in notebooks at Yale. For a discussion of Meredith's use of his notebooks etc. for the aphorisms, see below "A Note on Meredith's Notes".

giving particular approval to Diaper's work. The verses are an objective correlative of Richard's romanticism:

True, Madam, you may think to part
 Conditions by a glacier ridge,
 But Beauty's for the largest heart,
 And all abysses Love can bridge! (Ch.xxv, p.239).

The youth takes this jingling triteness for profound insight, and comments "Wasn't Sandoe once a friend of my father's?... He understands the heart", before proceeding to indulge in visions of "the wondrous things he was to do in the world" (p.240). Had Richard's own adolescent phase of romantic versifying been allowed to run its course, he might not have experienced his mother's susceptibility to Sandoe's blandishments (which is described on pp.2-3). Much more than paper is lost when Sir Austin forces Richard to burn his poems - "farewell all true confidence between Father and Son" (Ch.xii, p.102) - and this is recalled in the quotation from Sandoe, reverberating beyond the more evident irony of Richard's faith that "all abysses Love can bridge!" He has quoted Sandoe on an earlier occasion, too, when Adrian has been plying him with wine after the birthday escapade (Ch.iv, p.29), and his situation then has likenesses with the later one, in that explosions pend; and another quotation to Lucy walking in Kensington Gardens, just before they meet Uncle Algernon, also forebodes disaster (Ch.xxviii, p.270). Richard quotes Diaper's verses to Rip as he sits indulging wild fantasies of what he and Lucy will do once the wedding is over: "We shall travel first.

I want to see the Alps ..." - this happens to forecast Richard's awakening in the Rhineland. He then cites a stanza from Sandoe, saying "These lines, Rip, were written by a man who was once a friend of my father's. I intend to find him and make them friends again" - a woefully misguided aim, comparable to his schemes for fallen women; and next he allows his fancy freer rein: "I dream of the desert. I dream I'm chief of an Arab tribe, and we fly all white in the moonlight on our mares, and hurry to the rescue of my darling!" (Ch.xxviii, p.275).

There is perhaps even a slight murmur of Sandoe just before Richard meets Lucy on the river-bank, when he discusses women's names with Ralph Morton: for Richard, "the name of Mary was equivalent for woman at home" (Ch.xiv, p.116), though he soon awakes to "the wonderful beauty and depth of meaning in feminine names". A couple of lines from Diaper -

'For I am not the first who found
The name of Mary fatal!'

are quoted in the account of his wooing Lady Feverel as "they played Rizzio and Mary together" (Ch.i, p.3). On each occasion, a blow to Sir Austin is being prepared in the default of his son and his wife respectively.

Only Adrian, always the cynic, challenges Richard's attitude to Sandoe, as they watch a sunset on the Isle of Wight:

'What Sandoe calls the passion-flower of heaven,' said Richard under his breath to Adrian, who was serenely chanting Greek hexameters, and answered, in the swing of the caesura, 'He might as well have said cauliflower' (Ch.xxxiv, p.369).

Adrian also quotes Diaper's poem on the "Age of Work", commenting on one phrase, "Ophelia of the Ages" in terms premonitory of what happens with Lucy and Richard: "... just the metaphysical Hamlet to drive her mad? She, poor maid! asks for marriage and smiling babies, while my lord lover stands questioning the Infinite, and rants to the Impalpable" (Ch.vi, p.49).

Sometimes Meredith calls on such devices to serve a function in the plot as well as to provide ironic reflections and parallels which obliquely indicate something of the character and hence his inner life. Such an adjunct to the narrator's voice is Clare's Diary, effectively a letter transcending time, reaching back into the past and also beyond the grave. The transcriptions from it tell the reader little he does not already know of Clare's feeling for her cousin, though its intensity may not earlier have been suspected.

There she lay, the same impassive Clare. For a moment he wondered she had not moved - to him she had become so different. She who had just filled his ears with strange tidings - it was not possible to think her dead! (Ch.xi, pp.497-8).

Meredith indicates the oppressiveness of these tidings for Richard, with the awareness of guilt they bring, in an image drawn from the natural world, which always mirrors Richard's mood: "the shock sent him to the window to look for sky and stars. Behind a low

broad pine hung with frosty mist, he heard a bell-wether of the flock in the silent fold. Death in life it sounded" (p.498). The chill of isolation descends on the young man as on the Ancient Mariner, for he too is compelled to seek expiation though the quest is one he imposes on himself out of his somewhat histrionic code of honour rather than an ordained punishment like the Mariner's wanderings. His words to Mrs. Forey, asking her to go to Lucy, are ominous indeed: "... when she asks of me, say I have a death upon my head that - No! say that I am abroad, seeking for that which shall cleanse me. If I find it I shall come to claim her. If not, God help us all!" So it is that Clare's Diary, as well as revealing to Richard what for so long had lain in his cousin's heart, is the agent of his setting off on his travels to find redemption in the Rhineland: ironically, his reaction in undertaking to purge his guilt is a prelude to his even more misguided attempt at expiation in the duel with Lord Mountfalcon.

Clare's Diary is an extreme instance of a favourite device throughout Meredith's novels, that of having a character reveal himself through a letter. In such sustained and direct self-revelation, the effect of the epistles is almost that of soliloquy in Elizabethan drama, except that the convention of veracity in soliloquy is suspended: unlike Richard III's "I am determined to prove a villain", statements made and attitudes represented in

letters have to be evaluated in their entire context. Meredith's use of the technique is naturally much closer to that of his predecessors in the novel who used the epistolary mode exclusively, supplying readymade narrative points of view and a kind of documented authenticity to boot. He is not averse to exploiting epistolary conventions for an economical coverage of a period of time and sequence of events, as in the postbag effect of Chapter xliii of Sandra Belloni, "In Which We See Wilfrid Kindling", where Emilia's withdrawal into Wales, her development there, and Wilfrid's connivings are expounded in a series of letters to and from young Mr. Pole. This is a time-honoured technique, used for example by Thackeray in Chapter iii of The Newcomes to get Clive safely to school in England and the characters of the Honeymans and the brothers Hobson and Sir Brian Newcome sketched in.

In general, letters in the novels serve the end of conveying information, but the information is not necessarily factual, nor the means mechanical; and Meredith seems gleefully to seize the opportunity for allowing the character's voice to take over from the narrator's. He is particularly fond of ending a novel with a letter - four out of the thirteen do so. Sometimes this is an easy way out, since his actual conclusions are often limp - as Arabella Shore commented in 1879 he "is apt to prefer even a

fiasco to a triumphant success";² sometimes however there is real point to the procedure. The letter which concludes Sandra Belloni, resoundingly signed "Emilia Alessandra Belloni" (and the very signatures, or absence of them, have been pregnant with meaning in the many letters throughout the novel) gives an appropriate statement of the heroine's realisation of her powers and capacities, in an attributed rather than a direct monologue: this is hardly how Emilia would have expressed herself orally, let alone in writing, but it is an important expression of her awareness of the vocation which is to be fulfilled in Vittoria. Again, the last words in Evan Harrington are given to the Countess, whose tricks with letters have in fact precipitated the catastrophe (Chs.xxii-xxiv), in a missive which shows her blithely continuing the social double-dealing that has engrossed her throughout the book. Letters have similar plot significance in Rhoda Fleming (for instance, with Edward's letter that Dahlia does not receive - Ch.xli); and again in Vittoria where there is the drama of a stolen letter, and much play with the conspirators' mailbox (Chs.viii-x). In all of the novels, letters figure significantly in one way or another. The Egoist has Clara's subterfuge in writing to Miss Darleton, and its consequences;

2. "The Novels of George Meredith", British Quarterly Rev., LXIX, 420.

as well as a conversation between Willoughby and Clara on the difficulty of expressing oneself in letters (Ch.vii, pp.75 ff.). In The Tragic Comedians, Clotilde's agreeing to write a letter of renunciation to Alvan is indicative of her susceptibility to pressure, and enrages her lover. Diana breaks the news of her marriage - and later decisions - by letter; Victor Radnor is constantly busy with correspondence; the first contact of Matey and Aminta is in notes smuggled by schoolfellows, and she writes to Lord Ormont before joining Weyburn at the end; the letters of Henrietta in The Amazing Marriage are the medium for introducing Lord Fleetwood (Ch.vii), then for describing his proposal (Ch.xii), and later conveying news of Carinthia's movements.

Dame Gossip, although she does not believe that it is possible to "explain positively the cause of the behaviour of men and women in their relations together" (Ch.xiii, p.180), goes into great circumstantial detail to establish the authenticity of a letter which does cast some light on such behaviour: this is Fleetwood's curt communication with Lord Levellier about arrangements for his marriage:

My Lord: I drive to your church-door on the fourteenth of the month at ten a.m., to keep my appointment with Miss C.J. Kirby, if I do not blunder the initials.

Your lordship's obedient servant,

Fleetwood (p.141).

Such missives hardly present inner action, but do compellingly suggest that the outward exhibition needs explanation with the

aid of the 'inward vision'.

Meredith's use of such an apparently crude and mechanical device as letters takes various forms in Richard Feverel.

A relatively simple instance is Adrian's letter to Lady Blandish from the Isle of Wight, which is not merely a convenient means of describing the bliss of Lucy and Richard, but provides an opportunity for indicating further both Adrian's capacity for feeling and his reluctance to give way to it, preferring partly out of indolence and partly from mischief, to mask himself in the ironic and mock heroic (Ch.xxxiv, pp.375-8).

A different ploy is adopted in Richard's letter to Rip giving an account of the legal proceedings against Tom Bakewell. As with Emilia's letter at the end of Sandra Belloni, or Dahlia's letters in Rhoda Fleming, this is not a credible account of what might have been written: what Meredith provides is a sophisticated representation of a boy's breathless babble, with careful misspellings, giving his innocent reactions and perceptions - "It was splendid fun" (p.85); "Sir Miles was very attentive to my father and me. and dead against Tom" (p.86) - and throwing in details like Austin Wentworth's going off to South America. Further, there is clarification of attitudes in Richard himself: the chivalric code with its feudal assumptions which directs his behaviour not only as a youth, but also as a man, dictates such phrases as "Your sworn friend Richard Doria Feverel" and "Mind you are not to

show this to any of your friends on pain of my displeasure" (p.88). The self-dramatisation and punctilious insistence on maintaining honour at all costs, amusing and endearing in a boy, is disturbingly rigid in a man, and disastrous for instance when he feels himself compelled to duel with Lord Mountfalcon. Nevil Beauchamp's effort in penning his challenge to the French officers serves a similar function of adumbration, presenting his romantic idealism in an incident which retrospectively gathers significance as epitomising his character (Beauchamp's Career has another memorable letter, Dr. Shrapnel's, which serves purposes both of plot and characterisation).

There are later epistolary efforts of Richard's referred to, in each case giving something of his self-image at the time of writing, and in each case commented on by another character. A curt note to Ripton, "get lodgings for a lady immediately" smacks of the same cloak-and-dagger attitude as the boyish letter, and to Ripton "had the preciseness of an imperial mandate" (Ch.xxvi, p.244). Away in London, Richard writes daily to his father: "That cold dutiful tone assured him there was no internal trouble or distraction. 'The letters of a healthful physique!' he said to Lady Blandish, with sure insight. Complacently he sat and smiled, little witting that his son's ordeal was imminent, and that his son's ordeal was to be his own" (Ch.xxviii, p.283). Here Meredith spells out Sir Austin's fallibility at 'reading the inner'

except in terms of his own construction. Richard's lurid letter to Bella Mount is phrased in terms of devils and hell-fire, the language of their relationship, and is censured by Lord Mountfalcon - "Complimentary love-epistle! ... The dog! how infamously he treats his wife!" (Ch.xxxix, p.462) - the irony being that Mountfalcon for all his self-righteousness about Richard's behaviour has designs on Lucy himself.

Sir Austin gives vent to a different kind of utterance in his letter to Lady Blandish, when Richard has begun his attempt at redeeming "an erring beautiful woman" (Ch.xxxvii, pp.416-7). The letter is an extended Pilgrim's Scrip aphorism dwelling on the serpent in Eden, and Meredith sees fit to comment on it:

This alliterative production was written without any sense of the peril that makes prophecy.

It suited Sir Austin to write thus. It was a channell to his acrimony moderated through his philosophy. The letter was a reply to a vehement entreaty from Lady Blandish for him to come up to Richard and forgive him thoroughly: Richard's name was not mentioned in it (p.417).

The effect of the letter on the recipient is also noted: "He tries to be more than he is,' thought the lady: and she began insensibly to conceive him less than he was." We have already been told "From that moment she grew critical of him, and began to study her idol - a process dangerous to idols" (Ch.xxxiii, p.353): this is when in response to yet more letters brought to Raynham by Rip, announcing Richard's wedding, Sir Austin determinedly

masks his face and closes his heart to his son. A further shift in Lady Blandish's attitude is quietly indicated here, and the change can be fully seen by comparing two of her letters. The first, reporting on Lucy, is to Sir Austin in London whence he has removed Richard. In the same mail he receives a letter from Adrian, giving the assurance of Lucy's departure which enables him to order a return of the Feverels to Raynham. Lady Blandish's letter is very different from Adrian's, and disturbs the baronet rather than allaying his fears. He describes it as "a lady's letter" (Ch.xxii, p.191), and indeed it is full of underlinings and exclamations, with her natural reactions - to Lucy and to her reading - struggling against what she conceives to be Sir Austin's wishes and expectations. Though the two men share great ambitions for their sons, Sir Austin lacks the shrewdness of Richmond Roy who remarks "women's letters must be read like anagrams" (Harry Richmond, Ch.xxii, p.249): and Lady Blandish's letter certainly does have cryptic qualities.

After discussing Gibbon and Wordsworth and Byron, she reports "I have finished Boiardo and have taken up Berni. The latter offends me. I suppose we women do not really care for humour" (p.193); and the literary references are not wasted by Meredith. Remembering that this is a course of study prescribed for her by Sir Austin, Lady Blandish's responses are the more interesting: she credits Wordsworth, with whom Sir Austin clearly

identifies, with "Excellence and Nature's Inspiration" as against Byron's "Irony and Passion", seeing Wordsworth as "a superior donkey reclaimed from the heathen ... with great power of speech and great natural complacency" - a damning statement particularly in the light of Meredith's frequent resort to asinine imagery as a traditional notation for stupidity. As is later seen, this implication is not lost on Sir Austin. The mention of Boiardo and Berni works in a different way, however. The book Lady Blandish has begun to read is Berni's mock heroic reworking of Boiardo's unfinished Orlando Innamorato, a poem drawing on the Charlemagne legends for its subject, the vicissitudes which beset Orlando in his love for Angelica, daughter of the king of Cathay. Now the mock heroic treatment of the chivalric material offends the noble lady, who is still in fee to the Feverel ideals: a neat ironic reinforcement of the whole debate of the knightly ordeal. Not all of Meredith's references operate so insidiously, but it is dangerous to assume that they are arbitrary or casual.

The immediate effect of Lady Blandish's remark on Sir Austin, however, is that he realises his own humourlessness. This passage is one of the series presenting Sir Austin's worries and frets, which here are indicated by the narrator as part of the strategy of showing the baronet's self-protecting mechanisms in operation, rather than being revealed by the character himself.

"He trifled with the letter for some time, re-reading chosen passages as he walked about the room, and considering he

scarce knew what" (p.193). Meredith, of course, knows precisely what, and uses a generalisation to indicate Sir Austin's unarticulated awareness - "There are ideas language is too gross for, and shape too arbitrary, which come to us and have a definite influence upon us, and yet we cannot fasten on the filmy things and make them visible and distinct to ourselves, much less to others" (pp.193-4) - then as the appropriate means of clarifying 'the filmy things' proceeds to a series of questions and conjectures: "Why did he twice throw a look into the glass in the act of passing it? ... His general appearance ... was so far satisfactory, but his eyes were wide, as one who looks at his essential self through the mask we wear. Perhaps he was speculating as he looked on the sort of aspect he presented to the lady's discriminative regard" (p.194). But after suspending authorial privilege in this way, by the diffidence of "Perhaps..." - which of course serves to convey just what Sir Austin is thinking - Meredith becomes more direct - "Of her feelings he had not a suspicion" - and then retails more of what is passing: "But he knew with what extraordinary lucidity women can, when it pleases them, and when their feelings are not quite boiling under the noonday sun, seize all the sides of a character, and put their fingers on its weak point." This almost aphoristic observation, casting scorn on feminine intuition while recognising its capacities, represents a formulated truth to Sir Austin ('he knew ...'), whereas the next

observation is barely a perception, certainly not susceptible to being verbalised. It is the narrator who is formulating and commenting here: the parenthesis gives the unequivocal hint that Sir Austin is indeed incapable of such a degree of self-awareness. "He was cognizant of the total absence of the humorous in himself (the want that must shut him out from his fellows) ..." Though that parenthesis is a broad authorial wink, it is not succeeded by more knowing nods, but by a suggestion of how much Sir Austin may be conscious: "... and perhaps the clear-thoughted, intensely self-examining gentleman firmly conceived, Me also, in common with the poet, she gazes on as one of the superior - grey beasts!" Lady Blandish's likening of Wordsworth to a donkey is having internal repercussions.

The new paragraph opens with a reminder that the narrator, though retiring, is in control, and that this is conjecture based on deduction from external appearance - "He may have so conceived the case." Then the conjecture is immediately and reliably supported by the narrator's authority in a gloss on the sarcastic description of Sir Austin as 'clear-thoughted, intensely self-examining', and on the earlier assertion that his deficiency in humour is a cause of his alienation:

he was capable of that great-mindedness, and could snatch at times very luminous glances at the broad reflector which the world of fact lying outside our narrow compass holds up for us to see ourselves in when we will. Unhappily, the faculty of laughter, which is due to this gift, was denied him; and having seen, he, like the companion of friend Balaam, could go no farther (p.194).

Here two earlier references acquire new forms. Sir Austin, we recall, is pacing the breakfast-room, and has twice gazed at the mirror as if searching beneath 'his outer features' for 'his essential self'. But the mirror does not reflect 'the world of fact' against which men take their true measure, he perceives only the projection of what he thinks - and so, donkey-like, is stopped. The donkey image has continued through in this local context; and the mirror has been given new significance.

The use of generalisation followed by particular analysis of a state of mind is a technique Meredith frequently favours, though his task is not always as delicate as here, where he is making 'visible and distinct' to the reader 'filmy things' that the character cannot admit to himself although he is half-aware of his failures and influenced by them. Meredith refines and complicates the method of slight shifts of narrative distance and disguising of authorial unassailability as he becomes increasingly concerned with analyses of behaviour, and diagnoses of what lies behind various exteriors. For the moment, however, I am less concerned with such subtleties than with the structural parallel of Lady Blandish's letter. Richard Feverel ends with her writing to another Austin, Austin Wentworth. Her tone now is sad and anguished, no longer touched with coyness; the emphases are not hysterical, for Lady Blandish has come to a realisation of Sir Austin's enormities: "Oh! how sick I am of theories, and Systems, and the

pretensions of men! There was his son lying all but dead, and the man was still unconvinced of the folly he had been guilty of " (Ch.xlv, p.554). And so through the final indictment of Sir Austin and his System, in his erstwhile admirer's account of the death of Lucy and Richard's illness. The peroration comes properly from Lady Blandish, who alone of the major characters has been brought to a new awareness by the events of the novel; and it is important that for all the sympathy he merits, the verdict against Sir Austin and the values he represents, be delivered explicitly and resoundingly. For these various purposes, the letter is more than economical: its directness is potent, the point being reinforced by the contrast with Lady Blandish's earlier letter. Meredith often uses recurrent situations to achieve this kind of structural counterpoint, though characteristically he rarely operates in terms of simple equations, as the reverberations of statements and incidents so far mentioned testify.

V. TECHNIQUES : STYLISTIC PROJECTION

At times, however, Meredith prefers more oblique methods for indicating a mood and reflecting attitudes than are occasioned by a formal statement, and of these one of the most interesting and versatile involves the narrator's assuming a tone which projects a feeling in the characters. I have already discussed a more usual handling of the author's articulating a character to the reader, in describing the rapid and minute shifts of point of view with which Meredith delineates Sir Austin's reaction to Lady Blandish's letter. The ventriloquial technique operates at the same remove from a character's consciousness, and is particularly appropriate for a situation in which neither cerebral nor emotional responses can suitably be articulated by the character himself, but may more effectively be conveyed without resort to a completely external vantage.

Meredith recognised and described a similar capacity in Tennyson:

The peculiarity of Tennyson, and the singularity of his genius, is that he never draws a picture without dipping it in a thought, or suffusing it with a profound sensation. Hence the picture becomes accepted in the memory not only as a landscape that we have looked at visually, but have felt with emotion.¹

1. "Art and Belles Lettres", Westminster Rev., n.s. XII (1857), 590-1.

And he is himself constantly performing such rhetorical transcriptions which are a variation on his sustained production of an Oriental and a medieval diction in Shagpat and "Farina" to provide the atmosphere of the respective tales. Sometimes he slips momentarily into a mode which dramatises the situation: thus Sir Austin going to look at his sleeping son:

At the end of the gallery ... he discovered a dim light.. Doubling it an illusion, Sir Austin accelerated his pace. This wing had aforetime a bad character. Notwithstanding what years had done to polish it into fair repute, the Raynham kitchen stuck to tradition, and preserved certain stories of ghosts seen there ... (Ch.iv, p.32).

It requires only a slight exaggeration, in using words like aforetime, and archaic constructions, to make the diction here that of a Gothic horror, mimicing Sir Austin's somewhat melodramatic behaviour in this situation. Similarly the style of romantic adventure stories is briefly adopted in the account of Ripton Thompson which opens Chapter xxvi:

On the stroke of the hour when Ripton Thompson was accustomed to consult his gold watch for practical purposes, and sniff freedom and the forthcoming dinner, a burglarious foot entered the clerk's office where he sat, and a man of a scowling countenance, who looked a villain, and whom he was afraid he knew, slid a letter into his hands, nodding that it would be prudent for him to read, and be silent (pp.243-4).

Such a version of a seemingly ordinary event, the delivery of a letter to an office, is only to be expected from a youth like Ripton, earlier exposed as a devotee of Miss Random frustrated

by inactivity in his legal studies; and the diction with its pompous periphrasis and synecdoche, the syllepsis of "sniff freedom and the forthcoming dinner" and other syntactical ellipses, at once projects Rip's readiness to subscribe to a mysterious interpretation, and derides the attitude implied.

In neither case is Meredith concerned to do more than illuminate a passing attitude: His ventriloquial powers are more adequately extended for instance at the end of Chapter xiv, "An Attraction", where Richard, having been awakened to the wonders of the female sex, and musing as he rows on the newly-discovered charms of his cousin Clare, first meets Lucy. The author even explains his own practice a few pages before the actual meeting, as Richard takes his oars.

The paragraph opens straightforwardly enough with an authorial generalisation about the therapy of rowing, which is related to Richard; and then the focus moves in on the hero as the narrator follows his progress along the river: "Strong pulling is an excellent medical remedy for certain classes of fever. Richard took to it instinctively. The clear fresh water, burnished with sunrise, sparkled against his arrowy prow; the soft deep shadows curled smiling away from his gliding keel" (pp.114-5). It is a benign world to which Richard is instinctively attuned, but one which is invested with more than simply physical attributes. The description is charged with his responses: the

metonymy of 'his arrowy prow' and 'his gliding keel' enacts his abandonment to sensuous delight, at one with his boat on the water where as a further indication of the merging of human and natural even the shadows are anthropomorphised - they 'curled smiling away ...' - the first hint of how this world both encourages and takes the impression of the youth's reverie. For the description of the morning which follows is coloured by his mood: his responses to the scene are not indiscriminating - he observes 'delicious changes', still in contrast to his motion, though he does not appear to be affected by them; and the awareness of solitude ('solitary morning', 'the sole tenant') is Richard's also.

Overhead solitary morning unfolded itself, from blossom to bud, from bud to flower; still, delicious changes of light and colour, to whose influences he was heedless as he shot under willows and aspens, and across sheets of river-reaches, pure mirrors to the upper glory, himself the sole tenant of the stream (p.115).

But Richard's deepest response to nature is as a manifestation of a visionary realm with which his mind is occupied, and now from hints of his physical awareness we are admitted to his imaginative apprehension.

Somewhere at the founts of the world lay the land he was rowing toward; something of its shadowed lights might be discerned here and there. It was not a dream, now he knew. There was a secret abroad. The woods were full of it; the waters rolled with it, and the winds. Oh, why could not one in these days do some high knightly deed which should draw down ladies' eyes from their heaven, as in the days of Arthur! (p.115).

Richard's enchanted kingdom can only be broadly sketched since his vision of it is so misty; hence the language is purposefully vague in reference but has a strong rhythmic pattern which figures forth the emotional power of his yearning:

'Somewhere ... something' And having thus suggested Richard's transmogrification of the physical world to which despite his movement within it he is apparently oblivious, Meredith adds a sentence of authoritative interpretation:

"To such a meaning breathed the unconscious sighs of the youth, when he had pulled through his first feverish energy." The narrator's intrusion barely anticipates the complete dispelling of the reverie when Richard's ranging poetic fancy is quite suspended by Ralph Morton's hail, "an irruption of miserable masculine prose."

Meredith's authorial self-consciousness not infrequently leads him to make remarks on the characters' passing thoughts in terms normally relating to the representation of them. He describes a stage in Fleetwood's capitulation to Carinthia this way: "She was a warrior woman, Life her sword, Death her target, never to be put to shame, unconquerable. No such symbolical image smote him, but he had an impression, the prose of it" (The Amazing Marriage, Ch.xliv, p.459). There are several instances in The Tragic Comedians: at one point Clotilde's attitudes to Alvan and Prince Marko are explained as "Her splendid prose Alvan

could do what the sprig of poetry can but suggest" (Ch.v, p.51).

On another occasion, the disquisition is more extended:

In truth, she loved both, but each so differently! And both loved her! And she had to make her choice of one, and tell the prince she did love him, but ... Dots are the best of symbols for rendering cardisophistical subtleties intelligible, and as they are much used in dialogue, one should have now and then permission to print them. Especially feminine dialogue referring to matters of the uncertain heart takes assistance from troops of dots; and not to understand them at least as well as words, when words have as it were conducted us to the brink of expression, and shown us the precipice, is to be dull, bucolic of the market-place (Ch.vi, p.66).

Later Meredith develops this even further, as Clotilde's plight intensifies.

Perhaps, for the sake of peace ... after warning him ... her meditations tottered in dots.

But when the heart hungers behind such meditations, that thinking without language is a dangerous habit; for there will suddenly come a dash usurping the series of tentative dots, which is nothing other than the dreadful thing resolved on, as of necessity, as naturally as the adventurous bow-legged infant pitches back from an excursion of two paces to mother's lap; and not much less innocently within the mind, it would appear. The dash is a haven reached that would not be greeted if it stood out in words. Could we live with ourselves letting our animal do our thinking for us legibly? We live with ourselves agreeably so long as his projects are phrased in his primitive tongue, even though we have clearly apprehended what he means, and though we sufficiently well understand the whither of our destination under his guidance. No counsel can be saner than that the heart should be bidden to speak out in plain verbal speech within us. For want of it, Clotilde's short explorations in Dot-and-Dashland were of a kind to terrify her (Ch.xi, pp.130-1).

The facetiousness with which the conceit begins is soon lost as a perfectly serious and apposite discussion of Clotilde's mental

processes and of the author's responsibility in representing them unfolds. Such manifestations of the author's presence take us a little distance from Richard on the river, however, where again, in the dewberry passage, Meredith exploits his authorial prerogative of imaging not only the physical scene but also its psychic dimensions, though he does not draw attention to his management so explicitly as before. And again he contrives momentarily to suggest that he is representing the experience from the character's own point of view, but always there is a reminder that as narrator, he is telling how it was.

With a grandiloquent flourish, then, the subject is announced, in terms which sound echoes of other phrases in the novel, full as it is of images of fire, usually connected with passion, and concern about the operation of Providence:

When nature has made us ripe for love, it seldom occurs that the Fates are behindhand in furnishing a temple for the flame.

Above green-flashing plunges of a weir, and shaken by the thunder below, lilies, golden and white, were swaying at anchor among the reeds. Meadow-sweet hung from the banks thick with weed and trailing bramble, and there also hung a daughter of earth. Her face was shaded by a broad straw hat with a flexible brim that left her lips and chin in the sun, and, sometimes nodding, sent forth a light of promising eyes. Across her shoulders, and behind, flowed large loose curls, brown in shadow, almost golden where the ray touched them. She was simply dressed, befitting decency and the season. On a closer inspection you might see that her lips were stained. This blooming young person was regaling on dewberries. They grew between the bank and the water (p.118).

The sardonic tone at once assumes the reader's detachment and advises him to maintain some irony in his attitude to Richard, but also implicates him, through the pronoun 'us', in the folly of young love. Meredith later draws on this complicity, as in 'you might see that her lips were stained ...' to incorporate the reader more closely in the process of linking observations which continues in "Apparently she found the fruit abundant, for her hand was making pretty progress to her mouth", and then into a more complicated conjecture inaugurating a brief excursion into generalisation:

Fastidious youth, which revolts at woman plumping her exquisite proportions on bread-and-butter, and would (we must suppose) joyfully have her scraggy to have her poetical, can hardly object to dewberries. Indeed the act of eating them is dainty and induces musing. The dewberry is a sister to the lotus, and an innocent sister (p.118).

Again certain expectations concerning romantic love are mocked, and again the reader is involved: "You eat: mouth, eye and hand are occupied, and the undrugged mind free to roam. And so it was with the damsel who knelt there" (pp.118-9). The mockery is gentle, the reader being lulled by his awareness of the whole scene, and by the natural wonder of it, until the narrator again tactfully deploys his superior knowledge: "the kingfisher flashed emerald out of green osiers: a bow-winged heron travelled aloft, seeking solitude: a boat slipped toward her, containing a dreamy youth; and still she plucked the fruit, and ate, and

mused, as if no fairy prince were invading her territories, and as if she wished not for one, or knew not her wishes" (p.119). That 'fairy prince' strikes the first of the notes of enchantment which resound in the next chapter; and also Lucy's consumption of the fruit allies her with Eve in Eden (she is "the First Woman to him" - Ch.xv, p.120); so that an ominous context later expanded now attaches to the girl's being "a bit of lovely human life in a fair setting; a terrible attraction" (p.119).

This florid nature description enlists both the reader's delighted participation and his ironic detachment, providing an emblem of the magic moment. The opening of the next chapter, "Ferdinand and Miranda", moves into the characters' own apprehension of the situation:

He had landed on an island of the still-vexed Bermoothes. The world lay wrecked behind him: Raynham hung in mists, remote, a phantom to the vivid reality of this white hand which had drawn him thither away thousands of leagues in an eye-twinkle. Hark, how Ariel sang overhead! What splendour in the heavens! What marvels of beauty about his enchanted brows! And, O you wonder! Fair Flame! by whose light the glories of being are now first seen ... (sic) Radiant Miranda! Prince Ferdinand is at your feet.

Or is it Adam, his rib taken from his side in sleep, and thus transformed, to make him behold his Paradise, and lose it? ... (sic).

The youth looked on her with as glowing an eye. It was the First Woman to him.

And she - mankind was all Caliban to her, saving this one princely youth (p.120).

After four paragraphs devoted to the sensations of Richard and Lucy, Meredith provides a reminder that it is he who is attributing these sentiments, adding a note to explain the rhapsodic rhetoric: "So to each other said their changeing eyes in the moment they stood together ..." This is the equivalent of the earlier "To such a meaning breathed the unconscious sighs of the youth ..." (Ch.xiv, p.115); but here, instead of providing an appropriately nebulous and generalised image of Richard's gallant aspirations, to convey all that is in 'their changeing eyes' (itself a suitably Donne-like conceit), Meredith selects images which are indicative of the specific quality of the attraction. The world into which Lucy and Richard have moved is invested with all the mystique of The Tempest, acclaimed in the exclamations indicative of the intensity and incoherence of Richard's emotion. Even before the explanation that these are the terms in which the narrator chooses to represent the excitement of the meeting, the irrepressible Meredithian wit, intoxicated by the play of fancy around Ferdinand and Miranda in the first paragraph, has thrown up another possible image, of Eden, where the implications, which include evil and punishment, go far beyond a representation of Richard's exaltation in giving a premonition of disaster. This particular ventriloqual effect is rarely permitted to sustain its illusion long: in Meredith's hands it is fully dramatic only briefly, as he constantly draw attention to his privileges

both of disposal and proposal. But it is important to recognise that this kind of erlebte Rede does have dramatic potential, which is realised and exploited by Meredith, though later writers refined and extended his practice. One such is James Joyce, undisputed master of all means of presenting the inner life.

The sort of influence Meredith may have had on Joyce has been discussed, apropos of the famous dewberry sequence, by Donald S. Fanger. Fanger refers to My Brother's Keeper where Stanislaus Joyce says his brother liked and imitated "those passionate glowing passages of a poet writing prose, which are Meredith's most characteristic contribution to the novel",² giving as an instance of the imitation the end of Chapter iv of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, quoting two paragraphs:

He was alone. He was unheeded, happy, and near to the wild heart of life. He was alone and young and wilful and wildhearted, alone amid a waste of wild air and brackish waters and the seaharvest of shells and tangle and veiled grey sunlight and gayclad lightclad figures of children and girls and voices childish and girlish in the air.

A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh. Her thighs, fuller and soft-hued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like feathering

2. S. Joyce, My Brother's Keeper, ed. R. Ellman (1958), p.205.

of soft white down. Her slateblue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird's, soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some darkplumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face.³

Fanger observes

Besides a certain similarity in situation, both passages carry a charge of impassioned vision through a diction which strains toward the poetic, and swelling, incantatory rhythms which weave the observed detail into a whole more felt than seen. This sort of language was to become a hallmark of Meredith's fiction - never dominating a book, always shading off into other types of dexterity, but present, to enhance an effect or, when discipline failed, to spoil it. Lyricism represented a temptation which Meredith could not always control.⁴

While much of this commentary is perceptive and true, the language does more than provide a lyric interlude since it is very relevant for the darkening mood of the novel that the quality of the idyll be expressed. Moreover, what happens is not simply a lapse into lyricism, as Joyce apparently perceived, for he uses the lyric strain to represent - almost to dramatise - the wonder and exultation Stephen feels, walking alone and then seeing the girl. The romantic exaggeration of the language is generated by the character's enthusiasm rather than the author's sentimentality: the narrator, indeed, gently suggests youthful excess in the diction, and savagely points to a different indulgence, this time in the sordidness of bread and dripping and pawn-tickets, which opens Chapter v.

3. The Essential James Joyce, ed. H. Levin (1956), p.303.

4. "Joyce and Meredith: A Question of Influence and Tradition", MFS, VI (1960), 127.

Whether or no Meredith had in fact an influence on Joyce, it is interesting anyway that Joyce expressed admiration for an aspect of his technique, and the more interesting that this kind of ventriloquial power is one which Joyce develops to an acute pitch. Meredith's ventures are by no means as subtle or as extensive as his successor's, which is not to say they are blunt or awkward, but are clearly forays in the same direction.

Just as impassioned lyricism is not the only mode Meredith adopts to produce the required atmosphere, so "An Attraction" is by no means the only occasion in the course of The Ordeal of Richard Feverel on which the language of the narrator evokes an attitude, and suggests a judgement on it. The poetic Chapter xix, "A Diversion Played on a Penny-Whistle" in a similar vein to "An Attraction", is a set-piece especially dear to admirers of Meredith the nature poet. The first paragraph is a call to participation in the innocent golden world of the love of Richard and Lucy: "Away with Systems! Away with a corrupt World! Let us breathe the air of the Enchanted Island" (p.153). The island is the figurative realm created at their meeting - "He had landed on an island of the still-vexed Bermoothes" (Ch.xv, p.120) - hallowed by all the magical and romantic associations of The Tempest; and so the lushness of the description which follows has been already conditioned by

the earlier imagery. Indeed, though the passage seems in some respects gratuitous, since the transcendent glory of their love has been thoroughly established, the "Diversion" in itself conditions receptivity to what ensues.

Meredith here is operating even less in terms of a particular character's consciousness (or unconscious) than in "An Attraction". The mood created is at a remove from any single awareness, being really a metaphor for the state of events in the novel - though as such it should be distinguished from the generalised atmospheric rhetoric which opens Bleak House. Such purple-passage description of nightfall may look like simple indulgence, until its imaging of a shadow cast on the idyll is recognised - a shadow which falls again, more literally, in the next chapter when Richard rows Lucy on the lake, and they watch the shadows of the cypress (Ch.xx, pp.171f). However indulgent Meredith may seem, though, his purposefulness emerges in his careful provision of cues for the reader; and stands out in a comparison with the sheer verbiage of the beginning of Robert Buchanan's romantic adventure tale, The Shadow of the Sword:

The sun is sinking far away across the waters, sinking with a last golden gleam amid the mysterious Hesperides of the silent air, and his blinding light comes slant across the glassy calm till it strikes on the scarred and storm-rent faces of these Breton crags, illuminating and vivifying every nook and cranny of the cliffs beneath, burning on the summits and brightening their natural red to the vivid crimson of dripping blood, changing the coarse grass and

yellow starwort into threads of emerald and glimmering stars, burning in a golden mist around the yellow flowers of the overhanging broom, and striking with fiercest ray on one naked rock of solid stone which⁵ juts out like a huge horn over the brink of the abyss.

In Meredith's "Diversion", values are subtly suggested.

All seems to be innocence and bliss in the Enchanted Island, which is Eden for the lovers - but Paradise must be lost. The precarious happiness, the temporary impunity of the innocents is suggested, but the illusion of permanence is allowed to persist until it is exposed in its transience at the beginning of the next chapter, where there is a recovery to a more detached and cynical tone and a reminder, through the imagery, of all the tensions and dangers which threaten the magic of love: "Enchanted Islands have not yet rooted out their old brood of dragons ... every love-tale is an Epic War of the upper and lower powers. I wish good fairies were a little more active ..." (p.157). Meredith throughout the novel draws on various kinds of myth and legend - Christian, classical (the war in heaven reverberates continually), and the folklore realm of tales of fairies, and knights and dragons - though rarely does he play one against the other so directly as here.

However, this disillusioning, a prelude to Benson's intrusion on the lovers, and Sir Austin's intervention, has been prepared by the "Diversion", where the fragility of "the home of

5. The Shadow of the Sword (1876; "A New Edition", Chatto & Windus 1894), pp.5-6.

enchantment" is seen as an inevitable condition:

Here, secluded from vexed shores, the prince and princess of the island meet: here like darkling nightingales they sit, and into eyes and ears and hands pour endless ever-fresh treasures of their souls.

Roll on, grinding wheels of the world: cries of ships going down in a calm, groans of a System which will not know its rightful hour of exultation, complain to the universe. You are not heard here (p.154).

The echoes of "On a Grecian Urn" here do not sound idly, for Meredith is contriving at once to celebrate the lovers in their transcendent ecstasy, and to indicate that they are nevertheless subject to mortality. Quite formal rhetoric hallows the occasion, at least at the outset, where following the invocation "Away...! Away...!" there is intoxicated anaphora in

Golden lie the meadows: golden run the streams; red gold is on the pine-stems. The sun is coming down to earth, and walks the fields and the waters.

The sun is coming down to earth, and the fields and the waters shout to him golden shouts. He comes, and his heralds run before him ... (p.153).

The artificiality of the language, with its very conscious patterning of repetition and inversion, and the use of archaic and poetic expressions like "'tis a race", "farthest bourne", "athwart", reflects something of the brittleness of the situation. Such formality persists to the end of the chapter:

Pipe no more, Love, for a time! Pipe as you will you cannot express their first kiss; nothing of its sweetness, and of the sacredness of it nothing. St. Cecilia up aloft, before the silver organ-pipes of Paradise, pressing fingers upon all the notes of which Love is but one, from her you may hear it.

So Love is silent. Out in the world there, on the skirts of the woodland, the self-satisfied sheep-boy delivers a last complacent squint down the length of his penny-whistle, and, with a flourish correspondingly awry, he also marches into silence, hailed by supper. The woods are still. There is heard but the night-jar spinning on the pine-branch, circled by moonlight (p.156).

Here again, schemes and tropes of classical rhetoric - such as personification and parallelism - can be identified in the gentle coda where the whole mythological vision is dispelled, the sheep-boy's pipe resuming its commonplace actuality as a penny-whistle, and pastoral calm prevailing. This artful simplicity is in marked contrast to the very different formality of the language when the wedding ceremony is later described with ironic simplification:

Then comes that period when they are to give their troth to each other. The Man with his right hand takes the Woman by her right hand: the Woman with her right hand takes the Man by fourth finger, counting thumb. And the Man thrusts his hand into one pocket, and into another, forward and back many times: into all his pockets. He remembers that he felt for it, and felt it in his waistcoat pocket, when in the gardens. And his hand comes forth empty. And the Man is ghastly to look at!

Yet, though Angels smile, shall not Devils laugh!
(Ch.xxix, pp.300-1)

All the ingenuousness of this Biblical style cannot resist the pressure of the complications in which this man and woman have become involved. They may partake of the innocence of the Garden, but the dangers of Kensington Gardens, where Richard lost the ring when he encountered his aunt with Clare and Adrian, are as threatening as any serpent.

But in the "Diversion Played on a Penny Whistle", though the tragedy is implicit its course is not yet evident. The declaration of Evan to Rose Jocelyn (Ch.xxiii) is a pale shadow of Richard and Lucy, in keeping with the generally subdued aura of Evan Harrington by comparison with its predecessor. "By Wilming Weir" (Sandra Belloni, Ch.xx) has touches of the same lyric charm without the hints of doom that lour in Richard Feverel. While Meredith many times sets love scenes in the bosom of nature, later he tends towards a symbolic representation, with the characters participating in awareness of the significance of the scene - as with Diana and Redworth in the sunset (Ch.xliii) and Matey and Aminta swimming (Ch.xxvii), and never again achieves so delicate an epithalamium. The capacity for stylistic projection, however, is one he exercises to the end of his career.

The language here is fraught with the same inflation as the earlier chapter: it is exclamatory, achieving its effect by means of unnaturally elevated turns of phrase and contorted word-order, indicative of the pressure of Richard's torments. Much of the imagery evident earlier recurs, but the heavens now are threatening and earth purgatorial: nature has been violated like the sanctity of his love, and it is the young man's own consciousness which colours the prose. The questions and impressions are Richard's though articulated by the narrator, and the free indirect speech at times moves close to soliloquy, since reference to Richard as "he" is not incompatible with his self-dramatising propensity. Even the comment "His education has thus wrought him to think" is at once Richard's own bemoaning of his fate, and Meredith's indictment of the System.

Richard's clinging to his romanticised vision is strongly enough shown in the opening paragraphs, and yet more firmly spelled out when he histrionically appropriates all the blame to himself: "He can blame nothing but his own baseness. But to feel base and accept the bliss that beckons - he has not fallen so low as that" (p.513). Even his castigation of his foolishness and pride is made in epic terms:

Ah, happy English home! sweet wife! what mad miserable Wisp of the Fancy led him away from you, high in his conceit? Poor wretch! that thought to be he of the hundred hands, and war against the absolute Gods. Jove whispered a light commission to the Laughing Dame; she met him; and how did he shake Olympus? with laughter!

Sure it were better to be Orestes, the Furies howling in his ears, than one called to by a heavenly soul from whom he is for ever outcast (pp.513-4).

Again, there is no suggestion that Richard is using just these terms in bemoaning his fate: rather, Meredith is representing the quality of his frenzy using the imagery of the War of the Gods developed earlier. And, like the shadow of Carlyle, the author drives home the point about Richard's aspirations: in the Rhineland, "Often wretchedly he watches the young men of his own age trooping to their work. Not cloudwork theirs! Work solid, unambitious, fruitful!" (p.515). But this young man must operate on the heroic scale, and Lady Judith Felle, met by chance in Paris, encourages him now to consider fighting for the liberation of Italy, a prospect which leads to a whole new set of visions, rapidly evoked and exploded, as the point of view is shuttled from Richard to the narrator with something of the volatility of the vapour of Richard's ambition. The metaphor of cloud-shapes is thoroughly examined, and eventually turned to a strong plea from the narrator for his hero:

There was plenty of vapour in him, and it always resolved into some shape or other. You that mark these clouds of eventide, and know youth, will see the similitude: it will not seem strange, it will barely seem foolish to you, that a young man of Richard's age, Richard's education and position, should be in this wild state. Had he not been nursed to believe he was born for great things? Did she not say she was sure of it? And to feel base, yet born for better, is enough to make one grasp at anything cloudy (p.516).

Condemnation is not admitted, however incorrigible the youth may seem when a new fantasy develops of his role as "Private in the cavalry overriding wrecks of Empires" (p.516), quite of a piece with his boyhood dreams of Robin Hood for all that this is based on a political actuality. Again the narrator comes out in his own person with a sententia of a kind rare in this novel: "The high-road of Folly may have led him from one that terminates worse. He is foolish, God knows; but for my part I will not laugh at the hero because he has not got his occasion. Meet him when he is, as it were, anointed by his occasion, and he is no laughing matter" (pp.516-7).¹ This special pleading can provide only a momentary arrest in Richard's rush to disaster, which the ambiguity of 'Folly may have led him from ... worse' and even 'he is no laughing matter' somewhat conceals.

1. Though such authorial comment is rare in Richard Feverel, it is very common for instance in Evan Harrington, where there are remarks like "But heroes don't die, you know" (ch.xx, p.259), and in Sandra Belloni where again there is more self-conscious use of the narrator's personae.

Austin Wentworth's news of the birth of Richard's son begins to break the cloud, and the narrator moves in:

Hence, fantastic vapours! What are ye to this! Where are the dreams of the hero when he learns he has a child? Nature is taking him to her bosom. She will speak presently...

...'A father!' he kept repeating to himself: 'a child!' And though he knew it not, he was striking the key-notes of Nature. But he did know of a singular harmony that suddenly burst over his whole being (p.519).

Not only Richard's nebulosity, but the 'fantastic vapours' of the style are dispelled. The sentences become short and simple, presenting a sequence of sense impressions.

The moon was surpassingly bright: the summer air heavy and still. He left the high road and pierced into the forest. His walk was rapid: the leaves on the trees brushed his cheeks; the dead leaves heaped in the dells noised to his feet.

Gradually the description becomes more subjective, as Richard collects himself and begins to assimilate Austin's news:

Something of a religious joy - a strange sacred pleasure - was in him... A father! he dared never see his child. And he had no longer his phantasies to fall upon. He was utterly bare to his sin... Then came stern efforts to command his misery and make the nerves of his face iron.

His first reaction is his father's - to mask the hurt - but Richard is to be saved by Lady Judith's little dog which follows him and first begins to arouse him to relate the external world to the turmoil of his own mind. The

impressions of the scene are now Richard's, who interprets what he sees in the light of his own guilt, and this more complicated awareness is reflected in more complicated sentences which make qualitative observations and discriminations:

An oppressive slumber hung about the forest-branches. In the dells and on the heights was the same dead heat. Here where the brook tinkled it was no cool-lipped sound, but metallic, and without the spirit of water. Yonder in a space of moonlight on lush grass, the beams were as white fire to sight and feeling... The breathless silence was significant, yet the moon shone in a broad blue heaven (p.520).

Coloured by a vision which has deep and long-standing associations with 'the spirit of water' and of fire, these perfectly natural allusions carry more than natural charge.

Richard pauses. The thunder storm breaks, and in the cataclysm he is drawn back to life: "Up started the whole forest in violet fire... Alone there-sole human creature among the grandeurs and mysteries of storm - he felt the representative of his kind, and his spirit rose, and marched, and exulted, let it be glory, let it be ruin!" (p.521). Even yet, he has not been entirely purged of the dreams of glory, but he is washed clean - "A mighty force of water satisfied the desire of the earth" - and the baptism brings new awareness, and the beginnings of more than physical reactions:

He fancied he smelt meadow-sweet... He went on slowly, thinking indistinctly. After two or three steps he stooped and stretched out his hand to feel for the flower, having, he knew not why, a strong wish to verify its growth there. Groping about his hand encountered something warm that started at his touch, and he, with the instinct we have, seized it, and lifted it to look at it. The creature was very small, evidently quite young. Richard's eyes, now accustomed to the darkness, were able to discern it for what it was, a tiny leveret, and he supposed that the dog had probably frightened its dam just before he found it. He put the little thing on one hand in his breast, and stepped out rapidly as before (pp.521-2).

One by one Richard's senses are being reawakened, and he is able to be alive to the tiny creature, forgetting his own disturbances. Again the language reflects his calm and thoughtfulness as his intimacy with the natural world is sealed.

Lovingly he looked into the dripping darkness of the coverts on each side, as one of their children. He was next musing on a strange sensation he experienced. It ran up one arm with an indescribable thrill, but communicated nothing to his heart. It was purely physical, ceased for a time, and recommenced, till he had it all through his blood, wonderfully thrilling. He grew aware that the little thing he carried in his breast was licking his hand there. The small rough tongue going over and over the palm of his hand produced the strange sensation he felt. Now that he knew the cause, the marvel ended; but now that he knew the cause, his heart was touched and made more of it. The gentle scraping continued without intermission as on he walked. What did it say to him? Human tongue could not have said so much just then (pp.522-3).

The paragraph is just two sentences too long: the quasi-mystical experience is drained of its gentle wonder when

attention is drawn to articulating the quality of its significance in the question "What did it say to him?" The play on metaphorical and literal meanings of tongue, whether intentional or not, further destroys this mood, which is partly recaptured in the beginning of the next paragraph, but dispelled again when Richard sees the Virgin and Child in a forest chapel:

A pale gray light on the skirts of the flying tempest displayed the dawn... Impelled as a man who feels a revelation mounting obscurely to his brain, Richard was passing one of those little forest-chapels, hung with votive wreaths, where the peasant halts to kneel and pray. Cold, still, in the twilight it stood, rain-drops pattering round it. He looked within, and saw the Virgin holding her Child. He moved by. But not many steps had he gone ere his strength went out of him, and he shuddered. What was it? He asked not. He was in other hands. Vivid as lightning the Spirit of Life illumined him. He felt in his heart the cry of his child, his darling's touch. With shut eyes he saw them both. They drew him from the depths; they led him a blind and tottering man. And as they led him he had a sense of purification so sweet he shuddered again and again (p.523).

This experience is not supernatural, but praeternatural. For Richard, the Madonna is demythologised, potent as the representative of the natural magic of birth and regeneration, rather than the emblem of a totally inexplicable Power. However, for the reader, certain implications cannot readily be excluded: the connotative charge of Mary and the Child is too strong, and "the Spirit of Life" too familiar a term from conventional religious terminology, to submit easily to a secular sense.

In this episode Meredith is bold in undertaking to go as close as possible to a complete presentation and explanation in specific detail of Richard's change of heart. The whole chapter has developed the processes of mind which culminate in this purging of guilt. Richard has been yearning for Lucy, and is brought out of his passionate self-abasement and romantic fantasising by the news of the birth of his son, and then by direct physical contact with natural powers is drawn into a heightened relationship to other living things, inanimate and animate. Meredith is claiming in effect that there is a god in nature, but not the God men usually purport to worship; and is explaining the operation of this Spirit of Life in quite literal terms.

Emilia's being recalled to the world of the living when she sees and hears the street urchin with his pipe is one of the few other occasions on which Meredith presents so literal a redemption. The process is less protracted, though her agonies wandering London when her voice has failed have been movingly presented, and stylistic modulation plays little part.

Emilia thought of the Hillford and Ipley clubmen, the big drum, the speeches, the cheers, and all the wild strength that lay in her that happy morning. She watched the boy piping as if he were reading from a score, and her sense of humour was touched... The slight emotion of fun had restored to her some of her lost human sensations, and she looked about for a place where to indulge them undisturbed (ch.xl, p.450).

Whereupon Merthyr Powys appears to restore her more completely.

Later Meredith tends to eschew the attempt to present his ethic in operation in so literal a way, and shows it figuratively, as for instance, in "A Marine Duet" when Matey Weyburn and his Aminta take the plunge and plight their troth, striking out happily in the Sea of Life; or else he declines to officiate at the actual turning-point, as with some of the many changes of heart in The Egoist, since the crisis may in any case be a lesser concern than the fascination with motivations and reactions in the 'invisible conflict' of which it is part. Generally it is conflict within a character that he chooses to represent, in Richard Feverel and elsewhere; and it is the process of conflict, which may be attenuated and only ultimately have a moral resolution, rather than the moment of conversion, that most absorbs him. While Meredith has an ethic to propound, Nature and Earth do tend to function simply as a set of assumptions and evaluative terms. Here he differs from George Eliot, for example, who operates in an ethical interest, of showing the need for, and possibility of, fellow-feeling with humanity individually and collectively; and her exposition of this ethic arises naturally in her analyses of the trials undergone by her

characters. So Dorothea's struggle and resolution in her night vigil (Middlemarch, ch.lxxx) are a paradigm, enacting the movement from self-concern to involvement with others that is experienced also by Maggie and sought by Romola. The moments of intensest insight, and presentation of the most complex mental states or unspoken thoughts in Meredith, by no means bear the ethical import which suffuses nearly every occasion of high feeling in George Eliot. Nor do his characters, as a result of their inner turmoil, necessarily undergo a change of heart, as happens more often than not in George Eliot: Tito Melema alone among her protagonists is not a moral being and susceptible to conversion.

Dorothea's opening her curtains and looking out into the world is not so literally enacted a change of heart as Richard's return to Nature, but - perhaps on this account - is more convincing psychologically. In some ways a closer parallel to Richard's experience is that of David Copperfield, who after the deaths of Steerforth and Dora, and all the associated traumas, undergoes a time of trial during Continental wanderings, which climaxes in his realising his love for Agnes and accepting the duties imposed by the realisation. One night, in a Swiss valley, "some long-unwonted sense of beauty and tranquillity, some softening influence awakened by its peace" alleviates

David's "brooding sorrow":

All at once, in this serenity, great Nature spoke to me; and soothed me to lay down my weary head upon the grass, and weep as I had not wept yet, since Dora died!

I had found a packet of letters awaiting me...

The packet was in my hand. I opened it, and read the writing of Agnes.

She was happy and useful, was prospering as she had hoped. That was all she told me of herself. The rest referred to me.

She gave me no advice; she urged no duty on me; she only told me, in her own fervent manner, what her trust in me was...

I read her letter, many times. I wrote to her before I slept. I told her that I had been in sore need of her help; that without her I was not, and I had never been, what she thought me; but, that she inspired me to be that, and I would try.²

Dickens almost refuses to account for the actual moment of crisis in psychological terms, though David's sorrow and self-recrimination have been quite fully described. David's own somewhat perfunctory explanation of his emotional release, 'great Nature spoke to me', is all the explanation that is necessary, partly because the build-up has prepared for such an arbitrary turning-point, and partly because Dickens' emphasis is a moral one - he is presenting the correction of David's "undisciplined heart" and is prepared to let his account of the situation explain the change.

2. David Copperfield (1850; Penguin English Library edn. 1966), ch.lviii, pp.886-8.

The antithesis, a presentation of such an epiphany without connoting a moral crisis, occurs in the passage of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man referred to earlier. The very end of chapter iv has Stephen awake to a serene evening after the ecstasy of his vision, and the final paragraphs are similar in their quiet joy to the last paragraph of "Nature Speaks". Joyce has represented the stages of a psychological process, and has evoked its emotional tenor as well, but he makes no moral summary and draws no conclusions.

On another occasion when Meredith sends a hero to the Alps, this time Harry Richmond, he again presents a turning-point which does have a moral significance, but his emphasis is more like Joyce's in developing the emotional quality of the experience rather than the operation of his ethic as he had done with Richard Feverel. All Harry's dreams and aspirations, both those directly instilled by his father, and those developed by Harry himself, have been shattered by a series of revelations. His claims to noble rank are dispelled when he learns that his father has all along been financed by Aunt Dorothy and not some mysterious Personage; and his hopes of wealth vanish when the Squire his grandfather disinherits him. Now, he receives with indignation an offer from despised Janet Ilchester the heiress, proposing to share the Beltham

property; and at the same time has news of the wedding of Ottilia to Prince Hermann, exploding his hopes of marrying the Princess himself.

Harry's reaction in the first edition of the novel (1871) is to write a pompous letter to Janet: "(I was still more prolix and pedantic than I dared to show...) It was an unpardonable effusion. But one who would write like a high philosopher when he feels like a wounded savage, commits these offences" (Bibliography and Various Readings, p.212). Along with much of Harry's harshness to Janet, this passage was deleted in revising for the one-volume edition of 1886 and while other of the excisions tend to confuse the issue, such is not the case here, for Harry goes on to give an account of his subsequent actions.

I turned on Temple to walk him off his legs if I could.

Carry your fever to the Alps, you of minds diseased: not to sit down in sight of them ruminating, for bodily ease and comfort will trick the soul and set you measuring our lean humanity against yonder sublime and infinite; but mount, rack the limbs, wrestle it out among the peaks; taste danger, sweat, earn rest: learn to discover ungrudgingly that haggard fatigue is the fair vision you have run to earth, and that rest is your uttermost reward. Would you know what it is to hope again, and have all your hopes at hand? - hang upon the crags at a gradient that makes your next step a debate between the thing you are and the thing you may become. (ch.liii, p.649).

The deletion of Harry's letter, and of his own comment on his state of mind and the language in which he expresses himself, removes the cue alerting the reader to the timbre of the rhetoric in this moral prescription. Nevertheless, the strain of histrionic indulgence which accompanies the exorcism of being pitted against the elements sounds strongly enough as the Harry who by the time of writing has won through from the position of "The pleasant narrator in the first person ... the happy bubbling fool" to one approaching that of "the philosopher who has come to know himself and his relations toward the universe" (ch.lvi, p.674), recreates his petulant passion. This is Harry's own judgement on his immaturity. There is no change of heart specifically represented in the passage, though the episode contributes to a process which culminates after Harry has travelled further both in terms of physical time and distance, and in terms of his self-awareness: "I was seized with a thirst for England... A dream of a rainy morning, in the midst of the glowing furnace, may have been the origin of the wild craving I had for my native land and Janet" (ch.liv, p.650). There are further trials to be undergone before he can finally say "I learnt how entirely inactive special Providence had been in my affairs" (ch.lvi, p.672), be matched with Janet, and

come to terms with his inheritance, the prudence represented by Riversley and the flamboyance of his father, destroyed together in the conflagration of Roy's welcoming fireworks display. Such an indication of a change of heart in Harry as that given in "I was seized with a thirst for England" is relatively unusual. More commonly - and indeed incessantly - the appraisal of Harry the narrator looking back on his past actions is conducted in the very tone of his account. Because of the special advantage first-person narration affords in this respect, The Adventures of Harry Richmond is a tour de force of presentation of an extended inner action by stylistic projection.

Harry Richmond also provides many instances of dreams being used as notation of inner action.³ Harry's first dream occurs when Roy is bearing him away from Riversley: "he dreamed he was in a ship of cinnamon-wood upon a sea that rolled mighty, but smooth immense broad waves, and tore thing from thing without a sound or a hurt" (ch.1, p.14). The child's innocent dreaming is imbued with the wondering excitement of his adventure:

3. Jean Sudrann, "'The Linked Eye and Mind': A Concept of Action in the Novels of George Meredith", SEL, IV (1964), 630, gives Meredith's use of dreams to explore a character's subconscious as one of her few examples of his techniques for representing the life within.

later dreams are suffused with fear, and also have a significance beyond what Harry himself recognises though he comes to be able to interpret them. Many of his dreams concern quests for his father (ch.v, p.50; ch.ix, p.111; ch.xviii, p.215), and given Harry's intense life of the imagination are an extension of this fanciful activity. Not all of Harry's fantasies are dreams during sleep either. Moreover, in so using dreams, Meredith is rendering a recognised manifestation of inner disturbance in his fiction rather than projecting inner action by purely stylistic means. There is a complicated reference to a dream of Lucy's in Richard Feverel, during the lovers' tryst which is interrupted by Benson. Richard says

Come, and I will row you on the lake. You remember what you said in your letter that you dreamt? - that we were floating over the shadow of the Abbey to the nuns at work by torchlight felling the cypress, and they handed us each a sprig. Why, darling, it was the best omen in the world, their felling the old trees. And you write such lovely letters. So pure and sweet they are. I love the nuns for having taught you (ch.xx, p.169).

Richard interprets the dream as being of good omen, though all the indications suggest otherwise. The whole speech mingles reality and fantasy in the lover's talk, and represents both Lucy's fears and Richard's rejection of them.

There are of course other instances of Meredith's utilising ordinary indications of mental events, of which verbal slips provide a good example - being an intense form

of interpreting what is meant differently from what is said. The best-known example of course is Clara's slip over Vernon's name. She first catches herself thinking of Harry Oxford, the soldier who carried off Willoughby's intended, Constantia Durham: "But I have no Harry Whitford, I am alone ... the sudden consciousness that she had put another name for Oxford, struck her a buffet, drowning her in crimson" (ch.x, p.121). Later, she makes the same mistake aloud, referring to "Mr. Ox-Whitford" in a conversation with Willoughby (ch.xiii, p.148). This confusion of names is due to more than their similarity, for Clara is beginning to cast Vernon Whitford in the role of her rescuer from Willoughby.

The kind of crisis of inner action which Meredith most frequently represents is exemplified in "Nursing the Devil" (Richard Feverel, ch.xxiii), which does give a change of heart but of a different kind from that experienced by Richard when "Nature Speaks". Here Sir Austin has received from the hands of Ripton Thompson Richard's letter announcing his marriage, and this sounds the knell of his System in the baronet's ears, though paradoxically the marriage is really the System's success since in Lucy Richard has found his true mate. However Sir Austin cannot - nor would he

if he could - recognise anything other than his sense of betrayal and failure, and the change of heart he experiences is not a conversion but a hardening.

The beginning of the chapter, after the introductory "And now the author of the System was on trial under the eyes of the lady who loved him. What so kind as they? Yet are they very rigorous, those soft watchful woman's eyes" (pp.341-2), is a homily directed by the narrator to Sir Austin - and, since the second person pronoun is used, to the possibly errant reader as well: "If you are below the measure they have made of you, you will feel it in the fulness of time ... oh beware, vain man, of ever waxing enamoured of that wonderful elongation of a male creature you saw reflected in her adoring upcast orbs! Beware of assisting to delude her!" (p.342).

This idiomatic usage of you almost suggests at first that this is Sir Austin's own awareness; but the imperative beware clearly places the analysis beyond his ken. There is a switch to the archaic second person singular which signals an intimacy and intensity as the homily reaches a climax: "But shouldst thou, when the hour says plainly, Be thyself, and the woman is willing to take thee as thou art, shouldst thou still aspire to be that thing of shanks and wrists, wilt thou not seem contemptible as well as ridiculous? And when the fall comes, will it not be flat

on thy face, instead of to the common height of men?" The archaic form and preacher's rhetoric convey derision of the whole performance which the peroration unequivocally designates as farce: "The moral of which is, that if we pretend to be what we are not, women, for whose amusement the farce is performed, will find us out and punish us for it." The epithet farce points to the truly comic aspects of the novel, which I have barely mentioned; and the recollection of genre is significant at this stage because by his actions now Sir Austin accelerates the second phase of the comedy, which was inaugurated by the wedding (the heading draws our attention in ch.xxix, "In Which the Last Act of a Comedy Takes the Place of the First"). A heavy irony pervades all the talk of comedy and farce, since the whole action has a tragic outcome.

Meanwhile, the moral is drawn in particular terms in the second paragraph, with both Sir Austin's self-deception, and the natural way to behave in the situation, indicated:

Had Sir Austin given vent to the pain and wrath it was natural he should feel, he might have gone to unphilosophic excesses, and, however much he lowered his reputation as a sage, Lady Blandish would have excused him: she would not have loved him less for seeing him closer. But the poor gentleman tasked his soul and stretched his muscles to act up to her conception of him. He, a man of science in life, who was bound to be surprised by nothing in nature, it was not for him to do more than lift his eyebrows and draw in his lips at the news delivered by Ripton Thompson, that ill bird at Raynham (pp.342-3).

As Lady Blandish perceives, he is really punishing himself, and the point of view is shifted to her awareness of the situation. It is she who frames the central questions which the chapter is devoted to analysing through Sir Austin's reactions: "And yet, what had the young man done? And in what had the System failed?" (p.343). Sir Austin's official stand is given in his actual utterances, which have the ring of the Pilgrim's Scrip about them as he discourses on fate, proclaiming with dreadful irony in view of the outcome, and a certain wryness on the author's part, "'I believe very little in the fortune, or misfortune, to which men attribute their successes and reverses. They are useful impersonations to novelists; but my opinion is sufficiently high of flesh and blood to believe that we make our own history without intervention'" (p.344). Then, in response to Lady Blandish's "'may I say it? do not shut your heart'" there is an authorial cue: "He assured her that he hoped not to do so, and the moment she was gone he set about shutting it as tight as he could", and a dissection of thoughts and feelings follows.

The narrator's indictment of Sir Austin is made without recourse to impassioned diatribe, by suggesting judiciously what alternative he might have adopted, showing how nearly ^{he} has his position in focus, and yet how gross

is the distortion: "If, instead of saying, Base no system on a human being, he had said, Never experimentalize with one, he would have been nearer the truth of his own case. He had experimented on humanity in the person of the son he loved as his life, and at once, when the experiment appeared to have failed, all humanity's failings fell on the shoulders of his son." There is a shift now to Sir Austin's point of view, as he sets about interpreting events, discerning a plot as a necessary defence of his emotional investment in his son: "Richard's parting laugh in the train - it was explicable now: it sounded in his ears like the mockery of this base nature of ours at every endeavour to exalt and chasten it. The young man had plotted this." The baronet works himself to a veritable frenzy: "Base, like the rest, treacherous, a creature of passions using his abilities solely to gratify them - never surely had humanity such chances as in him!" (p.345). Again the narrator takes over, interrupting the interior monologue to revive a theological concept explored earlier in the rickburning episode, and invoking also Faustian elements which go along with the Manichaeism: "A Manichaeism tendency, from which the sententious eulogist of nature had been struggling for years (and which was partly at the bottom of the System), now began to cloud and usurp dominion of his mind. As he sat alone in the forlorn dead-hush

of his library, he saw the devil." Sir Austin's disturbance is now presented as an internal dialogue with the devil, with Meredith in fact taking literally the Manichaeian tenet of the coexistence of God and the Devil in constructing the image. The Satanic personification is not simply a device for representing mental debate, but a psychologically valid figuring of the genuine conflict between Sir Austin's love for his son and concern for his own infallibility.

The internal colloquy continues with various echoes of earlier incidents, as Sir Austin performs his ritual as guardian in cloak and cap. He has been seen in this guise before; on the first occasion when he is overlooked by the nursemaid, the description is in terms of purgatorial suffering (ch.1, pp.4-5); the next time, the night of the fire, Adrian reflects "A monomaniac at large" (ch.iv, p.32). Both the monomania and the suffering are still in evidence as Sir Austin treads his perennial beat, revolving the question of Richard's upbringing. When the debate has run its course, there is a summing-up, in which authorial omniscience is diversified by erlebte Rede.

Sir Austin did not battle with the tempter. He took him into his bosom at once, as if he had been ripe for him, and received his suggestions, and bowed to his dictates. Because he suffered, and decreed that he would suffer silently, and be the only sufferer, it seemed to him that he was great-minded in his calamity. The world had beaten him. What then? He must shut his heart and mask his face; that was all...

It was thus a fine mind and a fine heart at the bounds of a nature not great, chose to colour his retrogression and countenance his shortcoming; and it was thus that he set about ruining the work he had done... For a grief that was private and peculiar, he unhesitatingly cast the blame upon humanity; just as he had accused it in the period of what he termed his own ordeal. How had he borne that? By masking his face. And he prepared the ordeal for his son by doing the same (p.347).

Again, condemnation is unequivocal though covert, the judgement being implied in the scrupulous account of Sir Austin's noble qualities which for a little conceals the monstrosity of his behaviour. He dons his mask, and tests its obduracy against Lady Blandish's special pleading; having successfully resisted, he relents towards her a little - "their Platonism was advanced by his putting an arm around her" (p.353). To his further chagrin, the misogynist butler Benson comes on the scene, to meet with peremptory dismissal, like the nursemaid in chapter i who also witnessed her master betraying emotion. Nor is this the only reverberation of the tender gesture, since there is also an allusion to the earlier occasion on which Sir Austin made a physical demonstration, affectionate or placating, to Lady Blandish, kissing her hand after he has been pontificating on his plans for Richard's ultimate mating (ch.xiii, p.112). This "courtly pantomime" (p.113) is glimpsed by Richard as he rides by, and precipitates him into "the great Realm of Mystery" (ch.xiv, p.113) from which he seeks release in his fateful morning pull on the river.

These repetitions, echoes and parallels suffuse every aspect of the chapter with shafts of ironic reflection that reveal the intricate structure of cause and effect, illusion and delusion, by which the Feverels are suffocatingly enclosed. Here indeed is "the elementary machinery at work" for the audience alive to "the links of things as they pass" who "wonder not, as foolish people now do, that this great matter came of that small one" (ch.xxv, p.234).

Meredith here is very precise about what Sir Austin is doing, why and how, and the minuteness is demanded by the pivotal position of the chapter in plot development. It launches the final phase of the action, that of Richard's ordeal in his relationships with women which parallels his father's ordeal as well as resulting from it; and so care is taken to show the opportunities at every turn for Sir Austin to act otherwise, as well as the impossibility, given his character and experience, of his doing so. The hope of remedy is underscored by the likenesses to earlier situations, which on the one hand offer a second chance, and then, when this is rejected, reinforce the apprehension of doom. In scrutinising his subject, Meredith adverts to all that the situation potentially involves, sketching out what the character is

almost thinking, presenting his mental processes with clear disapproval but after a show of fairness - indeed, a demonstration of openmindedness - which damns the baronet the more effectively. The skill and restraint of the narrative here, and the deft management of such dense texture, show Meredith at his wily best. While Meredith is at times simply playful, it is not always fair to suggest that the surface iridescence and complication of his prose is simply a dimension of complexity in the narrative which does not exist; and misguided to consider that the apparent unruliness of his writing is a sign of lack of control.

As I suggested earlier, it is in such depictions of semi-awareness that Meredith's representation of the inner life is strongest, as he shows the shifts of thought and half-articulated realisations of his characters in situations of conflict. The novels are full of these occasions, which sometimes occur in a series indicating a development in a character, and sometimes provide an isolated insight. So relatively minor characters like Purcell Barrett and Anthony Hackbut are revealed at a single time of trial, when Sir Purcell succumbs to the sentimentalism of feeling himself dogged by fate and ends his life (Sandra Belloni, ch.lv), and Hackbut struggles with the temptation to make off with the money

entrusted to him in the course of his duties at Boyne's Bank (Rhoda Fleming, chs. xxv and xl). Major characters are treated in a more extended way: there is a succession of analyses of Wilfrid Pole's perplexities and questionings; of Cecilia Halkett's debates about her feelings for Nevil Beauchamp; of Nataly's agencies of concern for Victor and Nesta; and of Fleetwood's gathering love for Carinthia - and these are merely a few random instances.

Such crises are rarely relieved entirely of an ethical onus, though the enactment of conversion as in "Nature Speaks" does not recur. Generally, however, Meredith's stress is on the psychological trauma in the course of a development whose moral import is always inherent and is sometimes made explicit: whether covert or overt, there is judgement passed on the character.

Meredith's representation of the 'invisible conflict' in a character generally follows the strategy adopted to show Sir Austin struggling with his pride, a volatile mixture of interior monologue and authorial analysis, often in support of a personification which may be the principal device of figuring forth disturbance. On some occasions, however, instead of the soliloquy situation, he puts his characters in a position of interaction, providing as it were a simultaneous translation of inner and outer events. In Rhoda Fleming, a conversation between Rhoda and Robert

Eccles is indeed virtually translated, as Meredith adds in parenthesis what each really means by the words they utter. This effect is one which George Eliot also uses for the first encounter of Gwendolen Harleth with Grandcourt in chapter xi of Daniel Deronda, giving her heroine's thoughts in counterpoint to the dialogue. Meredith's method is fairly straightforward: the discussion has concerned Rhoda's decision to accept the proposal for her hand of Algernon Blancove, the young squire, and suddenly Robert realises that he may still have a chance with her:

Enraged at his blindness, and careful, lest he had wrongly guessed, not to express his regret (the man was a lover), he remarked, both truthfully and hypocritically: 'I've always thought you were born to be a lady.' (You had that ambition, young madam.)

She answered: 'That's what I don't understand.' (Your saying it, O my friend!)

'You will soon take to your new duties.' (You have small objection to them even now.)

'Yes, or my life won't be worth much.' (Know, that you are driving me to it.)

'And I wish you happiness, Rhoda.' (You are madly imperilling the prospect thereof.)

To each of them the second meaning stood shadowy behind the utterances (ch.xliii, p.455).

Meredith's procedure is not always so mechanical, as a famous scene in The Egoist demonstrates. Chapter xxxvii comes about three-quarters of the way through the

novel, at the stage where Willoughby begins to realise how grievously Clara's repeated pleas for freedom injure him, and sets in motion the protective mechanism designed to bring about his own union with Laetitia Dale, and Clara's with Vernon Whitford. The chapter-heading, "Contains Clever Fencing and Intimations of The Need For It", is an exact description of the thrust and parry which occupy its pages. In manuscript, the intimations were at first "Woeful" but Meredith retracted this (MS 732). Intimations of the need come first, as Willoughby considers recent happenings and then determines on a course of action in an encounter with Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson.

The chapter opens with events being seen from Willoughby's point of view. The first couple of sentences are apparently given to the omniscient narrator: "That woman, Lady Busshe, had predicted, after the event, Constantia Durham's defection. She had also, subsequent to Willoughby's departure on his travels, uttered sceptical things concerning his rooted attachment to Laetitia Dale" (p.454). The third sentence, however, gives away Willoughby's involvement and so explains what otherwise seems the excessive exasperation of the opening 'That woman, Lady Busshe...': "In her bitter vulgarity, that beaten rival of Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson for the leadership of the county had taken his nose for a melancholy prognostic

of his fortunes; she had recently played on his name: she had spoken the hideous English of his fate." To describe Lady Busshe's inquisitiveness as 'bitter vulgarity' is clearly a stronger sentiment than would be expected from an impartial narrator, and the outrage at the end of the sentence is plainly Willoughby's: his fear of having emotions verbalised has already been established and is to form part of the subject of the chapter.

Meredith is doing more than giving the baronet's point of view, however. He is very cleverly dramatising Willoughby's state of mind, showing his racing thoughts, showing that the man knows almost as much about himself as we do but cannot commit himself to an assessment in 'hideous English' and this is really Willoughby's tragedy. The reactions depicted reveal Willoughby as being concerned to maintain appearances at all costs, and able instinctively to settle on a course of action which will ensure this. It is frequently allowed in The Egoist that Willoughby is sensitive and imaginative - but only under the stimulus of threats to himself - and here his hyperawareness is fully activated.

A spelling-out of what is going on indicates the economy, subtlety, and psychological insight of Meredith's method of omission and implication. We are told "Little as she knew, she was alive to the worst interpretation of

appearances", and are then made to realise what this interpretation is. Willoughby is only just accepting that he is being jilted for the second time, acknowledging that what the gossips think has happened already is in fact bound to occur. From this it is a short step for him to determine that the outcome must be managed otherwise. He is resolving, it is implied, to let Clara go, but only if she will marry Vernon, thus earning Willoughby himself a reputation for magnanimity and sparing him the shame of seeing her paired off with a man like Horace De Craye. Meanwhile he will draw strength from the devotion of his bride Laetitia. It is as if this plan, not yet verbalised, springs fully formed into Willoughby's mind, permitting him to derive consolation from the confidence that he can recover from his setback with an imagined triumph. This presentation of one of the crucial decisions of the novel entirely by innuendo achieves great immediacy: the reader participates in the flow of Willoughby's consciousness, but judgement is not suspended because of the pressure to deduce what is really happening.

There is a halt once Willoughby has regained some balance, and the indirect interior monologue continues with determination colouring his reflections: "Ay, but to combat these dolts, facts had to be encountered, deeds done, in groaning earnest" (p.455). The grinding movement

acts out the resolution of the paragraph. Then follows a tactfully inserted narrator's comment which impresses the enormity of the baronet's self-regard. "He chose rather (and the choice is open to us all) to be flattered by the distinction it revealed between himself and mankind" (p.456). Sir Willoughby's habit of suppressing his own insights so as to retain a sense of superiority to "the pig-sconces of the population" has already been seen, but here, in a parenthesis, Meredith adds the reminder that this is not a manoeuvre peculiar to Willoughby, for the reader, as a player in the comedy of egoism, partakes in the fault.

And so the whirl of Willoughby's agitation continues, with the narrator confining the description to the scope of the character's awareness, though as his imagination stirs with nightmares of public discomfiture, metaphors are invoked which derive from the discussion of egoism in the "Prelude". The narrator provides the metaphor of the "Malarious earth" (p.456) to represent Willoughby's fear of the contagion of the world, and then shifts stance to make some authoritative observations on egoists in general and Willoughby in particular which explain both the causes and the intensity of his reactions, again coming round to a conclusion which emanates from the character: "He must ever, both in his reputation and his person, aching though he be,

show them a face and a leg" (p.457). Here Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson's bon mot is recalled, the phrase "He has a leg" having become for Willoughby the symbol of recognition of his style and so the epitome of the reputation he must at all costs preserve. A little later, when he engages in conversation with Mrs. Mountstuart in the flesh, he states directly, with pomposity and perfect clarity, the resolution he has reached: "I do strictly and sternly object to the scandal of violent separations, open breaches of solemn engagements, or a public rupture. Put it that I am the cause, I will not consent to a violation of decorum. Is that clear?" (p.462).

For the moment, however, his mental anguish is reflected in physical action. He retreats into his laboratory (to which Mrs. Mountstuart refers as "that den" - p.458 - recalling the association of Science with all that is primitive in man's nature which was made in the "Prelude") and paces round, though "He would not avow that he was in an agony: it was merely a desire for exercise" (p.457). From this vantage, Willoughby watches his world go by.

Quintessence of worldliness, Mrs. Mountstuart appeared through his farthest window, swinging her skirts on a turn at the end of the lawn, with Horace De Craye smirking beside her. And the woman's vaunted penetration was unable to detect the histrionic Irishism of the fellow. Or she liked him for his acting and nonsense; nor she only. The voluble beast was created to snare women (p.457).

Now follows a fine local example of Meredith's representation of the stream of Willoughby's consciousness in the gamut of "Willoughby became smitten with an adoration of steadfastness in women. The incarnation of that divine quality crossed his eyes. She was clad in beauty." The transition from dire musing on De Craye to fixation on Laetitia is nicely ambiguous, given the foregoing reflections, as to whether Willoughby is first attracted to the abstract quality of female constancy or to its embodiment in Miss Dale.

The ebb and flow of the baronet's scheming and conjecture proceeds as he nerves himself to go to speak with Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson. Their dialogue enacts the assessment and decision of Willoughby's reflections, as Mrs. Mountstuart, the "Quintessence of worldliness", attacks the baronet in precisely the fashion he had envisaged, and forces him to bring the decision concerning his bride-to-be nearer to conscious acknowledgement. Meredith annotates the dialogue, giving Willoughby's mental commentary:

'You are thoroughly good.'

This hateful encomium of commiseration transfixed him. Then, she knew of his calamity!

'Philosophical,' he said, 'would be the proper term, I think.'

'Colonel De Craye, by the way, promises me a visit when he leaves you.'

'To-morrow?'

'The earlier the better. He is too captivating; he is delightful. He won me in five minutes. I don't accuse him. Nature gifted him to cast the spell. We are weak women, Sir Willoughby!'

She knew! (p.459).

Again, Meredith spells out what is not said in this cryptic exchange, though the reader's comprehension of the situation is fairly complete:

'Well?' said he to her eyes.

'Well, and where is Laetitia Dale?'

He turned about to show his face elsewhere.

When he fronted her again, she looked very fixedly, and set her head shaking.

'It will not do, my dear Sir Willoughby!'

'What?'

'It.'

'I never could solve enigmas.'

'Playing ta-ta-ta-ta ad infinitum, then. Things have gone far' (p.460).

The whole building-up of the situation permits appreciation of this bout, with the force of the author's description - 'clever fencing' - becoming quite apparent. So finely have our perceptions been attuned that we recognise how Mrs. Mountstuart's repetition of the shameful "Twice!" really does spur Willoughby to frenzy. His seemingly very ordinary and controlled utterance, though

pompous, is indeed frantic. He begins "My dear Mrs. Mountstuart, you have been listening to tales," proceeds through "Let us preserve the forms due to society" and ends by denouncing marriage as "a demoralizing lottery" (p.461). What is happening is that Willoughby having been goaded into making up his mind, is now intent on leading Mrs. Mountstuart to view matters in the light he wishes to cast - a ploy which she suspects, asking

'... Are you fond of dupes?'

'I detest the race.'

'An excellent answer. I could pardon you for it.' She refrained from adding: 'If you are making one of me.'

Sir Willoughby went to ring for her carriage (p.463).

This simple stage direction serves to recall the visual situation before the action depicted becomes again that of the reality behind the appearance. As Willoughby turns away, he begins again to think and plot.

His defence mechanisms are quickly at work in a passage of self-analysis:

She knew. That was palpable: Clara had betrayed him. 'The earlier Colonel De Craye leaves Patterne Hall the better': she had said that: and, 'all parties would be happier for an excursion.' She knew the position of things and she guessed the remainder. But what she did not know, and could not divine, was the man who fenced her (p.463).⁴

4. The manuscript revisions are interesting here: Meredith inserted 'The earlier ... excursion', 'and she guessed the remainder', 'could not divine' - all small sharpenings of Willoughby's agitated thought processes and typical of the author's modifications of the chapter (MS 741).

And with this his self-satisfaction is re-established: he has protected himself with "his dark hints to Mrs. Mountstuart", and there is moreover, "the sense of a fact established."

On this fact he proceeds to muse, in glowing rhapsodic phrases imputing to Laetitia every quality he could desire in a wife, setting her all the time in comparison with Clara. The language of this interior monologue picks up and modifies earlier images, in such phrases as "He sailed on a tranquil sea, the husband of a stedfast woman - no rogue", with its reference to Clara as the "dainty rogue in porcelain", and to all the metaphors of storms and sailing. His exultant musing is interrupted, however, by a sharp change of focus. Judgement on Willoughby is no longer withheld as the narrator steps in with the comment that "His retinue of imps had a revel" (p.465), and proceeds to point the moral with pithy epigrammatic pronouncements and a quotation from the great Book of Egoism which makes explicit what is by now an open secret in the novel: "The secret of the heart is its pressing love of self", says the Book."

Meredith further explains Willoughby's situation, insisting that true understanding does not follow from "liftings of hands at the sight" but from "patiently studying the phenomenon of energy", with his recurrent emphasis on

awareness of the inner as well as the outer. Without such an awareness, "a man in love with one woman, and in all but absolute consciousness, behind the thinnest of veils, preparing his mind to love another, will be barely credible. The particular hunger of the forceful but adaptable heart is the key of him." The point, of course, is that Willoughby is all too credible: the encounter with his process of thinking and feeling, together with the control of our sympathy by shifts of perspective, has ensured this. The last paragraphs of the chapter blend authorial comment and the character's perceptions very fluently, giving specific and damning statements of Willoughby's self-regard; and moving back into the world of observable happenings as Vernon and Clara, who is by now imbued with all possible odious qualities ("a brilliant girl indeed, and a shallow one... a woman to drag men through the mud" - p.466), appear at the park-gates. "She approached" ends chapter xxxvii, and chapter xxxviii opens with "They met", a stage direction which again moves the focus^s away from Willoughby's awareness to a more detached view of the situation.

Although a large part of the chapter is taken up with representation and analysis of Willoughby's thoughts, here we are spectators of a realised scene - and if 'scene' is understood in the theatrical sense of a complete incident involving a number of characters and having some climactic

significance, such occasions are relatively infrequent in Meredith's novels, especially the later ones. At high points of action like Carinthia braving the mad dog in The Amazing Marriage, or the encounter at Steignton in Lord Ormont and His Aminta, the scene has its greatest importance in characters' anticipations of or subsequent reflections on the events depicted - for instance in the feelings of both Lord Fleetwood and Lord Ormont towards their wives. With the scene at Patterne Hall, the inner action is simultaneous with the external (such of it as there is): Willoughby's change of heart - in his case, perhaps better described as a change of mind - is the true action.

The essence of Meredith's scenic method, however, is not the same as Henry James' ideal of the dramatic scene. R.P. Blackmur explains how James takes as his subject not what happened but what someone felt about what happened, and suggests that "The Dramatic Scene was the principal device James used to objectify the Indirect Approach" and that often "his use of the Scene resembled that in the stage-play."⁵ In his Preface to The Awkward Age, James describes the advantage in the objectivity of the approach of the stage-play which forbids "'going behind' to compass explanations and amplifications";⁶ and he

5. The Art of the Novel (New York 1934), p.xviii.

6. Ibid., p.111.

indicates how, by the use of his characters as narrative filters, he emulates this denial in treating scenes in his novels.

But Meredith's scenes are not like those of a stage-play, even when as in the one I have discussed in The Egoist he goes so far as to supply stage-directions and at other points in the novel refers to his narrative as if it took the form of drama. Like James, Meredith is intent on rendering the content of his characters' consciousness; but unlike James he is perpetually and overtly 'going behind' his dramatic illusion since he is not concerned to provide a rendition consistently through any particular medium. Though his entrepreneurial function is not manifested in the same way as Dickens', it is as crucial. In a letter to a Harvard admirer written some years after The Egoist, Meredith explains: "You say that there are few scenes. Is it so throughout? My method has been to prepare my readers for a crucial exhibition of the personae, and then to give the scene in the fullest of their blood and brain under stress of a fiery situation" (1887: Letters, p.398). And indeed 'a crucial exhibition of the personae' is given, but always with authorial mediation. The method gives access to several levels of awareness because of the various perspectives available: in this instance there is depiction of observable action - carriages

arriving and departing, ladies and gentlemen chatting on the lawn - by omniscient comment; and more oblique presentation of a series of inner actions, comprising what Willoughby claims to think and feel, as well as what he really thinks and feels in reaction to Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson - who may only be physically in attendance for part of the time but whose presence as her gossiping self or as the symbol of the whole critical world is pervasive. Willoughby's situation is similar to Sir Austin's, in that both egoists are concerned for themselves and appearances; and Meredith's technique in The Egoist produces a similar narrative iridescence to that in Richard Feverel, a series of fluctuations which can be described in particular operation though hardly defined more generally.

In enacting the movements of Willoughby's mind, Meredith abjures explanation of conversion in the manner of that which accompanies Richard's experience in the forest (a somewhat different kind of change of heart anyway), but supplies a constant commentary, initially discreet but eventually blatant, relating the action to a moral standpoint. Given the overt didacticism of The Egoist, where the scourging of egoism by the Comic Spirit is announced, the ethical demonstration is not discordant with the skillful psychological analysis and representation. In other

novels there is sometimes discrepancy between the moral and psychological emphases: One of Our Conquerors is a case in point, since the positive demonstration of the moral teaching falls on Nesta through whom her parents, both characters much more fully reflected in the inward mirror, keep faith with Nature.

The changes of heart, and the changes of mind, which Meredith presents in his novels are many and various. But I submit that there is demonstrably a greater consistency in the kinds of crucial conflicts which are shown, and in the handling of such exhibitions of personae, than the author's dazzling inventiveness immediately makes evident.

VII. IMAGERY

I am not proposing to treat exhaustively Meredith's handling of imagery. This would be up to a point irrelevant, since not all imagery is used to present inner action; and further such a discussion would be presumptuous in view of Professor Hardy's essay on "The Structure of Imagery" in Harry Richmond which eloquently demonstrates the "casual and wayward richness" of Meredith's use of imagery.¹ Nevertheless some comments on the part of imagery in the process of "reading the inner as well as exhibiting the outer" are necessary.

Since metaphor of its nature relates unfamiliar experiences or attitudes to known ones, and reveals likenesses where none were discerned before, it is a peculiarly apt means of rendering accessible the events of the inner life for which the vocabulary of objective reality is not adequate. Meredith makes this point at various stages through the novels when he comments on his own use of language. There is a facetious instance in Rhoda Fleming where he rejects a description of "the miserable chop he saw for his dinner in the distance - a spot of meat in the arctic circle of a plate, not shone upon by any rosy-warming sun of a decanter!" with a brisk "But metaphorical

1. The Appropriate Form (1964), p.104.

language, though nothing other will convey the extremity of his misery, must be put aside" (ch.xii, p.109). The rejection of metaphorical language as being either overpowering or dishonest sometimes comes from the characters themselves: Mr. Dale, reeling under Dr. Middleton's rhetoric, cries "I am an invalid... I am unable to cope with analogies. I have but strength for the slow digestion of facts" (The Egoist, ch.xliv, p.556), and is soon after echoed by his daughter, who says "Oh! no, no: this is too serious for imagery" (ch.xlviii, p.604).

In One of Our Conquerors, however, the function of imagery is explicitly discussed as Dudley Sowerby rides away after learning that Nesta, whom he is courting, is illegitimate.

The internal state of a gentleman who detested intangible metaphor as heartily as the vulgarest of our gobble-gobbets hate it, metaphor only can describe; and for the reason, that he had in him just something more than is within the compass of the language of the meat-markets. He had - and had it not the less because he fain would not have had - sufficient stuff to furnish forth a soul's epic encounter between Nature and Circumstance: and metaphor, simile, analysis, all the fraternity of old lamps for lighting our abysmal darkness, have to be rubbed, that we may get a glimpse of the fray (ch.xxvi, p.314).

This explanation follows an imaging of the young man's feelings,

... his disordered deeper sentiments; which were a diver's wreck, where an armoured livid subtermarine, a monstrous puff-ball of man, wandered seriously light in heaviness; trebling his hundred-weights

to keep him from dancing like a bladder-block of elastic lumber; thinking occasionally, amid the mournful spectacle, of the atmospheric pipe of communication with the world above, whereby he was deafened yet sustained. One tug at it, and he was up on the surface, disengaged from the hideous harness, joyfully no more that burly phantom cleaving green slime, free! and the roaring stopped; the world looked flat, foreign, a place of crusty promise. His wreck, animated by the dim strange fish below, appeared fairer; it winked lurefully when abandoned.

This presentation of Dudley's mind fully warrants the warning Meredith has uttered earlier in One of Our Conquerors. He begins by pointing out that a simile works by "the fine flavour of analogy" and is not simply a restatement in other terms; and then proceeds:

It is the excelling merit of similes and metaphors to spring us to vault over gaps and thickets and dreary places. But, as with the visits of Immortals, we must be ready to receive them. Beware, moreover, of examining them too scrupulously: they have a trick of wearing to vapour if closely scanned (ch.xviii, p.189).

As it happens, the flavour of analogy to which this passage specifically refers is fine indeed - it is a comparison of the Rev. Septimus Barmby to Orpheus in the underworld (discussed more fully below, ch. VIII, sect. 9). However in the analysis of Dudley the basis of the analogy is not so elusive. Meredith is giving a rendition of the idiom "the wreck of his hopes", with the tumble of the language acting out Dudley's turmoil, presenting the paradox of his repulsion and attraction in a manner so fantastic

as to touch grotesquely the plaintive echoes of "a sea-change Into something rich and strange" - for the young man only just qualifies for treatment in metaphorical terms and does not merit high seriousness, however Laetitia Dale might exclaim at the impossibility of a responsible statement being made through imagery.

Though the prose is more tortured, and a particular image more fully developed, this is essentially the same technique of projecting a character's emotions by stylistic means as was used for Richard on the river, to the extent that Meredith again draws attention to the processes of his representing inner action. Perhaps one of Meredith's most cunning exercises in a similar vein occurs in Lord Ormont and His Aminta, where the capacities of figurative language are demonstrated and commented on as Lord Ormont awaits his wife's return from Steignton. He is thinking of Aminta by comparison with other women, and with her earlier "constraint of the adoring handmaid": now he sees her as

... the full-blown woman, rightful queen of her half of the dominion. Between the Aminta of then and now, the difference was marked as between Northern and Southern women: the frozen-mouthed Northerner and the pearl and rose-lipped Southerner; those who smirk in dropping congealed monosyllables, and those who radiantly laugh out the voluble chatter.

Conceiving this to the full in a mind destitute of imagery, but indicative of the thing as clearly as the planed, unpolished woodwork of a cabinet in a carpenter's shop, Lord Ormont liked her the better for the change... it forewarned him of a tougher bit of battle, if battle there was to be.

He was a close reader of surfaces. But in truth, the change so notable came of the circumstance, that some little way down below the surface he perused, where heart weds mind, or nature joins intellect, for the two to beget a resolution, the battle of the man and the woman had been fought, and the man beaten (ch.xxi, pp.257-8).

The images themselves are interesting, with echoes of other reflections earlier on; and again the insistence on the discrepancy between surface appearance and inner reality must be remarked. But the point I wish to make refers to the way Meredith suggests Ormont's incapacity for thinking figuratively. The narrator comments that the image contrasting Northern and Southern women could not have emanated from a mind 'destitute of imagery', but that the image is nevertheless a precise and complete representation of Ormont's sentiment - and then provides another image, of honest carpentry, to support the statement about Ormont as a plain bluff man. This is a variation on the diamond-cut-diamond presentation of Dudley Sowerby's turmoil, where the imagery of the deep-sea diver enacts what is already a figurative statement, "the wreck of his hopes".

The peculiarity of Meredith's imagery which I want to discuss - with due awareness of the dangers of dissipating metaphors - relates to the kind of verbal wit he often displays, a disconcerting blend of literal and figurative usage. The explanation of one image in terms of another is not altogether rare; though other means of representing inner action by imagery are considerably more common.

Sometimes Meredith simply uses a metaphor to describe a state of mind: of Diana at The Crossways after she has left Warwick and been overtaken by Redworth, he says "Her brain was a steam-wheel throughout the night" (ch.x, p.113); and later in the same chapter personifies her turbulent thoughts as "the troops defiling through her head while she did battle with the hypocrite world" (p.115). Sometimes a scene functions as a symbol of internal events: "A Diversion Played on a Penny-Whistle" is one such, an authorial imaging of the shadowed bliss of the lovers; in "The Great Fog and the Fire at Midnight" (Harry Richmond, ch.xi), it is Harry's romantic sensibility which invests the actual incidents with a special heroic and providential glow; and later Harry's childhood vision of his father as a glittering hero larger than life is enacted by Roy's posing as a statue, and then dispelled when the statue turns out to be mortal and part of Harry's illusion is shattered

(chs. xvi-xvii); the Ormont jewels become an objective correlative of the contention among Lord Ormont, his sister Lady Charlotte, and his wife Aminta, over Aminta's status in law and before the world in the series of scenes in chapter xxiii.

Such exploitation of imagery can be paralleled in many writers. A more unusual use of metaphor in a manner achieving a curious kind of literalness occurs fairly early in Richard Feverel. As so often happens throughout the novels, a chapter heading provides the cue which alerts the reader to particular significances: thus the title of chapter viii, "The Bitter Cup", indicates the figurative usage which infiltrates subsequent chapters. The image refers to Richard's confession to Farmer Blaize of his guilt in the matter of the rickburning, and develops from a casual metaphor: "He commenced blinking hard in preparation for the horrible dose to which delay and the farmer's cordiality added inconceivable bitters" (p.62). The metaphor of 'the horrible dose' alludes fairly directly to the idiom of "taking one's medicine", but its next occurrence puts the allusion at a further remove from its source:

Farmer Blaize was quite at his ease; nowise in a hurry. He spoke of the weather and the harvest; of recent doings up at the Abbey; glanced over that year's cricketing; hoped that no future Feverel would lose a leg to the game. Richard saw and heard Arson

in it all. He blinked harder as he neared the cup. In a moment of silence, he seized it with a gasp.

'Mr. Blaize! I have come to tell you that I am the person who set fire to your rick the other night' (p.62).

Here the image is a straight authorial representation of Richard's attitude, though in playing out the idiom the image begins to generate the momentum of a metaphysical conceit, figuring forth the physical as well as the moral distastefulness to Richard of the confession. Blaize challenges the boy, suggesting he is lying:

'Come,' continued the farmer, not unkindly, 'what else have you to say?'

Here was the same bitter cup he had already once drained brimming at Richard's lips again! Alas, poor human nature! that empties to the dregs a dozen of these evil drinks, to evade the single one which Destiny, less cruel, had insisted upon.

The boy blinked and tossed it off.

'I came to say that I regretted the revenge I had taken on you for your striking me.'

Farmer Blaize nodded.

'And now ye've done, young gentleman?'

Still another cupful!

'I should be very much obliged,' Richard formally began: but his stomach was turned; he could but sip and sip, and gather a distaste which threatened to make the penitential act impossible... 'So kind,' he stammered, 'so kind' (fancy a Feverel asking this big brute to be so kind!) 'as to do me the favour' (me the favour!) 'to exert yourself' (it's all to please Austin) 'to endeavour to - hem! to' (there's no saying it!) (pp.63-4).

In passing, this parenthetical notation for a meaning of which Richard is conscious but of which he reserves expression, should be remarked: it is, of course, a similar device to those already observed in Rhoda Fleming and The Egoist. However Richard's attempts continue:

The cup was as full as ever. Richard dashed at it again.

... It seemed out of all human power to gulp it down. The draught grew more and more abhorrent. To proclaim one's iniquity, to apologize for one's wrongdoing; thus much could be done: but to beg a favour of the offended party - that was beyond the self-abasement any Feverel could consent to. Pride, however, whose inevitable battle is against itself, drew aside the curtains of poor Tom's prison, crying a second time 'Behold your Benefactor!' and, with the words burning in his ears, Richard swallowed the dose:

'Well, then, I want you, Mr. Blaize, - if you don't mind - will you help me to get this man Bakewell off his punishment?' (pp.64-5).

And once this is out, Meredith adds a comment on Farmer Blaize's reaction: "To do Farmer Blaize justice, he waited very patiently for the boy, though he could not quite see why he did not take the gate at the first offer" (p.65) - providing Blaize with a different image for Richard's baulking. The cup is thereupon put aside for the rest of the chapter, to reappear in a summary at the beginning of the next chapter but one. The point is that though Richard has done what he ought, his act of conscience has been achieved by lying. However "good seed is long

ripening; a good boy is not made in a minute" (ch.x, p.74), and the difficulty of progress is emphasised: "Young Richard had quitted his cousin Austin fully resolved to do his penance and drink the bitter cup; and he had drunk it; drained many cups to the dregs; and it was to no purpose. Still they floated before him, brimmed, trebly bitter."

The image is dropped for a little, but having represented one ordeal, the cup recurs in association with Richard's introduction to Woman - the gravest ordeal of all, in his father's view. Ironically, it is the sight of Sir Austin kissing Lady Blandish's hand which precipitates Richard into "the great Realm of Mystery" (ch.xiv, p.113), where his imagination runs wild: "he was in the act of consummating all earthly bliss by pressing his lips to the small white hand. Only to do that, and die! cried the Magnetic Youth: to fling the Jewel of Life into that one cup and drink it off! He was intoxicated by anticipation" (pp.113-4). There is no particularly forceful retrospective reference here, but the expression is more a projection of Richard's new romantic self-image than an authorial description as before (and of course the cup is no longer bitter). When the cup makes another appearance virtually at the end, it is as an image directly evoked by Richard's own thoughts

when he is re-united with his wife and his father:
 "the cup of happiness was held to him, and he was invited to drink of it" (ch.xliv, p.538). The diction suggests the sanctity of ritual, and hints at the young man's honour which will not allow him to accept the proffered bliss.

The image of the cup is one supplied by the narrator, although as Richard develops, its presentation is more oblique, and from being a metaphor completely external to his awareness, it becomes almost accessible to his conscious expression of his state of mind. There is ingenuity of a whimsical kind in the initial notion; and such local and sporadic fancies are abundant in Meredith's prose, but become more complicated for instance when the metaphor is made available both to the character for self-expression, and to the author, for exposition and comment.

A conceit is sometimes complicated by an image being rendered literally: this propensity is well demonstrated in chapter xxxviii, the title of which, "An Enchantress", refers to Mrs. Mount and establishes one of the dominant image strands woven through the chapter. The most encompassing cluster is constituted of fire images, which are of course frequent throughout Richard Feverel,

deriving initially from the Magian conflict; and fire here is announced almost as a text with a comment on Richard: "He began to think that the life lying behind him was the life of a fool. What had he done in it? He had burnt a rick and got married! He associated the two acts of his existence" (p.434). Throughout the chapter, the fire imagery recurs, connected with the infernal regions, and thus with Bella's bewitching ways; and while the conflagration of which Richard thinks is at first literal, Meredith soon uses fire as a metaphoric representation of the character's state of mind: "He should have known then - it was thundered at a closed door in him, that he played with fire. But the door being closed, he thought himself internally secure" (p.439). Here the metaphor used in an idiomatic way, is almost accessible to Richard: a little later, there is a similar imaging of his resignation when he feels he has done his utmost in battling with his father and the world: "His great ambition must be covered by a house-top: he and the cat must warm themselves on the domestic hearth! The hero was not aware that his heart moved him to this. His heart was not now in open communion with his mind" (p.447).

The scene works out in terms of fire and witchery and haunting, with Meredith's representation of Richard's

reactions being couched in such images, and Richard's utterances using similar figures. Bella, too, participates in this awareness of symbolism, and acts out her metaphoric role by making herself look witch-like and setting fire to a dish of spirits. When her clothing catches alight, Richard embraces her to put out the flames, and feels his resolution that this should be their last meeting weaken. His question, "Was she a witch verily?" (p.453), is unuttered, but Bella makes a spoken response: "'There! I won't be a witch; I won't be a witch: they may burn me to a cinder, but I won't be a witch!'" She is witch enough, however, to seduce Richard.

Such use of simile and metaphor certainly vaults both author and reader over a thicket - in this instance hardly a dreary place. But as with the fire imagery Professor Hardy discusses from Harry Richmond, the images are not static, and fire is both a physical event and a metaphysical presence. Interpenetration of the figurative and the literal is of course the essence of Meredith's method in big symbolic scenes, like "A Marine Duet" in Lord Ormont and His Aminta where Matey and Aminta are aware of the significance of "their one short holiday truce" (ch.xxvii, p.325), with the lack of restraint which enables them to exchange names before Triton. This kind of interpenetration can

occur on a restricted local scale as well: here is an example from The Egoist, just after Clara's first attempt to win freedom from Willoughby. The baronet says solicitously

'...You are cold, my love? you shivered.'

'I am not cold,' said Clara. 'Someone, I suppose, was walking over my grave.'

The gulf of a caress hove in view like an enormous billow hollowing under the curled ridge.

She stooped to a buttercup; the monster swept by.

'Your grave!' he exclaimed over her head; 'my own girl!' (ch.xiii, p.153).

The simplest description of the technique in this vignette is mixed metaphor - but what a triumphant mixture. Indeed the confusion of language which follows Clara's cliché 'Someone ... walking over my grave' is an appropriate correlative of her own confusion, for she is all at sea playing Beauty to Sir Willoughby's Beast. The best description of the effect of such language is Meredith's own, presenting Rosamund Culling's reaction to the "fanatical nonsense" of Dr. Shrapnel:

... a species of mad metaphor had been wriggling and tearing its passage through a thorn-bush in his discourse, with the furious urgency of a sheep in a panic; but where the ostensible subject ended and the metaphor commenced, and which was which at the conclusion, she found it difficult to discern - much as the sheep would be when he had left his fleece behind him (Beauchamp's Career, ch.xii, p.121).

Beyond this I feel the explanation of metaphor by metaphor cannot proceed.

There are occasions on which the characters themselves are credited with the provision of figurative representation of their inner state. Diana Warwick, for example, being an authoress by profession is particularly adept in this regard - though Meredith at one stage warns that "metaphors were her refuge". The long Debit and Credit image in chapter xxiii is explicitly attributed to Diana's own fancy; and its elaboration brilliantly represents the way she evades the facts of her financial and social situation by indulging in whimsy. Similarly in chapter xxxii, when from a complicated and mistaken mixture of motives she betrays the political secret Percy Dacier has confided in her to the editor Tonans, she thinks of the newspaper office as "the very furnace-hissing of Events: an Olympian Council held in Vulcan's smithy. Consider the bringing to the Jove there news of such magnitude as to stupefy him! He, too, who had admonished her rather sneeringly for staleness in her information" (p.369). The Olympian imagery persists through the chapter, functioning as an indication of the importance Diana attaches to reasserting her place in what she regards as celestial councils (it should be recalled that there is

constant play throughout the novel on the mythological significance of her own name). In passing, there is another kind of Meredithian verbal wit to be noted here, in the puns deriving from The Times and its nickname The Thunderer.

As a final instance of the reverberations set up by Meredith's imagery, consider the references to china in The Egoist. Here again a character initially provides the image, but as a comment on another character. Miss Clara Middleton is being introduced into the novel, and is described as "a young lady whom Vernon Whitford could liken to the Mountain Echo, and Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson pronounced to be 'a dainty rogue in porcelain' " (ch.v,p.47). Vernon's simile is briefly considered, then put by to recur later; but the young lady's fiancé takes up Mrs. Mountstuart's mot with some fretfulness, insisting on a discussion of the terms used. Mrs. Mountstuart was introduced as "a lady certain to say the remembered, if not the right, thing" (ch.ii,p.10); and at this point there is an additional comment on her propensity for epigram: "Like all rapid phrasers, Mrs. Mountstuart detested the analysis of her sentence. It had an outline in vagueness, and was flung out to be apprehended, not dissected" (ch.v, p.51). Whatever the accuracy of the "dainty rogue in

porcelain" phrase, it is certainly memorable.

Sir Willoughby "detested but was haunted by the phrase" (ch.x,p.105); "His mind could as little admit an angel in pottery as a rogue in porcelain" (ch.xi,p.130). He worries at the implications, coming to associate the tag with unruly qualities in Clara, so that when she sings with De Craye, "Traitress! he could have bellowed" (ch.xxiv, p.284) : when he does give utterance, it is a cryptic "'Porcelain!'" His own name refers to the Willow Pattern china, and the story is mentioned by Mrs. Mountstuart, discussing her wedding gift with Willoughby:

"Then porcelain it shall not be ... 'I shall have that porcelain back,' says Lady Busshe to me, when we were shaking hands last night : 'I think,' says she, 'it should have been the Willow Pattern.' And she really said : 'he's in for being jilted a second time!'" (ch.xxxiv,p.417)

On another occasion, Sir Willoughby talks of porcelain with De Craye in a factual way, though there are ironic overtones: "Your porcelain was exquisitely chosen, and I profess to be a connoisseur ... I am poor in old Saxony, as you know : I can match the country in Sèvres, and my inheritance of China will not easily be matched in the country" (ch.xxxvi,p.450). A similar kind of reference was deleted from the manuscript : there is a long passage cut from the discussion of the function of the Comic Spirit in the "Prelude", part of which

runs

... we must suppose either that the comic spirit is no landscape painter, or that he is too hot upon his quarry to be heedful of the circumstantial ... Sir Willoughby's hat, gloves, coat, boots, are more or less left to imagination : his China too, & his pictures, & the furniture of his house, the family relics & the heirlooms (MS .2).

This is a variant on the theme of the irrelevance of externals to the study of internal history, but it is interesting that Meredith did contemplate a clue to the special import of china in the novel in the introductory stages.

The references to china and porcelain are legion, whether relating to a physical object, or to the epigram on Clara, or to a symbolic abstraction drawn from either or both of these possibilities. Many of the characters seem almost to be aware of the symbolic resonance of their remarks, particularly once the breakage of Horace De Craye's wedding present, a porcelain vase, comes to represent the impending break of the engagement. De Craye himself remarks "I'm haunted by an idea that porcelain always goes to pieces" (ch.xxv,p.308); and Clara's father, who is occasionally very perceptive - in this instance perhaps unwittingly so - explicitly makes the connection, saying towards the end "But the broken is the broken, sir, whether in porcelain or in human engagements" (ch.xliii,p.541).

The mixture of figurative and literal references to porcelain in The Egoist is a less idiosyncratic use of imagery than some of the other examples I have considered - for instance, James employs the golden bowl as a central image in an essentially similar way - though Meredith's fertility and variety in allusion is distinctive. His exuberance of imagination and delight in language produce an almost metaphysical play on words and concepts which is a dominant feature of his stylistic volatility. Always there is a peculiarly active relation of language to the reality it represents, making demands on the reader for attention and mental agility. Alvan no doubt speaks for his creator : "Shun those who cry out against fiction and have no taste for elegant writing. For to have no sympathy with the playful mind is not to have a mind : it is a test" (The Tragic Comedians, ch.vi,p.62). The playful mind is much in evidence throughout Meredith's writing, and in ways more or less serious disports in the interests of the representation of inner action.

PART THREE

ONE OF OUR CONQUERORS

VIII. THE COMPOSITION OF ONE OF OUR CONQUERORS

1. THE SPECIAL CASE

One of Our Conquerors is rather a special case among Meredith's novels. Various of the author's pronouncements about it indicate that his conception was more ambitious than in other works, and that he quite consciously taunted his readers with his dense and complicated prose. At last, with Diana of the Crossways, he had achieved both popular and critical acclaim; but its successor, One of Our Conquerors, was the product of what Meredith himself might have described as a combination of Nature and Circumstance. The circumstance was a legacy which made him for the time independent of the need for pecuniary success, and encouraged his natural perversity in deciding to administer "a strong dose of the most indigestible material".¹

The dose certainly proved unpalatable if not completely indigestible. The reviewers' attitudes varied from reprimand ("A story it is not, so much as a theme for variations...The writing is all pure virtuosity, in which the thing written about has come to be the mere accident of the whole performance"²) to outrage ("The author's usual

1. C. Photiades, George Meredith His Life, Genius and Teaching, (tr. A. Price, 1913), p.9.
2. Daily News (2 May 1891), 2.

faults of incoherence, prolixity, straining after epigram, seeking after the uncommon, lack of firmness in character-drawing, and allusiveness, are intensified in his latest work...He has a story...but it will not let itself be told... This surely is not the way to write"³). Only a few found more to admire than regret. Lionel Johnson had given himself time to read the novel three or four times before writing his review for the Academy, and in the light of this intimacy with the text announced that "the apparent confusion disappears, the intricacies of design become intelligible, and the whole greatness of design is evident"⁴. His favourable verdict was supported only by the Athenaeum reviewer, and then somewhat resignedly, without the same assertion of 'an ultimate greatness of design': "To say that the book is by Mr. Meredith is to say that it is full to the brim of brilliant things...but...we ask him to allow the stream of his genius to flow a little less turbidly... As he is strong, let him be merciful"⁵. The same journal's retrospect on "English Literature in 1891" declared that it had been a good year for fiction, being raised above the

3. Saturday Review, LXXI (1891) 626.

4. Academy, XXXIX (1891), 555.

5. Athenaeum, no. 3314 (1891), 562.

average by "the appearance in book form of Mr. George Meredith's powerful and tragic novel 'One of Our Conquerors', by Mr. Hardy's contributions [Tess of the D'Urbervilles], the stories of Mr. Kipling, and the ambitious ventures of Lucas Malet and Mrs. Woods [The Wages of Sin and Esther Vanhomrigh respectively]"⁶: high praise for Meredith and Hardy, rendered equivocal by the company in which they are placed.

Meredith's reaction was characteristic: "The Novel has been kicked about by reviewers, as I expected. And clearly there is no further chance of peace between us." He added a comment countering specific criticisms: "What they call digressions, is a presentation of the atmosphere of the present time, of which the story issues!"⁷ Sheer bafflement was no doubt responsible for such an oversight by the critics. Even Johnson, while praising the whole greatness of design, did not elaborate on how the greatness was achieved.

Ultimate judgements aside, it does not require Meredith's own assertion to discern that One of Our Conquerors does present an interpretation of the 'atmosphere of the present time', dealing in particular aspects. There is a much closer engagement with the contemporary world even than in the political discussions of Beauchamp's Career,

6. Athenaeum, no. 3349 (1892), 22.

7. ALS (16th June 1891) - Yale.

though there is hardly a naturalistic confrontation like Gissing's or George Moore's. Issues and attitudes of varying degrees of consequence in the gamut from reflections on the national character to vegetarianism, but all peculiarly pertaining in Meredith's view to the state of English society, are introduced into the novel. More usually, actual comment on events of the time appears in Meredith's poetry - for instance, "France, December 1870" - and his recent work, such as "Jump-to-glory Jane" (1889), dealing with a revivalist, had continued this practice. On this occasion, however, such issues arise directly in his fiction, and the novel depends on a representation of the society in a far-reaching way as well as in its effects on individual members. While he was still in the throes of composition, Meredith had confided to a friend "I am just finishing a novel & am a bit strained - as I have condemned myself both to a broad & a close observation of the modern world in it, - throwing beams both upon its rat-tides & its upper streams"⁸. Possibly, Meredith may have wished to use his close analysis of the story of Victor Radnor, the conqueror of society, as a means to the broader survey of the modern world; or he may have planned to show at close quarters in Victor and his circle the forces at play in the broader social context. The pivot is clearly the parallel of Victor's imperial sway in the world of business with his attempts at social domination, but in the event, the course of the novel is diverted into two virtually discrete channels, which never flow together in the full force that Meredith may be supposed to have

8. Letter of 30th May 1890, Coolidge, p. 9.

planned at the outset, so that the reflections on contemporary society do not add depth to the exploration of the psyches of individuals within it, or vice versa. But flawed and difficult though it is, One of Our Conquerors in both its matter and its manner is a Meredithian manifesto, raising in extreme forms many basic critical problems.

Take, for instance, questions of style. In another response to the barrage of criticism, Meredith made a rare admission. Writing on 5th January 1892, he refers to "the flagellator...dealing with me as a novelist...I can acknowledge that here and there he strikes justly." The acknowledgement of deficiency would in itself be remarkable in an author so sensitive to criticism as Meredith, but the letter continues: "One fancies that a cultivated man might perceive in a writer a turn for literary playfulness, when strong human emotion is not upon him. To find this taken seriously, as an example of my 'style,' is quaint. But we will admit that there is too much of it" (Letters, p.444). As a concession to the strictures of the reviewers, and as a comment on his own style, this is almost unique; though Meredith was never impelled to remedy the excess in subsequent revisions of the novel as he had attempted to meet criticism in revising Richard Feverel. The changes he made in One of Our Conquerors for the Edition de Luxe were trivial, consisting of a handful of substitutions of one word for another, or deletions of the odd phrase.⁹

9. Most of the changes are listed in Bibliography and Various Readings, Memorial Edition, vol. 27, p.248.

How convenient if it could be shown that "a turn for literary playfulness" in Meredith is only evident "when strong human emotion is not upon him"; or that the stylistic discrepancies in One of Our Conquerors relate to the division between the introversion and psychological analysis of Victor's story, and the overblown rhetoric of many of the atmospheric digressions. But such an alignment is not evident: indeed, if the appearance of 'literary playfulness' denotes the absence of 'strong human emotion', one might well ask if there is any such emotion in One of Our Conquerors at all. Working the other way, and disregarding Meredith's own diagnosis, it would hardly be accurate to think of his most mandarin style as resulting simply from a deficiency of human emotion, just because such a preponderance of intellectual agility and verbal dexterity can be discerned. After all, there are ways in which thought for Meredith is experience, even if modification of sensibility is not always evident.

But the problems raised by the variety of Meredith's styles cannot really be considered conceptually: only close engagement with the narrative surface can indicate the range and purpose and iridescence of his virtuosity; and One of Our Conquerors, presenting as it does in a heightened and extreme form many of the stylistic features common to the other novels, provides a particularly taxing exercise in analysis and explication. However, the fact that a large part of the novel exists in two versions gives a basis for discussion which is unique in the canon.

Meredith's commenting in his letter to Jessopp that he felt "a bit strained" may well have been related to the fact that he was sufficiently dissatisfied with the progress

of his work to rewrite the first half completely. The Yale University Library has a draft entitled A Conqueror in Our Time, consisting of chapters i-xvi, with a rejected version of chapter vii, four rejected attempts at beginning chapter xiv, and two at chapter xv. The Library also holds the manuscript of the published version, One of Our Conquerors; though Meredith does not seem to have adopted the title, drawn from his short story, "The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper", until he had reached chapter xv of the revision. Kept with the earlier (A) manuscript, but clearly belonging with the final (B) version, are two rejected drafts of chapter xix; and there are a few other rejected pages surviving.

The conjecture that Meredith worked on both versions simultaneously is inherently unlikely, and demonstrably false, since much of B is clearly modifying what already existed in A.

The survival of the two versions of this novel provides an interesting opportunity for elucidating not only stylistic problems in the work but also Meredith's aims and his methods in writing it. Conjecture as to whether such extended revision was typical is fruitless. Certainly he worked for a long period - from just after the completion of The Egoist in 1878, to 1895 - on The Amazing Marriage, of which drafts of several sections survive, indicating that he altered his whole conception of the novel in the process.¹⁰ Similarly, Joyce Measures

10. Discussed in detail in Judith A. Sage, "The Making of George Meredith's The Amazing Marriage", unpubl. Ph.D. diss., Ohio State Univ., 1967.

has traced his large-scale reworking of Diana of the Crossways to accommodate his change in plan for the ending. But in general his practice seems to have been to work with one draft only: Dr. Measures conveniently reviews what is known of his habits in this respect, describing his custom of leaving a two to three inch margin on the left side of cheap quality $7\frac{1}{2}$ x 9 inch paper, and filling his pages with between twenty-two and twenty-six lines of writing, allowing ample room for interlinear revision, and frequently adding lengthy insertions in the margin.¹¹

Part of the interest of the rewriting of A Conqueror in Our Time derives from the relative mildness of the changes Meredith made compared with the substantial alterations in Diana and The Amazing Marriage. The change of title is significant, especially as it seems to have come at a stage when his revision was getting well into stride. The original title points clearly enough to the two elements of Meredith's avowed "broad & a close observation of the modern world", Victor as conqueror and the contemporary atmosphere. One of Our Conquerors has pretty much the same connotations, though it is more elliptical and perhaps more embracing in its reference, becoming even a little ambiguous, since it could refer to a quality such as pride and not necessarily to a person. In the context of the short story, "The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper", the phrase refers to General Ople as a conqueror of women, and ironically beyond the immediate context, to Lady Camper as a conqueror of men. Some of the implications of the passage in the short story are even

11. "Meredith's Diana of the Crossways: Revisions and Reconsiderations", unpubl. Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Wisconsin, 1966, 9-10.

relevant to One of Our Conquerors. Lady Camper, having deflated General Ople's egoism, is giving him a final lecture: "Slight exaggerations do more harm to truth than reckless violations of it. You would not have cared one bit for a caricature, if you had not nursed the absurd idea of being one of our conquerors" (pp. 184-5). Poor General Ople, bijou residence and all, seems hardly to merit Lady Camper's harsh treatment; but he is undeniably self-centred, and Victor Radnor, the ambitious man who is the more vulnerable to ridicule because his obsession with his goals renders him impervious to all else, is in a sense the case of General Ople carried to an extreme. It is tempting to see Meredith in One of Our Conquerors acting according to his lights and respecting the truth as he sees it by reckless violation and not merely slight exaggeration.

But the change of title does not seem to have been dictated by a fundamental change in the conception of the novel. Fred C. Thomson argues otherwise: "It is as if Meredith began with an impetuous appeal on behalf of the 'natural' union of Victor and Nataly, and then gradually realized the fuller moral and social consequences of such a rebellion to their daughter".¹² This suggestion is undercut at the outset by his assumption that the drafts of chapter xix belong with A Conqueror in Our Time, with the result that he attributes developments which occur in the later version to the earlier stage. Further, he quite disregards explicit and repeated statements in A Conqueror in Our Time of what Victor is planning to achieve by means

12. "Stylistic Revisions of One of Our Conquerors", Yale Univ. Library Gazette, XXXVI (1962), 65.

of Nesta and Lakelands, which suggest somewhat different readings both of One of Our Conquerors and A Conqueror in Our Time from those he proposes. While he mentions hardly any, Thomson maintains that there are many changes of content from A to B; and he also sees a significant obfuscation of technique occurring, an observation he substantiates rather more fully though not reliably. His quest for a major structural and thematic focus for the revision causes him to overlook and to simplify the effects of much of the detail of Meredith's reworking.

From consideration of the two manuscripts, I cannot discern any such drastic reshaping of the narrative as Thomson proposes. Meredith appears to rewrite chapter by chapter, rearranging some incidents for obvious local effects, and altering some details, but these changes do not seem to me to suggest that he "gradually realized the fuller moral and social consequences" of the situation presented, revising so as to develop these consequences more amply.

That One of Our Conquerors shows Meredith proceeding with a firmer conception of his story, and particular emphases in mind, is only to be expected: that it proceeds from a fresh inspiration cannot be demonstrated. For all the change in title, and what that implies, One of Our Conquerors remains, like A Conqueror in Our Time, essentially Victor's story. The ordeal and eventual triumph of Nesta are an integral part of Meredith's original plan for the novel, providing *harmatia* to the fall of her father. Victor as a tragic hero partakes of some of the qualities

and experiences of Othello and Antony and even Lear; but his kinship with Tamburlaine is stronger than these. It is as the over-reacher that he emerges: Meredith denies him fully heroic stature by never adequately demonstrating his nobility and generosity, which, asserted from time to time, are always seen as deriving from arrogance and selfish ambition. The moment of self-knowledge which comes to the Shakespearean heroes is denied to Victor; and ultimately - though it is a moot point whether Meredith intended so - what happens to Victor and Nataly and Nesta is seen as an isolated accident rather than the result of universal laws in operation. It is usual for Meredith to restrain his protagonists even from realizing the enormity of their actions, but the kind of analysis he gives shows the protagonist as almost aware of duplicity, and it is with the psychological state rather than with psychological, and let alone moral development, that the author is mainly concerned.

Nevertheless, what is to be demonstrated from a consideration of Meredith's second and subsequent thoughts, is that he reworks the presentation of mental processes in all the characters, especially the conflicts and yearnings of Victor and Nataly; that he draws attention to his aims and methods by the addition of characteristic inveighings against what he presumes to be the average novel-reader's expectations from fiction; and that he modifies in several directions the sections dealing with the condition of England. The recasting overall seems to be undertaken in the interests of "a broad & a close observation of the modern world": the increase in commentary on social questions extends the breadth, while the intensification of

treatment of inner action gives another aspect of Meredith's world. Stylistically, no general tendency of revision emerges: some changes, as Thomson alleges, do tend rather to confuse than clarify; but by no means all, and most of the revisions seem to be made on other than stylistic grounds in any case. More of the complicating changes appear in the parts of the novel bearing on the national theme, where even in the first version Meredith's style is markedly mandarin.

Both in general and in particulars, a comparison of the two versions is illuminating. Light is cast on Meredith's methods of composition as well as on his motives for the revision; and extra opportunity provided for attempting to describe the iridescence of his narrative.

2. "ACROSS LONDON BRIDGE"

The two opening chapters of the final version, One of Our Conquerors, correspond almost exactly to the first chapter of the earlier A Conqueror in Our Time, the significant alterations occurring at the point where Meredith divided the original long chapter i into two. Although the two versions are practically identical, "Across London Bridge" deserves a close reading before more extensive and profitable comparisons are begun, since this chapter naturally shapes the course of what follows - and is in addition probably the best-known passage of stream-of-consciousness writing in all Meredith's novels, and also one of his most infamously conceited openings.

No doubt there were many earlier attempts at describing Victor's fall than that in the surviving A manuscript, but the highly-wrought style is present in this draft and was not a product of revision from A to B. Meredith is reported to have said on one occasion that he wrote his first chapters last, but the surviving manuscripts of his novels do not bear out this statement. The opening here was clearly written at the outset and not retrospectively. Generally, as might be expected, Meredith's openings are carefully planned and pregnant with intimations of the action to follow. Sometimes he begins with reports on his characters and setting from the vantage of those not actually involved, as with the Lympport tradesmen's talk which opens Evan Harrington, or the diarists' accounts in Diana of the Crossways, or the tales of Dame Gossip; sometimes with an essay on some key topic, as in The Egoist and The Tragic Comedians. He is fond, too, of leading off

with a scene anticipating the main current of action - the schooldays sequence of Lord Ormont and His Aminta, the incidents from the boyhood years of Richard Feverel and Nevil Beauchamp. Rarely, however, does he launch straight into action as in Vittoria; or, as here, set the narrative in motion with a scene which turns out to be heavily portentous yet contemporary with the ensuing action.

In discussions of Meredith a certain notoriety attaches to the incident described in the first chapter of One of Our Conquerors - and with justification. A businessman walking across London Bridge slips and falls; there is a mild altercation with bystanders. In a way, this is all, though the prose is so dense that the actual physical occurrence is not readily comprehended. But no Meredithian would expect an apparently trivial event to lack dimensions of significance, and while the fall can be regarded as in every sense accidental, serving simply as an introduction to the key figure Victor Radnor which happens to provide a recurring motif in the novel, this chapter can be seen to present literally the fall of the overreacher which is the central theme of the book. It turns out to have more than literal significance, however, for the introduction to Victor which is performed in "Across London Bridge" is phrased in terms of his habitual mode of thinking and his appearance to bystanders, there being no set-piece of expository description to establish a visual image of him. There rarely is such a picture of Meredith's characters, indeed - even the lavish eulogies of the heroines tend to be impressionistic. Usually only a few details of physical appearance - such as Diana's dark hair - are given, if any, and in the first chapter of Sandra Belloni

Meredith indicates that for his purposes outward show is not of prime importance: "After thus stating to you the vast pretensions of the ladies of Brookfield, it would be unfair to sketch their portraits. Nothing but comedy bordering on burlesque could issue from the contrast... Outwardly they were not unlike other young ladies with wits alert" (pp. 6-7).

Accordingly what is presented of Victor at the outset is in terms of qualities rather than facts, and there is a continual assessment and judgement of him.

A gentleman, noteworthy for a lively countenance and a waistcoat to match it, crossing London Bridge at noon on a gusty April day, was almost magically detached from his conflict with the gale by some sly strip of slipperiness, abounding in that conduit of the markets, which had more or less adroitly performed the trick upon preceding passengers, and now laid this one flat amid the shuffle of feet, peaceful for the moment as the uncomplaining who have gone to Sabrina beneath the tides (p. 1).

Evaluation begins in the first phrases of the first sentence - 'A gentleman, noteworthy for a lively countenance and a waistcoat to match it' - where the syllepsis immediately adds further grounds for considering Victor exceptional to his initial distinction by breeding, though later on in the chapter, the epithet 'gentleman', when used not by the judicious omniscient voice but by the thoroughly partisan Cockney bystanders, carries a hint of derision. For the opening, however, no such touch is permitted. The ludicrousness in the spectacle of a dandified City gent slipping on a piece of orange peel is carefully excluded from the account of the incident,

which is presented with elevated whimsy, according great status to the 'sly strip of slipperiness'. It is not until considerably later that this agent of destruction is identified, when Victor during the first tour of Lakelands recurs to thoughts of his great scheme (in which the huge country house, of course, is an important element), and momentarily perceives "a meanness in the result". At this stage the whole incident is mentally re-enacted: "he saw the orangey spot on London Bridge, and the sinking Tower and masts and funnels, and the rising of them, on his return to his legs" (ch. ix, p. 94). In the meantime, however, the metaphysical overtones of the magic dexterity of this 'orangey spot' are allowed to operate.

The very construction of the opening sentence, beginning with the gentleman, his attributes and situation, twists with the succession of qualifying clauses to give the peel as subject a mock-heroic emphasis before the turn of syntax brings Victor back as the object of its powers, lying 'peaceful for the moment as the uncomplaining, who have gone to Sabrina beneath the tides'. Victor, prone, is temporarily submerged in the mass crossing the bridge - a situation which could be connected with T. S. Eliot's "a crowd flowed over London Bridge". Indeed it is interesting though idle to observe the similarity of references to London and especially the City in The Waste Land and One of Our Conquerors, as each writer interprets for his own purposes features like the rush on the bridge and the dominance of Jews in business. The purposes, of course, are rather different, though both are pointing to aspects of City life which are somehow ritual and mechanical.

In the midst of this node of associations, however, Victor is allowed to enjoy a tranquillity which Meredith likens to that of death by drowning (with another Eliot-anticipation). The reference to Sabrina, while perhaps incongruously lofty, seems innocent enough, even if the deity usually associated with the Severn is translated briefly to the Thames. But mention of Sabrina picks up motifs and situations which have some applicability to the story that is getting under way, though in the manner characteristic of much of Meredith's figurative language, the analogy suggested with the release by Sabrina of the maiden imprisoned by Comus, offspring of Bacchus (one of whose exploits was to make journeys through the world civilising by means of music and wine - these are qualities of Victor) and Circe (known for her powers with herbs and drugs, and the ability to turn men into swine - and in a way these qualities are attributed to Mrs. Burman) is supported by the context while not developing a complete parallel. Another part of the legend of Sabrina sounds a stronger note of likeness, in that the goddess was the daughter of Lochrine by his concubine Estrildis, suggesting a correspondence with the situation of Victor and Nataly and their daughter Nesta which is intensified by further investigation, since Mrs. Burman can be fitted into the analogy as a counterpart to Lochrine's queen, Gwendolen, who vowed revenge against Estrildis and the girl, gathered an army together, and overthrew her husband.¹

1. Phyllis Bartlett, "The Novels of George Meredith", REL, III (Jan. 1962), 37-8, points out some of the ramifications of the Sabrina simile: "It is playful, certainly, but not idly so".

But as yet the unfortunate gentleman has not been identified, let alone fully characterised, and so the figurative suggestions cannot come into play. Their implications are deeply embedded in the language and in any case operate with what Meredith describes later in the novel as "the fine flavour of analogy" (ch. xviii, p. 189). For the moment, the gentleman is occupied in recovering his outward composure, his assurances of soundness being reported and received: "it appeared an acceptable statement of his condition". This external view of Victor is maintained at the beginning of the next sentence, which lists his actions in collecting himself, stressing his volatility; but the narrative standpoint shifts in the latter part to give Victor's interpretation of his gestures: "he scattered another shower of his nods and smiles around, to signify, that as his good friends would wish, he thoroughly felt his legs and could walk unaided." The automatic assumption of the oratorical phraseology and attitude to his 'good friends' provides a piece of information about the gentleman which is supplemented by his even more patronising behaviour a little later, and his present astounded conjecture "how such a misadventure could have occurred to him of all men." Later, it appears that the mental dialogue, with "his familiar beneath the waistcoat" - this phrase was supplied in a revision of the B manuscript, as a substitution for 'within' (B,2; p. 1) - or some other imagined conversationalist, is a frequent resort of the gentleman, described at one point in the A manuscript as "dramatically self-communeing" (A,175), who always sees himself in relation to an audience, apparently needing the self-definition and sense of superiority he derives from such a placing. Almost always, however, he conceives of others as he chooses, without regarding them

as they are, and this tendency is increasingly seen not only as a symptom but a source of his vulnerability.

After this brief glimpse into Victor's mind, the point of view is shifted back to the detached observer, who, while commenting on Victor's exclamation of "'Oh, confound the fellow!'" (pp. 1-2) and the expressions of "simple frankness...humorously ruffled" on "his outward face" is perhaps rather ready to accept Victor's good humour at just this 'outward face' value - again, the expression has been supplied in revising the B manuscript which originally read "...discomposed him" (B,2). The distinction between Victor's visible expression and his inward thoughts is thus prepared. His concern with preserving a genial countenance, and winning the goodwill of the bystanders, is clear; but the refusal of the crowd to be readily submissive also emerges: "If we ask for nothing for helping gentlemen to stand upright on their legs, and get it, we expect civility into the bargain" (p. 2). The tone adopted is the same straightfaced loftiness which has prevailed from the beginning, and as it is more firmly attributed here to the Cockney bystanders, there is a relenting and admission of an element of overt satire in the orotund verbosity of "Moreover, there are reasons in nature why we choose to give sign of a particular surliness when our wealthy superiors would have us think their condescending grins are cordials."

This inflation of language is even increased in the following paragraph, when Victor frowns on a second glance at his waistcoat - or rather, "The gentleman's eyes were followed on a second hurried downward grimace, the necessitated wrinkles of which could be stretched by malevolence to a semblance of haughty disgust". The

sentence goes on to the crowd's resentment of Victor's assumption of superiority, with the conceit again depending on the disparity between the instinctive and inarticulate reaction of the group, and the highly-wrought language in which it is expressed. Certainly the crowd's self-image is not of any beast so fabulous as "the hoar-headed nineteenth-century billow of democratic ire"; nor would its postulated corporate reminiscence of the Regency Court, through the agency of the newspapers, for all that there turn out to be points of similarity with Victor and his circle, be so finely drawn. The facetiousness is mildly functional as well as decorative: the epithet for the crowd adds nothing in terms of "meaning", though the allusion to the Prince Regent does, in suggesting a possible view of Victor's power and morality which relates to hints already imparted.

So the altercation continues, still seen from the vantage of the crowd, until the bystander's final shaft of repartee, "'And none of your dam punctilio'" (p. 3),² and Victor's moving away. "It was observed in the crowd, that after a few paces he put two fingers on the back of his head" - and then, with this cinematic transition, the narrative is taken over for Victor's reflections:

They might suppose him to be condoling with his recent mishap. But, in fact, a thing had occurred to vex him more than a descent upon the pavement or damage to his waistcoat's whiteness: he abominated the thought of an altercation with a member of the mob; he found that enormous beast comprehensible only when it applauded him...

2. This retort is included in a note among Meredith's miscellaneous papers, perhaps recorded after an actual incident (Portfolio^{of his} headed "Original manuscript notes for a dramatic dialogue, ...etc."). See below, "A Note on Meredith's Notes".

(That only is a revealing insertion in the B manuscript - B,6). Until the threat of the animal-mob baring its fangs, Victor's feelings are presented in an indirect interior monologue, and the image of the masses as a beast to be pacified derives readily from his attitude. But when his emotions are engaged more nearly, there is a move closer to the run of his thoughts which are expressed in more involved figurative language playing on the bestial qualities of the populace. This kind of persistence with an image in depicting a train of thought is a feature of Meredith's notation of the inner life, and has been used in various ways from his earliest fiction.

...and besides he wished it warmly well; [all that was good for it; plentiful dinners, country excursions, stout menagerie bars, music, a dance, and to bed:] he was for patting, stroking, petting the mob, for tossing it sops, never for irritating it to show an eye-tooth, much less for causing it to exhibit the grinders: and in endeavouring to get at the grounds of his dissension with that dirty-fisted fellow, the recollection of the word punctilio shot a throb of pain to the spot where his mishap had rendered him susceptible (p. 3; B,6-7).³

3. In transcribing manuscript readings, I have used square brackets to indicate an insertion in the manuscript, resorting occasionally to angle brackets within the square brackets to represent for instance an interlinear addition to a marginal insertion. Words deleted from the manuscript are indicated in the same way, with the addition of deleted. I have quoted from the manuscripts only where there are changes of interest to be noted; otherwise page references are to the Memorial Edition as elsewhere. Also, to avoid excessive clutter of the text I have not used ibid., and it may be assumed that a quotation not located by a parenthetical page reference occurs on the same page as the one preceding.

The insertion of 'all that was good for it...' presents Victor's benevolence as a counterbalance to his arrogance, and helps prepare for the hurt amazement at the bystander's retort which is the specific reaction following from the more general expression of his notion of how the masses should be treated.

Meredith goes very close to attributing this expression of a state of mind to the character's own consciousness, but because he is presenting more than the character can actually be aware of, his mode here always remains a version of erlebte Rede. Thus "Headache threatened - and to him of all men! But was there ever such a word for drumming on a cranium?" could be a representation of Victor's own expression; but the development of his disturbance which follows is distinctly an authorial imaging of perplexity. "Puzzles are presented to us now and then in the course of our days; and the smaller they are the better for the purpose, it would seem; ...they buzz at our understandings and insist that they break or we, and, in either case, to show a mere foolish idle rattle in hollowness. Or does this happen to us only after a fall?" (pp. 3-4). The man's shocked state is portrayed not only by this figurative representation of the content of his thoughts, which projects a fear that either the worry may prove groundless and he ridiculous for worrying; or else be well-founded, and he destroyed; but in the jerky succession of clauses in which the attempted analysis is described.

The next paragraph focusses all Victor's distress, with Meredith allowing his character to condemn himself in what are effectively his own statements of his horror at

having been involved in an unseemly fracas in public, his notions of his popularity, his attitude to the world at large (the sustaining of the animal imagery in the epithet "common dirty dogs" - p. 4 - despite his asseverations that he does not disdain the masses, unmistakably spotlights Victor's sense of superiority, which has been emerging from the beginning), and his bewilderment at having been labelled with punctilio. Some saving grace is allowed him in his recognition that he is treating very seriously an incident which is both trivial and ridiculous, and the reason for this next occupies his thoughts.

The veering from a fairly rational consideration, phrased in formal vocabulary and syntax - "...a degradation of his physical system, owing to the shock of the fall, must be seen and acknowledged" - to the irritated "very soon he was worrying at punctilio anew" - and then back to the fall and the attendant humiliation - accurately dramatises Victor's perturbation, the formal language in itself acting as a metaphor of his attempting to impose order on his thoughts. Meredith is aided in the process of notation of a mental state by having Victor deliberately engaging in self-analysis at a time when the normal constraints of his consciousness have been shaken, a situation which both structures the narrative and also indicates the degree of irrationality which enters into Victor's musings.

The internal colloquy proceeds, stressing even more Victor's confidence in his capacities and the goodwill of "His godmother Fortune" (p. 5). His habit of mentally addressing an imagined or specific audience is seen again in his sense of "deficiency in explosive repartee" beside Simeon Fenellan who can tame a crowd with his rejoinders;

and in his inability in his fallen state easily to dispel the criticisms of England levelled by Colney Durance:

Colney had to be overcome afresh, and he fled, but managed, with two or three of his bitter phrases, to make a cuttle-fish fight of it, that oppressively shadowed his vanquisher:-

The Daniel Lambert of Cities: the Female Annuitant of Nations:- and such like, wretched stuff, proper to Colney Durance, easily dispersed and out-laughed when we have our vigour (p. 6).

Victor's protective mechanisms are operating, revealing the insecurity beneath his bold front. He claims victory as his more than nominal prerogative, but has no weapon against Colney's attacks besides ridicule by epithet - 'wretched stuff', 'venomous dyspepsia' - and the action of laughing 'when we have our vigour', which requires the support of the plural pronoun, and the implied existence of others of right mind, to be effective.

Mention of Colney Durance introduces this character performing his function as a superego figure for Victor, though his history as a barrister drawn to journalism, and his personality traits other than cynicism, are reserved until later. In the course of the novel, Colney emerges in a special relationship to Victor which is gently intimated in "another friend, from whom he stood constitutionally in dissent" (p. 5) and explicitly stated in an important passage much further on: "For Victor Radnor and Colney Durance were the Optimist and Pessimist of their society...Compose the parts, and you come nigh to the meaning of the Nineteenth Century..." (ch. xix, p. 212). It appears that Meredith meant that Colney should have a broader significance in relation to Victor than the personal one, though the ramifications of their opposition as representing the tenor of the times are not overly developed.

At this stage, however, Colney's fantasy of England fawning to the Jew gives promise of much commentary on the state of the nation, from the same source and in the same allegorical medium. In such diatribes, and especially in his serial story, Durance proposes attitudes which are generally contrary to Victor's glowing visions, though Radnor concurs in "the ghastly vision of the Jew Dominant in London City" (p. 6), which is outlined here in one painfully extended sentence appropriate to Colney's style. This style, used extensively once the serial begins in chapter xix, is distinguished by a kind of whimsical imagination which finds expression in conceits like "Hengist and Horsa, our fishy Saxon originals, in modern garb of liveryman and gaitered squire...assiduously servile, are shown blacking Ben-Israel's boots and grooming the princely stud of the Jew...", where the allusiveness of the language extends the inventiveness in the very idea, serving as well the traditional deflating function of mock heroic in suggesting the exaggeration of Victor's fear.

This allusiveness is an intensification of one of Meredith's own styles, which can be seen in witty operation in a slightly different form in the play which develops from the phrase 'a cuttle-fish fight', used as a synonym for ink and referring to Colney's journalism, a couple of paragraphs earlier. In the middle of the Hengist and Horsa paragraph, a parenthesis gives the not unnecessary reminder that this is all a fabrication, "a picture drawn in literary sepia by Colney", picking up the cuttle-fish phrase, and being itself echoed and transmuted almost immediately in Victor's view of the river, "London's unrivalled mezzotint and the City rhetorician's inexhaustible argument". This little train of imagery leads nowhere

and is not laden with precious cargo of significance; it simply provides a diversion and opportunity for the exercise of the writer's ingenuity. Meredith's hyperactive verbal responsiveness as seen here is one of the main qualities of his style (or of his various styles), and one which makes for peculiar density.

The representation of Colney's fancy is concluded by the privileged comment of the omniscient narrator, who gives a new judgement on Victor - "the most mercurial of patriotic men" - and goes on to attempt to substantiate both the mercurialness and the patriotism. In the next paragraph, Mr. Radnor is depicted regaining his spirits after the despondency arising from Colney's gloomy vision of the condition of the country. The narrator suggests alternative explanations to that ultimately accepted for Victor's recovering mental equilibrium - "the imperious demand of an animated and thirsty frame for novel impressions" (pp. 6-7) is dominant, rather than a particular desire for self-aggrandisement as a national hero, or a sudden delight in the scene of ships on the Thames, though these contribute to the balance. Before relinquishing this authorial vantage, Meredith takes the opportunity of indicating another of Victor's characteristic mental manoeuvres, a propensity for requiring a stimulus of some kind, be it threat or praise, to engage his attention for a given subject - but "a phrase could spring him alive... he was lightly kindled" (p. 7), as has already been seen in his reactions to the charge of punctilio, and happens again later when the mention of Armandine leads to a recollection of the fall (ch. ix, p. 94).

So Victor looks along the river, and "The scene... had a sharp sparkle of attractiveness at the instant" which is developed in a vigorous, imaginative yet precisely-observed, and above all affectionate description, the manner being recognisably "a certain rosily oratorical" (p. 5) Victor has claimed to possess. The liveliness and immediacy of his response to the view along the river are reproduced in expressions of motion and action; and this is really the first occasion on which Victor has given any hint of attractive qualities - though the momentary sympathy is soon dispelled by the meditations which follow.

Victor's recovery from the shock of his fall, and his distraction from concern with himself, are reflected in a free indirect style. The slight disengagement from his consciousness is the correlate of his incapacity completely to express what at this point he is feeling, though the periphrastic language is generated by his sense of self-importance: "Gazeing along that grand highway of the voyageing forest, your London citizen of good estate has reproached his country's poets for not pouring out, succinctly and melodiously, his multitudinous larvae of notions begotten by the scene" (pp. 7-8). He needs to employ the services of poets to hatch his embryonic praises; and while the desire for expression is indicative of his sensitivity to impressions revealed earlier, awareness of this sensitivity is undercut by his assumption that everything can be bought, and the reference to fleshly delights in the form of feasts - gluttony being one of Meredith's favourite images for crassness, and here related to the corruption inherent in worshipping Commerce.

Yet with the intrusion of a thought of the Jew, and the threat of his dominance, Victor rejects "those blazing bellied windows of the aromatic dinners" (p. 8), and further rejects poetry as an expression of national pride, to indulge in an idealised vision of England in action at sea:

...where the strenuous ancestry of a race yet and ever manful at the stress of trial are heard around and aloft whistling us back to the splendid strain of muscle, and spray fringes cloud, and strong heart rides the briny scoops and hillocks, and Death and Man are at grip for the haul.

There we find our nationality, our poetry, no Hebrew competing (pp. 8-9).

This is the same kind of enthusiastic rhetoric as in the description of shipping on the Thames, though the colouring is less purely descriptive: there is the glow of jingoistic simplification in this notion of Old England (given a little more emphasis by the insertion of 'a race yet and ever manful at the stress of trial' in manuscript - B,18). As in the view of the river, however, the tendency to rhapsody is curbed, here by a doubt whether the battle with the deeps would indeed renew the strength of the nation. There is an image of such a revival, in which Victor's attitude emerges though the narrative voice is not his. He is demanding traditional manly virtues - natural qualities, in fact - rejecting "jewels, titles, essences, banquets...slimy spawn of lucre" (p. 9) to thwart the inroads of the Jew (though ironically each component of this spawn means a good deal to Victor himself).

Humpy Hengist and dumpy Horsa, quitting ledger and coronet, might recur to their sea bow-legs and red-stubble chins, might take to their tarpaulins again; they might renew their manhood on the capture of cod; headed by Harald and Hardiknut, they might roll surges to whelm a Dominant Jew clean gone to the fleshpots and effeminacy.

This looks like a prime example of the Meredithian gratuitousness which appears such anathema to readers accustomed to Jamesian notions of total relevance and such perversity to the most patient or critically uncommitted of readers. The sentence is perhaps even more difficult to comprehend than the previous one which introduced Hengist and Horsa into the discussion of British decadence, being esoteric in its terms of reference anyway and highly condensed into the bargain. As well, there are problems of orientation. Just now I said that the attitude represented here is indeed Victor's though the narrative voice deals more in abstractions than does his "rosily oratorical" vein: the language, however, is that of the poet Victor had wished to invoke a little earlier, and Meredith himself comes willingly forward to assume the role as in the earlier "malignant sketch of Colney's" (p. 6).⁴

Such a mode of dealing with processes of thought may be considered by the midtwentieth-century reader to verge on the overfamiliar, as the author's voice drowns that of his character, violating the decorum of erlebte Rede which conventionally represents the content of a character's

4. It is interesting to note in passing that in the second draft of chapter vii A, Victor's thoughts after the first showing of Lakelands include "The picture of Lakelands rose toweringly to protest that it had not been appreciated. It was his poem, which he had read out to his friends & his darlings" (176) - a direct statement of his seeking to express his vision through the medium accessible to him, which is suppressed in re-writing.

thoughts in language consistent with that character. Meredith is concerned not only to represent the content of Victor's mental processes, however, but their characteristics. Having undertaken to express figuratively the mind of his personage, an authorial liberty which hardly requires justification, Meredith is not bound to proceed by any particular formula of interpretation, and so in this instance pursues a complicated series of verbal attributions. Victor wished for a poet to put his sensations into words - the image used is of hatching "his multitudinous larvae of notions" (p. 7) - and the author as it were incubates these notions to figure forth with a high degree of verbal sophistication what is essentially a preconscious area of feeling. Instead of giving the usual erlebte Rede, "this is how the character might have expressed himself...", Meredith provides the kind of utterance which might be expected from the poet whose distillation and articulation of responses the character would recognise as corresponding to his sentiments. This is more than fancifulness and drollery: there is a literal consistency at play, an almost metaphysical wit whose operation very often leads to Meredith's most tortuous and idiosyncratic stylisations. And here, for all the artificiality of the proceeding, hints of Victor's various prejudices, and his energy in any kind of activity, reward the reader who exercises his ingenuity in response to Meredith's. While it is true that the style requires explanation, it does not demand defence.

The narrative does not stay long in the poetic patriotic vein, as Victor's internal dialogue takes up again:

And how of the Law?

But the Law is always, and must ever be,
the Law of the stronger.

- Ay, but brain beats muscle, and what if the Jew should prove to have superior power of brain? A dreaded hypothesis! (p. 9. The effect of repartee was intensified by corrections in manuscript which made these sentences separate paragraphs - B,19).

The plainer style gives way briefly to the fanciful, which is even more circumlocutory than before: the poet, it must be presumed, is now in dialogue with Victor, representing one part of his mind:

Why, then you see the insurgent Saxon seamen (of the names in two syllables with accent on the first), and their Danish captains, and it may be but a remnant of high-nosed old Norman Lord de Warenne beside them, in the criminal box: and presently the Jew smoking a giant regalia cigar on a balcony giving view of a gallows-tree (p. 9).

And so, after this somewhat discomfiting shift, back to Victor's style again for his resolution in balancing the power of the Jew against that of the English race. This is perhaps no more realistic an account of what is passing in Victor's mind than the fancies about Saxon seamen, but there is a more recognisable imitation of his exuberant manner in the exhortation, interpolations, melodramatic 'aha!' and all: "But we will try that: on our side, to back a native pugnacity, is morality, humanity, fraternity - nature's rights, aha! and who withstands them? on his, a troop of mercenaries!"

The movement towards directness of statement is completed in the next paragraph, where Victor is

sufficiently in control to be allowed to draw his own conclusion to his musings: "- And that lands me in Red Republicanism, a hop and a skip from Socialism! said Mr. Radnor, and chuckled ironically at the natural declivity he had come to. Still, there was an idea in it....(sic)". Presumably the irony which Victor recognises relates to the unlikely situation of his espousing Republicanism or Socialism, positions quite incompatible with his leanings which, albeit benevolent, are despotic, and imperialist into the bargain. His mercantile empire is assured, and he is now planning to achieve dominion over his society too, by means of the great house at Lakelands. And although the national theme is barely touched on in this introductory chapter, Victor is tacitly associated with the England he so reverences: indeed, can it be accident that his name, already vibrant with the strains of conquest, is the masculine form of that of the great Queen Empress herself?

Victor's capacity to perceive this irony does not however extend to a realisation of the hypocrisy of his attitudes: the man who hates and fears the power of the Jew has deliberately won for himself the same power, and operates through mercenaries - or at least on the belief that everything has its price - just as he accuses the Jews of doing. But he is not left smug: an attempt to formulate the idea he has discerned "ended in pain to his head near the spot where the haunting word punctilio caught at any excuse for clamouring" (pp. 9-10). And so back to the imperilling of his hold on the great scheme by the charge of petty formality.

The neatness of this conclusion to Victor's stream of thought is not an artificial imposition but is psychologically veracious since what has been presented is not simply a series of free associations but a true flow of consciousness. Meredith contrives to give his readers access to Victor's mind at stages before the character's mental activity has achieved verbal form; and, as William James described the "stream of consciousness", there is a vague shifting area of impressions at the periphery of Victor's attention - a fringe as well as a focus.

Donald Fanger, in discussing Joyce and Meredith, quotes the latter part of Victor's monologue,⁵ and comments "It will be seen from this fragment that the Meredithian monologue is a good deal more logical and conventional in its syntax (if not in vocabulary) than the Joycean: the monologue sounds somehow rehearsed: the earlier is, understandably, the cruder version." The degree of stiffness and artificiality which Fanger sees in Meredith's technique is of course undeniable: nor does Meredith approach the richness and flexibility of Joyce's notations of the inner life. This monologue, however, while relatively cruder than the run of Joyce's writing, is by no means crude.

What must be insisted yet again is that Meredith is not operating in terms of a Jamesian economy. Although he does move into his character's consciousness and present the action largely from Victor's point of view, Meredith

5. Fanger refers to a section of eight paragraphs, beginning "But is the Jew of the usury gold..." (pp. 8-9). His article is "Joyce and Meredith: A Question of Influence and Tradition", MFS, VI (1960), 129.

does not strictly use his character as a narrative filter, and only in a limited way displays James' habit of writing "not as my own impersonal account of the affair in hand, but as my account of somebody's impression of it".⁶ Meredith's emphasis would be on 'my account'; James' on 'somebody's impression'. Moreover James generally makes his observers highly perceptive and articulate, so that the characters are invested with all the author's own capacities for scrupulously discriminating and delineating sensibilities. The contrast of the two authors emerges strikingly from a comparison of "Across London Bridge" with the first chapter of The Golden Bowl.

Amerigo, like Victor, is a conqueror, being introduced as such: "The Prince had always liked his London..." (p. 29), with the pronoun his suggesting the encompassing of the City - and a little later we learn of his triumph over the Ververs. His attitude to empire, however, is that of an observer. "If it was a question of an Imperium, he said to himself, and if one wished, as a Roman, to recover a little the sense of that, the place to do so was on London Bridge, or even, on a fine afternoon in May, at Hyde Park Corner" - advice which Victor has anticipated, but which Amerigo does not himself follow, since "he had strayed, simply enough, into Bond Street" (and if a distinguishing feature were needed, that 'simply enough' is indubitably Jamesian). The situations of the two men are similar, however, since both are presented

6. Preface (1909) to The Golden Bowl (Penguin edn. 1966), p. 7. Subsequent references to The Golden Bowl also are to the Penguin edition.

peripatetic in London, and for Amerigo too there is a spate of "undirected thought" being registered. But there is no need for Amerigo to be projected through a bard imported for the occasion: he is fluent in many tongues (p. 31), and is capable of complex figurative usage, as in the conversation with his wife-to-be which he soon recollects.

"...Such as I am - but you'll see for yourself. Say, however, I am a galantuomo - which I devoutly hope: I'm like a chicken, at best, chopped up and smothered in sauce; cooked down as a crème de volaille, with half the parts left out. Your father's the natural fowl running about the basse-cour. His feathers, movements, his sounds - those are the parts that, with me, are left out."

"Ah, as a matter of course - since you can't eat a chicken alive!"

The Prince had not been annoyed at this, but he had been positive. "Well, I'm eating your father alive - which is the only way to taste him. I want to continue, and as it's when he talks American that he is most alive, so I must also cultivate it, to get my pleasure. He couldn't make one like him so much in any other language" (p. 32).

This may look to be more conventional language than Meredith's - certainly it lacks the syntactic tortuosities and periphrastic orgies which mark Meredith's prose - but it is hardly orthodox usage no matter how refined a sensibility is being presented. Though James' chosen mode is different, it is as stylised and artificial a means of representing his characters' relationship as Meredith's is, even if not so apparently grotesque. But Meredith's style, as I have suggested, is fully equal to its task: and that task is a different one from James'.

James here never pretends to be other than omniscient, giving all the parenthetical remarks which proclaim as much - "as we join him" (p. 30), "our personage", "the occasion of which we thus represent him as catching the echoes from his own thoughts" (p. 34) - though he confines his omniscience to the present and does not give significant nods and winks in the direction of future developments. Furthermore, his omniscience is of the most intimate and searching kind, so that while there is external comment on the character - "A sobriety that might have consorted with failure sat in his handsome face..." (p. 30) - most of the chapter is internalised, giving the effect of soliloquy though in fact the interior monologue is supplemented by authorial analysis. Since character and author speak the same language, and that one of judicial intricacy, there is a unity of tone which differs markedly from Meredith's Protean fluctuations.

Compare James' treatment of a character seemingly at peace with the world, suddenly finding himself in perplexity, with Meredith's more florid and variegated handling of a similar situation in Victor's fall.

He felt therefore, just at present, as if his papers were in order...But what meanwhile marked his crisis, as I have said, was his sense of the immediate two or three hours [before dinner with the Ververs]. He paused on corners, at crossings; there kept rising for him, in waves, that consciousness sharp as to its source while vague as to its end, which I began by speaking of - the consciousness of an appeal to do something or other, before it was too late, for himself. By any friend to whom he might have mentioned it the appeal could have been turned to frank derision. For what, for whom indeed but himself and the high advantages attached, was he about to marry an extraordinarily charming girl, whose 'prospects,' of the solid sort, were as guaranteed

as her amiability? He wasn't to do it, assuredly, all for her. The Prince, as happened, however, was so free to feel and yet not to formulate that there rose before him after a little, definitely, the image of a friend whom he had often found ironic. He withheld the tribute of attention from passing faces only to let his impulse accumulate. Youth and beauty made him scarcely turn, but the image of Mrs. Assingham made him presently stop a hansom. Her youth, her beauty were things more or less of the past, but to find her at home, as he possibly might, would be 'doing' what he still had time for, would put something of a reason into his restlessness and thereby probably soothe it. To recognize the propriety of this particular pilgrimage - she lived far enough off, in long Cadogan Place - was already in fact to work it off a little. A perception of the propriety of formally thanking her, and of timing the act just as he happened to be doing - this, he made out as he went, was obviously all that had been the matter with him. (pp. 40-1).

James supplies the image to describe Amerigo's present point of resolution - his accounts are in order - and then goes on to outline the concomitant unease. Much of the Prince's thought process corresponds to Victor's, as he thinks of a friend and fears derision; but where Victor does not seek to articulate his deference to Colney's superego criticisms, Amerigo specifically defines Mrs. Assingham's place in his scheme of things, recognising his indebtedness - "She had made his marriage" (p. 41) - and the fitness of acknowledging as much at this point.

While James assumes the existence of a preverbal area of consciousness, in phrases like 'the consciousness of an appeal to do something or other, before it was too late, for himself', he does not investigate it. That 'something or other', and all the other nagging somethings

like it, always get articulated in James. In this case, the dawning of Amerigo's awareness is not apocalyptic, though James is always careful to make revelations without ostentation since what is of consequence is the way in which an emotion or a situation finally emerges from the realm of the intangible. As the novel proceeds, the implications of any epiphany become more fraught with significance because of the mere development of the relationships of the four main characters, and so subsequent realisations have increasing resonance. The whole functioning subconscious area Meredith explores, showing the nearlys and might-have-beens is irrelevant to James. Despite the eddyings of his sentences, James' account of the Prince's mental peregrination moves with an evident and relentless pressure: Meredith follows Victor in a more diverse and seemingly desultory way, though there is indeed direction in the writing.

A further comparison which illumines what Meredith is doing is provided by the beginning of Mrs. Dalloway. Virginia Woolf also opens her novel with her character on foot in London. The apparent arbitrariness of the first sentence is gradually explained:

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.

For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning, - fresh as if issued to children on a beach.⁷

7. Mrs. Dalloway (1925; Hogarth Press, eleventh impn. 1963), p. 5. All subsequent references are to this edition.

Virginia Woolf's favourite transitional for makes the move from the objective opening statement into representation of Clarissa Dalloway's thoughts, which proceed in a discernably logical sequence. She will buy the flowers because the maid is busy; the maid is busy since the men are coming to take the doors off their hinges: but the series of thoughts apparently to continue from Rumpelmayer's men with the connective 'And then...' breaks off. The stage direction to be understood is that she steps out onto the street and exclaims at the beautiful morning. Mrs. Dalloway's diction is sprightly and gay: there is a girlish immediacy in her physical responsiveness, and imaginative awareness in her expression of it - 'fresh as if issued to children on a beach'. The freshness of the day connects in her mind with other such mornings, long ago it turns out ("a girl of eighteen as she then was", and we soon learn that she is now "over fifty" - p. 6). There is a half-association because her eruption into the open air at Bourton was through the French windows, "with a little squeak of the hinges" (p. 5), and the chain of free association has already included hinges in connection with Rumpelmayer's men.

The next link derives from her visual recollection of looking out the window, and an anecdote follows:

...Peter Walsh said, "Musing among the vegetables?" - was that it? - "I prefer men to cauliflowers" - was that it? He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out on to the terrace - Peter Walsh. He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which, for his letters were awfully dull; it was his sayings one remembered; his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile, his grumpiness and, when millions of things had utterly vanished - how strange it was! - a few sayings like this about cabbages.

This reminiscence is perfectly accessible to the character's consciousness, and has all the groping vagueness of the process of remembering, caught in the sequence 'vegetables.. cauliflowers...cabbages', where the actual name is as elusive as the recollection which moves with its parenthetical questions and exclamations from the past incident with Peter Walsh to his future reappearance, and present memory of him. Before too much longer we are told that this man is more than an old acquaintance: she might have married him, but felt her "divine vitality" threatened by his thoughtful intensity ("It was the state of the world that interested him...everything had to be shared; everything gone into" - pp. 9-10).

Authorial guidance is never-failing. A new paragraph is taken for an external view of Mrs. Dalloway from an acquaintance passing by, which provides a physical description of her, adding the information that she lives in Westminster. And this provides the next link, back to the protagonist's thoughts.

For having lived in Westminster - how many years now? over twenty, - one feels even in the midst of the traffic, or waking at night, Clarissa was positive, a particular hush, or solemnity; an indescribable pause; a suspense (but that might be her heart, affected, they said, by influenza) before Big Ben strikes. There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air (p. 6).

The leaden circles are to provide a leitmotif through the novel, chiming the hour to the various characters whose paths are to cross Mrs. Dalloway's.

And so she proceeds across Victoria Street and into the park, thrilling to "what she loved; life; London; this moment of June", and thinking that "she, too, was going that very night to kindle and illuminate; to give her party" (p. 7).

All the dartings of Mrs. Dalloway's mind as she walks along gradually accrete information about her - appearance, personality, history. Rather than a self-interrogation as with Victor and the Prince, the process represented is a roving of memory, its route clearly mapped by the author. Virginia Woolf is perhaps ultimately more interested in the broad configurations of pattern in her novel, expressed in the metaphor of the circles of different individual existences rippling, meeting, vanishing, than in the exhaustion of the premises of an initial situation as in The Golden Bowl, or in what is still the more traditional telling of a story in One of Our Conquerors. Nevertheless she has her own means of verbally formalising the particular kind of flow of consciousness she chooses to represent.

But to return to Victor and his restored equilibrium, and to the assertion that Meredith's exhibition of the course of his character's mental activity is as valid in its way as Henry James' or Virginia Woolf's. Meredith's authorial presence may be the least disciplined of the three, but his approach in its own histrionic way is less wanton than it seems, and the opening chapter of One of Our Conquerors does prognosticate the method as well as the matter of the

tale - though in revising he apparently felt that his procedure required elucidation.

3. THE REVISION OF A CONQUEROR IN OUR TIME; CHAPTER i.

Quite early in the piece, Meredith shows his hand by dividing the long chapter i of A Conqueror in Our Time into two, the first retaining the title "Across London Bridge", and the second having a more symbolic heading, "Through the Vague to the Infinitely Little". Both in his revisions of the text, and the additions at the point of division, he proclaims his aims and methods.

To the end of chapter i, Meredith made only slight verbal changes in the course of his revision, but the long paragraph which concludes the chapter is a significant addition. The opening of the novel has been concerned with the introduction of Victor Radnor, not so much in conventional terms of appearance and background, but in terms of his character and attitudes, and this paragraph brings together in another example of Victor's processes of thought, many of the attributes the chapter has been devoted to portraying. He has been engaged in a rambling series of reflections on London, and the English character following the shock of slipping and falling on a piece of orange peel on London Bridge, an injury to which insult has been added by an altercation with a Cockney bystander who has smudged Victor's white waistcoat while helping him to his feet, thus producing an ejaculation of "Oh, confound the fellow!" (pp.1-2), to which the rejoinder "And none of your dam punctilio" (p.3) is eventually made. That "haunting word punctilio" (p.10) rankles when Victor tries to recall an idea which had been on his mind before the whole disturbance, and from this point the A manuscript continued straight on with what is now the second paragraph of

chapter ii: "After his ineffectual catching at the volatile idea, Mr. Radnor found repose in thoughts of his daughter and her dear mother" (p. 11).

The addition opens with an authorial generalisation which is designed to lull, associating Victor's behaviour with a very normal human reaction: "Yet we cannot relinquish an idea that was ours; we are vowed to the pursuit of it" (p. 10). There is no pressure for identifying the reader with "we", nor any particular attribution of the truism to Victor. However, as Victor is followed taking up the pursuit, the unlikelihood of his ever being able to close for the kill is established. His deflection onto Inchling, for instance, has Victor recurring to his own earlier reflections on the increasing power of the Jew, and takes him closer to his lost idea only to resist articulating it. In referring to Inchling's dread of any foreigner, some connection with Victor's notions of national pride is suggested; and later the suspicion adumbrated at this stage is confirmed, the real connection between Radnor's upset after the exchange with the Cockney and his obsession with foreign influences is an emotional identification of a common element in each situation, the fear of a challenge to supremacy, a threat of subjection. Even to define the idea is threatening, because Victor's motives are by no means so altruistic as his hearty vision of sailors battling the surge in the national interest might have suggested. Another hint of his evasiveness is given by the female personification of the idea, which reveals an attitude of marked superiority towards the weaker sex intensified by additions in the manuscript: at first he wrote simply "She was feminine", but qualified this to read "She was very feminine; coming when she willed and flying when

wanted" (B, 22; p.10). With the closing sentence, "Not until nigh upon the close of his history did she return, full-statured [and embraceable,] to Victor Radnor" (B,22; p.10)', there is an abrupt movement away from the presentation of Victor's thoughts in an interior monologue, and even from the narrator as observer and commentator, to a more thoroughly omniscient ominous foreboding of what kind of close the history of Victor Radnor will have, intensified by the insertion of 'and embraceable': Victor's embracing of his Idea involves a far greater fall.

"Across London Bridge" gives relatively little information about Victor in the ordinary way. The division of what was originally one long chapter in A even postpones to the next chapter such mundane details as the fact that he has a daughter and, we assume, a wife - though the reflection of his idiom in "thoughts of his daughter and her dear mother" (p.11) conceals Nataly's de facto status for the moment. This postponement is less in the interests of achieving a shock by the revelation of a piece of information, as Trollope, very much the directing narrator, tries to do with the offhand "At the time of which I am writing she was already engaged to be married" which concludes the first chapter of Can You Forgive Her?¹, than it is a natural delay in the light of the more pressing and less conventional matters dealt with so far. The introduction which has been performed prefigures the mode of action throughout the novel, since Victor's mind is seen at work, in both conscious and unconscious areas, reducing the apparent happening of the chapter, his fall, to an

1. Can You Forgive Her? (1864-5; W.C. edn. 1953), p.10).

external event important for its mental rather than its physical consequences.

The significance of mental events is taken up in the paragraph which opens chapter ii, another addition during revision. As with several other quite lengthy insertions, this paragraph provides a gloss on and an apologia for what the author is doing. Meredith adopts the rhetorical ploy of admitting inadequacy: "The fair dealing with readers demands of us, that a narrative shall not proceed at slower pace than legs of a man in motion; and we are still but little more than midway across London Bridge" (p.10) - and that resigned still was an addition in manuscript (B,23). But the concession is retracted when he shows how "tardy forward movements" are necessary in introducing a character, "if a man's mind is to be taken as a part of him." The scorn of those who are happiest whirled along by a succession of incidents - Meredith uses a favourite image of "the enchanted horse of the Tale, which leaves the man's mind at home while he performs the deeds befitting him" (pp. 10-11) - intensifies to the bitter climax "An ill-fortuned minstrel who has by fateful direction been brought to see with distinctness, that man is not as much comprised in external features as the monkey, will be devoted to the task of the fuller portraiture" (p.11). This sentence is one occasion where a periphrasis is introduced by a manuscript revision, apparently supporting the thesis that the tendency of changes is towards increased complication, since Meredith at first wrote simply "but he who has come to see with distinctness..." (B,24). But it is a slight piece of evidence, and the question can best be dealt with in a broader sample of revision. For the moment,

it is worth noting that the 'ill-fortuned minstrel' and his 'task of the fuller portraiture' engenders irony later when in a scene added in revision, Victor declares his own taste in novels.

"If I read fiction, let it be fiction; airier than hard fact. If I see a ballet, my troop of short skirts must not go stepping like pavement policemen. I can't read dull analytical stuff or 'stylists' when I want action - if I'm to give my mind to a story. I can supply the reflections. I'm English - if Colney's right in saying we always come round to the story with the streak of supernaturalism" (ch. xviii, p.194).

Again there has been an addition in the B manuscript itself, the two sentences which open the quotation (B,417). Partly this is just Meredith being mischievously mocking, especially on "dull analytical stuff or 'stylists'"; partly, too, he is giving Victor a speech very much "in character"; and for good measure throwing in a further jibe at the phlegmatic English. Moreover, a couple of paragraphs on, Victor's philistinism is a little redeemed, when he says "in life we can have quite enough excitement coming out of our thoughts" (p.195), as his creator is intent on showing.

The outburst at the beginning of chapter ii, however, is important not simply as a comment on the course of the novel to date, but also as a polemic in which Meredith casts the gauntlet to the reader: resist and misunderstand his purpose if you dare. And as well as providing a statement both of theme and method, Meredith also provides the key to his revision. There can be no doubt that 'the fuller portraiture' was intended from the outset - chapter i of A Conqueror in Our Time is certainly not overmindful of 'external features' - but I suspect that Meredith's

dissatisfaction with his draft of sixteen chapters arose from an awareness that he could intensify his psychic pictures, and in so doing better realise the form of his novel. It is tempting even to read the lament of the 'ill-fortuned minstrel' as the author's bewailing of this very realisation because of the effort involved in acting on it.

There are later stages in the novel where Meredith again draws attention to his technique, justifying and explaining it. Perhaps the most notable instance occurs at the beginning of chapter xxvi, "In Which We See A Conventional Gentleman Endeavouring To Examine A Spectre Of Himself", where Dudley Sowerby, in turmoil from Nataly's revelation that she is not married to Victor, rides back to Cronidge. The first three paragraphs cost Meredith much thought in composition, the manuscript being heavily revised; the fourth paragraph came late in the piece, being inserted in the margin:

The internal state of a gentleman who detested intangible metaphor as heartily as the vulgarest of our gobble-gobbets hate it, metaphor only can describe; & for the reason, that he had in him just something more than is within the compass of the language of the meat-markets. He had - & had it not the less because he fain would not have had - sufficient stuff to furnish [forth] a soul's epic encounter between Nature and Circumstance: and metaphor, simile, analysis, all the fraternity of old lamps for lighting our abysmal darkness, have to be rubbed, that we may get a glimpse of the fray (B,623; p.314).²

This capacity to express the intangible and subjective through figurative language is a dominant feature of Meredith's style: given the contorted elaboration of much of his writing, however, it is consoling to have his own assurance that what can be deduced was probably intended.

2. Our in the phrase 'the vulgarest of our gobble-gobbets' was apparently added in proof.

He gives another interpretative account of the way he means his figurative language to operate near the beginning of chapter xviii. These clues for the reader were given in the first version, though as the outcome of a number of attempts to get the chapter (xv, and untitled in A) under way; and underwent only minor alterations in revision, so that the relevant paragraph finally reads

Now, if you are not for insisting that a magnificent simile shall be composed of exactly the like notes in another octave, you will catch the fine flavour of analogy and be wafted in a beat of wings across the scene of the application of the Rev. Septimus Barmby to Mr. Victor Radnor, that he might enter the house in the guise of suitor for the hand of Nesta Victoria. It is the excelling merit of similes and metaphors to spring us to vault over gaps and thickets and dreary places. But, as with the visits of Immortals, we must be ready to receive them. Beware, moreover, of examining them too scrupulously: they have a trick of wearing to vapour if closely scanned. Let it be gratefully for their aid (p.189).

This may look like special pleading but is in fact a very accurate explanation of the way Meredith employs highly allusive language as expedient, without regard for the comfort of any reader or the convenience of a critic constructing neat image-patterns. And it is characteristic that he should provide such directions for reading, especially in the density of One of Our Conquerors.

With his readers now thoroughly instructed in what to expect, Meredith rejoins Victor Radnor proceeding across London Bridge, and resumes the account of what is happening in Victor's mind. The information imparted, while intimate, is now of a somewhat more conventional kind than in chapter i, beginning with a markedly more homely concern

than any associated with Victor earlier in the thought of 'his daughter and her dear mother' (not, as one would expect, 'his wife and daughter', and this for reasons of accuracy of fact as well as verisimilitude of utterance). Generally from here to the end of chapter ii, A and B versions continue parallel, but the small adjustments Meredith makes in rewriting have some significance, and to substantiate my contention that the motive for revision was the desire to strengthen the presentation of inner action, I propose to examine the alterations in the passage beginning with the third paragraph of chapter ii.

This paragraph continues the flow of Victor's thoughts: he has just demonstrated his physical disdainfulness by exposing his chest to the April winds with the arrogant and ironic reflection that "He was that man in fifty thousand who despises hostile elements and goes unpunished" (p.12). He now goes on to assert that as well as being favoured he is also happy. There is the same kind of free indirect representation, with metaphorical imaging of Victor's state of mind though the metaphors are not of his providing, as in the first chapter. The first sentence, opening with a double meaning of "naturally" as both "of course" and also "by nature", survives almost unchanged in revision:

Naturally he was among the happiest of human creatures; he willed it so, with the consent of circumstance; a boisterous consent, as when votes are reckoned for a favourite candidate; excepting a

Naturally he was among the happiest of human creatures; he willed it so, with consent of circumstances; a boisterous consent, as when votes are reckoned for a favourite candidate: excepting [on the

small band of black dissentients in a corner, a minute body, devilish in their irreconcilability, who maintain their struggle to provoke discord, with a cry disclosing the one error of his youth, the sole one chargeable upon his antecedents (A,17).

part of] a small band of black dissentients in a corner, a minute opaque body, devilish in their irreconcilability,³ who maintain their struggle to provoke discord, with a cry disclosing the one error of his youth, the sole bad step chargeable upon his antecedents (B,26; p.12).

Such adjustments as are made are not of particular consequence: B's "with consent of circumstances" implies a general conspiracy of Fate on Victor's behalf more than 'with the consent of circumstance' in A which suggests a particular occasion only; the insertion of 'on the part of' (an afterthought in B) clarifies the sense more rapidly; 'opaque' adds the implication not present in A that the motives of the party of discord in Victor's mental parliament are beyond his comprehension; 'the sole bad step' qualifies a little further the nature of 'the one error of his youth' than does A's 'the sole one' (which in any case lacks euphony because of the repetition of 'one'). And at this stage it is Victor's attitude to his action rather than the action itself which is relevant. For the most part, however, the revisions of this sentence are merely the slight tidying of expression which motivate any revision.

With the next sentence, the recasting becomes more marked. A reads:

But what!-shall he not have them turned out? He does; and he leaves it to his buoying [constituents/bullies? deleted] to deal with these lies as they deserve; and he tells a friend that it was not exactly an error, but an erratic step: a false, necessitated by an

3. 'Irreconcilability' is Meredith's spelling in manuscript: the first and subsequent editions prefer 'irreconcilability'.

ignorant step preceding it; having Youth to plead, in the first instance; and O how deeply truly! Love, in the next. And he tells himself that, judged by the Powers (to them only can he expose the whole skeleton-cupboard of the case), judged by those clear-sighted Powers, he is exonerated.

To be exonerated by those awful Powers, is to be complimented.

As to that, there is no doubt: Whom they acquit they approve.

[Try it within yourself: approving, they right you to yourself: they promise you to justify you to the world: they are your fortified <citadel and your/word deleted> bastion. <an inn. of? deleted> they are the fourth of blessedness which sustain you before a world that wonders how you stand.]

Compare their verdict with [that of deleted] a purblind clumsy world's, which casts the stone indiscriminatingly, profoundly unintelligent of distinctions.

These people, well or ill meaning, will not see the distinction:- the purity behind the spot; brighter because of the spot. And the spot itself - what is it? a thing of Convention, not of Nature. We could plead it in proof of an adherence to Nature's laws. We affirm that, far from a defacement, that spot is an illumination and a stamp of nobility. Brand with it if you can the heavenliest of the souls on earth!- she comes forth all the more radiant: [She, were he culpable, would with her saving grace absolve her persecuted but unruffled mate: ~~and~~ who <in deleted> calling her his own could stand in second rank among the blissful?]

To this conclusion Mr. Radnor had led his musings on his destiny in life and his share of happiness many times; usually, as at present, outside the locked chamber of his bosom, where he kept the Powers imprisoned to yield him [subservient and] agreeable responses.

He could rationally say (that deleted) he was made for happiness: ... (A, 17-19).

The recasting in B presents Victor's mental colloquy more closely: "But do we listen to them? Shall we not have them turned out?" This initial modification is a change from a third-person construction, which implies an exclamation from an outsider rather than Victor's reaction to his own image, to the plural first person, the same incorporative "we" noted earlier as a feature of Victor's attitude. The metaphor of the dissentient voices is then concluded. "He gives the sign for it," replacing the simple "He does", is indicative of a man accustomed to giving orders; and "he leaves his buoying constituents to outroar them", rather than '...to deal with these lies as they deserve', supports the same reading by according less concern to discordant circumstances, which can be shouted down and do not require any tactical consideration. In passing, it is interesting to note the appropriateness of the figure used to represent Victor's internal debate, that of the parliamentary candidate heckled during his address, in view of his political ambitions which assume such significance in the course of the novel. Though the image is deployed by the narrator, and is not a product of the character's consciousness, it does have connotations which almost suggest it has emerged from Victor's subconscious.

Once the metaphor is left behind, the revision gives an expanded and more detailed account of Victor's internal diatribe of self-justification.

...and he tells a friend that it was not, as one may say, an error, although an erratic step: but let us explain [to our bosom's friend;† it was] a step quite unregretted, [a step deleted] gloried in; [a step] deliberately marked, to be done again, were the time renewed: it was a step necessitated (emphatically) by a false preceding step; and having

4. The manuscript reading is as here, 'bosom's friend', though printed versions have 'bosom friend'.

Youth to plead for it, in the first instance, youth and ignorance; and secondly, and O how deeply truly! Love. Deep true Love, proved by years, is the advocate (B, 26-7; p.12).

The increase in verbiage derives mainly from the adoption of the diction of counsel for the defence, 'not, as one may say' replacing 'not exactly' and so on. The shift from the rhetoric of the political debater is a slight one, but significant in the defensiveness betrayed in Victor. Further, there is a noteworthy addition to the process of self-justification - and self-conviction? - in the assertion that this unspecified 'erratic step' would be taken again in similar circumstances. The relevant action becomes 'a false preceding step' in B, rather than A's 'a false, necessitated by an ignorant step preceding it' - a change of emphasis and shifting of blame which is not negligible. The tone of pleading is inflated in B, with a more formal rhetoric being used: 'in the first instance,...; and secondly,.....'

A fresh sentence quietly explodes Victor's indulgent attempt at exculpation:

He tells himself at the same time, after lending ear to the advocate's exordium and a favourite sentence, that, judged by the Powers (to them only can he expose the whole skeleton-cupboard of the case), judged by those clear-sighted Powers, he is exonerated (B,27; pp. 12-13).

The phrase added to A, 'after lending ear to the advocate's exordium and a favourite sentence', as well as naming the mode that has been adopted, confirms a suspicion aroused by the practised appeal in the preceding paragraph: this is a confession which has been made before. Later, there is a further confirmation: "This was another favourite sentence

of Love's grand oration for the defence" (B,28; p. 13); and these clues together provide the evidence presented more directly - and by blatant, not sly, authorial statement - in the earlier version: "To this conclusion Mr. Radnor had led his musings on his destiny in life and his share of happiness many times" (A,19).

B now has a more extended chant attempting by logic and rhetoric to prove that Fate, or the Powers, smiles on Victor - an absurd aim, to predict the irrational by rational means, which in itself reveals the irrationality of Victor's proceeding.

To be exonerated by those awful Powers, is to be approved.

As to that, [there is] no doubt: whom they, [all-seeing,] discerning as they do, acquit they justify.

Whom they justify, they compliment.

They, seeing all the facts, are not unintelligent of distinctions, as the world is (B,27; p. 13).

The adjustments from A are slight but telling: B ranks 'approved', 'justified', 'compliment', as the results of the judgement of Fate, against A's 'complimented' and 'approve'. This means of indicating Victor's doubt and unease is both more subtle and more effective than the reinforcement given in A by the paragraph beginning "Try it within yourself..."

Just as B is angled towards a greater awareness of the world's reaction, so it reveals a greater susceptibility to the sniggerings of the world than is admitted in A, where

there is a frontal attack on the verdict of 'a purblind clumsy world'. B has the parenthetical remark that the Powers 'are not unintelligent of distinctions, as the world is'; but at the end of the following paragraph recurs to the point: "Our world has many ways for signifying its displeasure, but it cannot brand an angel" (B,28; p.13).

B stresses the rationalisation that the 'error' is 'in proof of an adherence to Nature's laws' rather than 'a thing of Convention'. There is a similar use of rhetorical appeal to A's "And the spot itself - what is it? a thing of Convention, not of Nature" (A,18); but the revision makes this appeal more emphatic and more practised: "What, [wd. deleted] to them, is the spot of the error? - admitting [it] as an error." (B,27, p.13). And of course, Victor is making no such admission: his routine argument continues through the figuring of Nataly as an angel to present the romantic vision engendered by 'Love's grand oration for the defence': "So seductive was it to the Powers who sat in judgement on the case, that they all, when the sentence came, turned eyes upon the angel, and they smiled." (B,28, p.13). The pun on sentence is probably accidental: the obvious reference is to the 'favourite sentence' which has concluded the previous paragraph ("Our world...cannot brand an angel"), but since the Powers are sitting in judgement, there is also a suggestion of the sentence they must pass. Nataly's acquittal is sealed in the one-sentence paragraph which follows: "They do not smile on the condemnable"; and Victor's basic self-interest further revealed: "She, then, were he rebuked, would have strength to uplift him, And who, calling her his own, could be placed in second rank among

the blissful!" The use of conditional constructions is the cue that the address for the defence has ended, and its results, all relating to Victor not Nataly, assessed.

Meredith adds another conditional to move the narrative standpoint a little further still from Victor. We continue to have Victor's state of consciousness represented as it were at first-hand, but though the metaphor of trial is sustained, it is now a vehicle being used to convey a tenor which is considerably closer to conscious articulation by Victor himself. The device makes this exposure of his self-satisfaction the more damning: "Mr. Radnor could rationally say that he was made for happiness; he flew to it, he breathed, dispensed it. How conceive the clear-sighted celestial Powers as opposing his claim to that estate?" And so the parallel with A is resumed.

This passage reveals Meredith intensifying what was already an analysis in character, deepening and enriching the presentation through language. My contention is that the general pattern of revision in One of Our Conquerors confirms the reading of the kind of concern Meredith evinces in this passage, a concern to intensify his presentation of action in the novel - which is largely inner action, in any case - filtered through the consciousness of one of the characters involved.

Chapter ii provides a further instance of the tendency of the revisions, in the passage where Victor finds himself so unnerved that he hesitates to cross the road. With his proclamation "He had a secret for them",

the narrative has come quite close to Victor's conscious thoughts: he reflects how not once in crossing the bridge had he concerned himself with this project. "It seemed to have been knocked clean out of it - punctilioed out, Fenellan might say" (p. 14) - again, there is the appeal to a friend's phrasing for authority, as occurs in the next paragraph too, where the fanciful description of "the feeling of a thought" as "a rotifer astir in the curative compartment of a homoeopathic globule" is attributed to Dr. Peter Yatt. The orotund phraseology reflects 'a playful fancy' which Victor is equating with his own admission "that he perhaps might think he felt" a bruise on his head: he cannot admit that he does feel a bruise, because this would be to concede that such an 'infinitely little' event as slipping in the street can affect more than physical equilibrium.

As Victor heads towards a haberdasher to repair at least the external damage he has suffered, Meredith removes the narrative point of view to a vantage providing a somewhat distanced look at his protagonist, who is seen standing gazing at the statue of King William IV. Then, with another series of conditional constructions, an important confirmation of the view of Victor so far given is provided.

A trifle more impressible, he might have imagined the smoky figure and magnum of pursiness barring the City against him. He could have laughed aloud at the hypocrisy behind his quiet look of provincial wonderment at London's sculptor's art; and he was partly tickled as well by the singular fit of timidity enchaining him (p. 15).

This exploitation of grammatical resources serves Meredith well. '...he might have imagined' contrives to suggest that the fear Victor manifested earlier is indeed well-founded if only he could see it, since the City is in a way barred against him; and also indicates another limitation to the impressionableness already attributed to Radnor. The next clause looks as if it depends on "A trifle more....": an extra dimension of receptivity would enable Victor to be more critical of himself; though that 'He could have' can as well be read to mean Victor was capable of admitting part of his hypocrisy, an interpretation which makes better sense of what follows, 'he was partly tickled as well....', which completes the movement from conjectural to positive statement. Now A reads

...he was unable to induce his legs to take advantage of the gaps; he listened to a warning that he would be down again if he tried it, among those wheels, & all his nerves protested against the danger of an exposure to the horrid crunch, pitiless as tiger's teeth: and indeed, once down, or once out of the right line, [you might as well be among lions & jackals;] the forces of the world will have you in their mandibles; you [are granted/ have deleted] an instant to see what a surface thing our civilization is, and the cart completes the mischief the cab commenced, leaving you to make the worst possible present to your family, in the form of [a deleted] (sic) Mr. Radnor beheld the object & shuddered.

"A pretty scud overhead you're observing!" said a voice at his ear. His arm was taken; he looked on his friend Fenellan, & straightened immediately [to cross the road with him,] dismissing all nervousness, & asking between a cab & a handbarrow, "Anything doing in the City?" for Mr. Fenellan's proper station was westward. (A,22).

B begins by substituting "he could not induce his legs" (B,32; p.15) for 'he was unable...', a slight emphasis on his inability being thrown on Victor's volition. Then, after the warning, a simile is added to describe his nervous paralysis: "his nerves clutched him, like a troop of household women" - another occasion on which the figurative language picks up an element in the character's consciousness and enriches the representation of it, since the basis of Victor's jitters is indeed his various 'household women'. Their aim is "to keep him from the hazard of an exposure...", 'hazard' here suggesting a situation more open to chance and hence relating to Victor as gambler than does A's 'danger'. "...we may say truly, that once down, or once out of the rutted line, you are food for lions & jackals": again, adjustments are slight, but Meredith's purpose may be conjectured. (There has been a slight change, presumably in proof, since printed versions read 'lion and jackal'.) He throws in one of Victor's incorporative oratorical phrases, 'we may say truly', instead of A's 'indeed', giving the cue earlier than 'you are food for lions & jackals' (which is more threatening in itself than A's 'you might as well be among lions & jackals') that this statement is being made from Victor's point of view. The substitution of 'rutted' for 'right' could be taken as a small example of Meredith's choosing the less rather than the more familiar word; but the two are not synonymous, 'rutted' suggesting the commonly trodden, but not necessarily correct, path, prime among Victor's defences being that his course is in fact the right and natural, not the conventional one. What Meredith seems to be doing here, is bringing his protagonist to another point at which he might face up to the quality of his vulnerability to marauding society, but

where he again turns away: "An idea was there too; but it would not accept pursuit". The passive construction again has Victor resisting the assumption of blame. The evasion is presented more succinctly in B, the expansion in A on 'what a surface thing our civilization is', and the reference to a present to the family, being deleted, not, I suspect, so much for reasons of economy as to keep the hideous fate unexpressed in Victor's mind - the breaking off at 'in the form of....' and then the statement that 'Mr. Radnor beheld the object & shuddered' are more specific indications of Victor's awareness.

The changes in the account of the meeting with Fenellan appear to be directed towards giving a more precise description of Victor's mental processes in recognising his friend and gaining confidence from his presence. Thus the succession of co-ordinate clauses - "Mr. Radnor affably replied to a stranger; and gazing on the face of his friend Fenellan, knew the voice, and laughed: 'You?' He straightened his back immediately to cross the road, ..." - traces out Victor's reaction step by step.

With this stimulus to provoke him out of introversion, Victor's spirits rise rapidly. He finds a rational explanation for his fall in weakness through lack of food; and proceeds on to the haberdasher to remedy the deficiencies of his waistcoat. Even tiny changes indicate the sharpened presentation of the character of Victor. In the last sentence of chapter i in A, and chapter ii in B, there is what looks to be simply stylistic embellishment. Victor is pleased to have been complimented by the shop-keeper on being the first to ask for white waistcoats that

season, and A comments "for the smallest of things was pleasureable to this brightly-constituted gentleman" (A,24). B glosses 'things' as "our gratifications in life", (B,35; p.16), adding a turn to A's 'pleasureable' in respect of Victor, and introducing a different dimension to 'our', which here necessarily includes reader and author in the imputation of susceptibility to praise on the most trivial occasion - the first time in One of Our Conquerors that the tactic, a favourite in earlier novels, has been employed despite the succession of first person plural pronouns. Even though the reader's involvement is suggested in the "Our" of the title, the sense of participation in fault which Meredith develops in The Egoist, for instance, is not marked in One of Our Conquerors.

4. THE REVISION OF A CONQUEROR IN OUR TIME: CHAPTER ii

That Meredith sustains his purpose of presenting 'the fuller portraiture' is seen on further examination of the two versions. In revising chapter ii of A Conqueror in Our Time (which becomes chapters ii and iii in the novel as published), he makes more substantial changes than had occurred in his reworking of chapter i, though again the two manuscripts run fairly parallel.

There is a slight rearrangement of material and alteration of detail in B, beginning with mention of Colney, from whom the secret of Lakelands has been kept, in the conversation between Victor and Fenellan. The comment is added in B that "He has been foretelling an eruption of an edifice" (B,44; p.21), a touch which adds weight to the portrayal of Durance as a commentator of authority: not only has Victor's fear of his opinion been indicated, but the quality of his perception glimpsed in the remark Fenellan quotes, which implies intuition of Victor's project in the metaphor he chooses. It is very typical of Meredith to allow his characters, especially those with a commentating function, access to such a figurative lingua franca, and this habit is really a variant on the kind of representation of thoughts through a metaphor almost available to the character which he uses in "Across London Bridge" when Victor's mind is imaged as a parliamentary and legal debate. Further testimony to Colney's authority is given in Fenellan's citing his remark on Britain's "'individualism[us]'" being another name for selfishness" (B,47; p.22); an addition in B which primarily serves as an element in the presentation of the themes of national pride

and interest which though intimated in A are more fully developed in the later version.

After the exchange on national defence, B goes straight on to Victor's invitation to Fenellan to go to Lakelands on the morrow, and his catalogue of its attractions, which is less detailed than in A, particulars having been fined away to give greater significance from the selection. Meredith is able to leave out what is not necessary for his characterisation of Victor - after all, the existence of Lakelands in the novel is as a projection and instrument of his ambitions - and present what he does find necessary in a more dramatic fashion. For once he is relatively merciful in providing a hint of how to take Victor's utterances, since the reader, like Fenellan, must gauge "his friend's character by the light of his remarks and in opposition to them, after the critical fashion of intimates who know as well as hear" (p.23).

The various kinds of defensiveness sensed in Victor's account of Lakelands in One of Our Conquerors - "it's a castle with a drawbridge: no exchangeing of visits, as we did at Craye Farm and at Creckholt; we are there for country air; we don't court neighbours at all - perhaps the elect; it will depend on Nataly's wishes" (pp. 22-3) - become positive mendaciousness by comparison with references in the earlier version to experiences at Craye Farm and Creckholt. This draft is both simpler and more direct in Victor's assertions of the independence from society in general and Mrs. Burman in particular that he proposes to achieve by means of Lakelands: which is not to

suggest that B is vague on the point. Rather, the later version conveys a more complex sense of what is involved in this urge for self-aggrandisement, for example in such substitutions as B's "I have made my stand at Lakelands, and there's my flag till it's hauled down over Victor Radnor" (p.24) for A's "[now] I make a [final] stand...For the term of my natural life" (A,33), where the romantic bravado in the later version beyond the neutrality of a cliché like 'For the term of my natural life' suggests something of the quality of Victor's exploit. He is not, after all, a man to resort to cliché; and besides the freshness and exuberance of his claim, there is captured his concern with what his twentieth-century counterpart would unhesitatingly refer to as his image. He speaks of himself in the third person, in terms which by their absurdly heroic nature imply something of the unreality of the campaign he is planning (unreal because the grounds of dispute are in every way of his own making) and his confidence of victory.

I have dwelt on this small alteration as an instance of the kind of attention to details of language which is so apparent in Meredith's revision. This substitution retains the premonitory effect of 'For the term of my natural life' while shedding its obviousness, and then adds telling individuality.

It is not always necessary to read "by the light of his remarks and in opposition to them", however. After the opening of the second bottle of Old Veuve when talk turns to Mrs. Burman, with Fenellan reporting that she hints at a blow to Victor, Radnor's comments in A are expanded in B by a long self-justificatory speech incorporating a similar

briefly passage concerning his relationship with this lady which occurs at a later stage of the chapter in A. This particular revision provides an instance to set against Thomson's charge that Meredith becomes more secretive in the process of making alterations. In the first place, A does not reveal the nature of the bond between Mr. Radnor and Mrs. Burman until later, in the meeting of Simeon Fenellan with Carling the lawyer in chapter iv A, where the indications given are less direct anyway, and the delay results in bafflement for the reader. Secondly, the revision is really a matter less of what Meredith does or does not say, but of how he says it; and in this case the rearrangement and rewriting in B makes the presentation of Victor through his typical reactions and processes of thought more convincing - and besides, A's awkward moustache-twirling speech is well lost:

"Now to business! [- I have my designs about Lakelands. It shall serve me! - Ah, well, well, in certain situations scheme one must - & as long as it's honest! You never knew me dishonest, old chum? - except in that...(sic) that - but let the woman be. If I profaned the name of love, Lord help me! I've had my punishment. So no more of it.]
You dine with us tonight (A,49).

Victor's diction in the later version is also broken, clauses falling apart under the pressure of his emotion, betraying a greater disturbance than is apparent in the earlier draft:

"For the sake of my sanity, it was! to preserve my...but any word makes nonsense of it. Could - I must ask you - could any sane man - you were abroad in those days, horrible days! and never met her: I say, could you consent to be tied. - I admit the vow, ceremony, so forth - tied to - I was barely twenty-one: I put it to you, Fenellan (B,69; p.32).

The two versions resume a closer parallel with Victor using the argument that the true sin would have been if he and Nataly had met and not recognised each other, followed by his bragging "we can drink and do business" (p.33), to which Fenellan gives the reply "It's a pleasant way of instructing men to submit to their conqueror", a gracenote rather than a leitmotif. After the boast, there is a page or so of deflation of Victor added in the B manuscript:

Mr. Radnor added hints of advice to a frail humanity: he was indulgent, the giant spoke in good fellowship. It would have been to have strained his meaning, for purposes of sarcasm upon him, if one had taken him to boast of [a personal/an deleted] exemption from our common weakness. (B,72; p.33).

This addition, apart from being directly critical of Victor, serves to keep us sensitive to the quality of his "witless envy" when Simeon tells him that Dartrey Fenellan's wife has died. Already in A Meredith employs a series of shifts of point-of-view to represent the leap of hope and mixture of emotions in Victor, and the paragraph remains virtually unaltered in B. It opens with straight description: "Mr. Radnor stood gazing. He asked for the name of the place of the burial. He heard without seizing it" (p.34). Then a metaphor presents the surge of feeling, with the ghost image attaching to a cluster of similar ones associated with Mrs. Burman: "A simulacrum spectre-spark of hopefulness shot up in his imagination, glowed and quivered, darkening at the utterance of the Dutch syllables, leaving a tinge of witless envy" (p.34. B,73 reads 'glowed and quavered': 'quivered' is presumably a compositor's error). The movement inward is completed with a direct transcript of Victor's conscious thoughts: "Dartrey

Fenellan had buried the wife whose behaviour vexed and dishonoured him: and it was in Africa! One would have to go to Africa to be free of the galling. But Dartrey had gone, and he was free!" And abruptly Meredith takes the narrative right away from any direct reference to Victor, into a realm of generalisation which nonetheless reflects on Victor's situation but softens the judgement on him by the attribution of similar feelings to all men. Most importantly, the generalisation indicates what is happening below the level of Victor's conscious thought.

- The strange faint freaks of our sensations when struck to leap and throw off their load after a long affliction, play these disorderly pranks on the brain; and they are faint, but they come in numbers, they are recurring, always in ambush. We do not speak of them: we have not words to stamp the indefinite things; generally we should leave them unspoken if we had the words; we know them as out of reason: they haunt us, pluck at us, fret us, nevertheless.

A gloss on 'the indefinite things' is provided in B, where two paragraphs on Dartrey are added, the first clearly indicating the tendency of Victor's thoughts, the second continuing this and also providing more comment on Dartrey himself:

Dartrey free, he was relieved of the murderous drama incessantly in the mind of shackled men.

It seemed like one of the miracles of a divine intervention, that Dartrey should be free, suddenly free; and free while still a youngish man. He was in himself a wonderful fellow, the pick of his country for vigour, gallantry, trustiness, high-mindedness; his heavenly good fortune decked him as a prodigy.

Yet another kind of alteration undertaken in revision is indicated in the attention given to the character of Dartrey Fenellan, where successive versions have expanded what was originally said of him. Again,

this is very much the kind of touch that might be expected in rewriting, and certainly not evidence for any major new direction in the novel. A character who is to assume considerable importance later needs to be more fully sketched in now, in anticipation. Dartrey is first mentioned in A in a marginal insert which adds Simeon's remark that his brother had lessons in the rudiments of boxing from Skepsey, who vouchsafes a tribute to Captain Dartrey's speed and cleverness (A,40). In B, this is incorporated in the main text; and a further marginal note continues the conversation with Simeon telling Skepsey that Dartrey has left the army; and the clerk praising his idol further for his ability at fencing (B,60; p.28).

On later occasions, information concerning Dartrey is also apparently an afterthought: for instance, at the end of chapter vi of One of Our Conquerors, after Victor has told Nataly and Nesta of the new country house, a mention of Dartrey which is not in the A manuscript is incorporated, and Victor evades telling Nataly that Fenellan's wife is dead (B,125-6; pp. 56-57). This touch works in several ways: the simple reminder of Dartrey, for one; and the thematic reminder of unhappy marriages for another; and the demonstration of Victor's deviousness, for yet another.

Again, at the end of chapter xv, Skepsey's thought of Dartrey is an addition in B (B,360; p.166); and in the second of the two rejected versions of chapter xix B, Dudley Sowerby questions Victor about Dartrey in a lengthy passage added in the margin (B,444).

But meanwhile, "at the house of the turtle and the attractive Old Veuve" (p.17), the paragraph of very Meredithian wit beginning "Old Veuve in one, to the soul of Old Veuve in the other" (p.35) is added in the revision from A to B. The cadence conveys the champagne-engendered exhilaration; but more than this, there is a representation in the first sentence of Victor's cast of mind in action, and a comment on it in the second. The opening sentence continues "they recalled [a past] day or two, touched the skies; and merriment or happiness in the times behind them held a mirror to the present: or the [hour of the] reverse of happiness worked the same effect by contrast: so that notions of the singular election of us by Dame Fortune, sprang like vinous bubbles" (B,76; p.35). Such confidence in the benevolence of Fate recalls Victor's earlier "he was among the happiest of human creatures; he willed it so, with consent of circumstances" (p.12), and the simile, that this assurance is like bubbles in wine, adroitly indicates its baselessness. The most searing indictment of his optimism, however, comes in the putting of a negative proposition in a positive way in 'the hour of the reverse of happiness' - with Victor's propensity, even when sober, for seeing any situation just as he wishes, neatly captured in the predicate, 'worked the same effect by contrast'.

Meredith now takes to the ploy of quoting an anonymous Book of Words:

For it is written, that however powerful you be, you shall not take the Winegod on board to entertain him as a simple passenger; and you may captain your vessel, you may pilot it, and keep to your reckonings, and steer for all the ports you have a mind to, even to doing profitable exchange with Armenian and Jew, and still you shall do the something more, which proves that the Winegod is on board: he is the pilot of your blood if not the captain of your thoughts (p.35).

The figure of the Winegod assuming control of a man's frail vessel is turned to proclaim that the intoxicating effects of wine release man's rational controls so that feeling challenges intellect. However the surging of the blood is seen as only an intensification of Victor's natural exuberance - if this is read as a continuation of his boast of 'singular election...by Dame Fortune', and '...the pilot of your blood if not the captain of your thoughts' taken as a denial of emotion dominating reason. But if the last two clauses are taken to mean 'the pilot of your blood if not also the captain of your thoughts', and the narrative standpoint taken to be the author's, then there is a further undercutting of Victor's projection of confidence and optimism. Simeon Fenellan, however, slightly befuddled, accepts Victor's implied superiority; and both A and B versions end with similar reflections on the magnate.

For a passage which at first sight may seem somewhat excrescent, this "Old Veuve" paragraph yields a substantial proportion of very relevant comment, reinforcing the presentation of the character of Mr. Victor Radnor, and also working locally to suggest through the author's favourite stylistic mimicry the intoxication of men who have lunched with such apparent success.

5. "THE LONDON WALK WESTWARD"

The various changes in what was chapter ii of A Conqueror in Our Time can be seen contributing in greater or less degree to a tauter exposition dealing largely in mental processes and reactions. There are revisions for a similar purpose, though differently executed, in chapter iii A, "The London Walk Westward", which again divides into two in B, one chapter retaining the original title, the other having the new heading "Nataly". Both versions begin with reference to "that nationally interesting Poem, or Dramatic Satire, once famous, The Rajah in London (London, Limbo & Sons, 1889)" (p.36), developing the conceit of the London march to the east in the morning and the west at evening as a form of religious rite. The device of having an outsider interpret aspects of an alien society in which he finds himself according to his own expectations and experience is a traditional tool of satire; and that Meredith included this commentary in A Conqueror in Our Time indicates both that the themes of national concern were part of the original conception, and also that the stylistic variety is not created by revision alone. There are slight deletions and substitutions, and some additions - the Minister's explanation to the Rajah of how Science has taken over from Nature, and made 'the hatted sect' into mechanical beings is inserted, for instance, pointing the theme of the strength of Nature against all constrictions of civilisation. The lines about

The doubly-wedded man and wife,
 Pledged to each other and against the world
 With mutual onion.¹

which presumably refer, in 'doubly-wedded', to Victor's situation, and enforce, in the opposition to the world, the Nature theme, are introduced in B. (p. 38).

1. Surely, for onion read union? Even for Meredith at his most perverse, mention of the vegetable makes little sense: presumably the implication is of a kind of ill odour. However, the crucial letter in the manuscript looks more like an o than a u; and one of the notes in Meredith's early hand on a strip of paper folded into the home-made "Keepsake" notebook at Yale, reads

like man and wife
 Pledged to each other, & against the world with
 mutual onion.

Unequivocally onion; and apparently a favourite joke since it was so long nurtured before use. Just to add a little further perplexity, the serial version prints union.

The chapter so far has been in Meredith's most elevated contortions; and the paragraph beginning "One would like to think of the lengthened tide-flux..." (p.38) reaches an acme. But, be it noted, the rhetoric is not a development in revision: it survives from the outset. Shortly afterwards however there is a five-page addition in the manuscript (B, 86-90) which continues in the same dense style, but presents a genuine eulogy to London in the April sunset:

There is immensity, swinging motion, [collision,] dusky richness of colouring, to the sight; and to the mind idea. London presents it...here is a [noble/splendid ~~deleted~~] harmony of heaven and the earth of the works of man, speaking a grander tongue than [barren sea or] wood [or/& ~~deleted~~] wilderness. Just a moment; it goes; ... For the pinched are here, the dinnerless, the weedy, [the gutter-growths,] the forces repressing them... A moment of satisfaction in a striking picture is accorded, and no more. For this [London, this] England, Europe, world, but especially this London, is rather a thing for hospital operations than for poetic [rhapsody/~~word deleted~~] (B,86-8; pp. 39-40).

The immediate point of this whole addition is, I think, to direct attention to squalor as well as beauty, as summed up in the next couplet from The Rajah in London, "A decent visage and a hideous rear". It is very characteristic of Meredith to be making such a forthright comment in so circuitous a manner - indeed, this procedure is really the paradigm of his novels, where the pointing of a moral is always achieved through (and even in spite of) much adornment of the tale. This diatribe must be ascribed to Meredith himself, or at least to the authorial voice: for all that various phrases relate to Victor's vision (the opera, Italy, his thoughts of commissioning a poet), he

could never encompass or admit the apprehension of corruption beneath a fair outward show; and the thematic relationship is not enough to support an attribution of the passage to the great "Poem or Dramatic Satire". Besides, the possibility of exploring the underworld is sarcastically and truculently rejected in a sentence a little further on which aids in identifying the source of the outburst:

Granting all that, it being a transient novelist's business to please the light-winged hosts which live for the hour, and give him his only chance of half of it, let him identify himself with them, in keeping to the quadrille on the surface and shirking the disagreeable (p.41; B,90 has 'blinking' where all printed texts read 'shirking'; suggesting either a proof correction or compositorial error).

In this jibe at the reading public's demands and expectations, Meredith is disembarassing himself after the outburst and adding another comment on what he believes to be the function of the novel. Perhaps, with his chameleon capacity, he is adopting the attitudes of the realist writers, though "the two Englands" hardly emerges as a problem in the affluent world of the novel - and the idiom is certainly not that of the naturalists.

But the comment on "a transient novelist's business" comes at the end of the Rajah interpolation. There is a note of recovery after the diatribe, "But first there must be the cleansing" (p.40), and so back to the Rajah, whose adventures now involve him in conflict with the English hypocrisy especially in sexual matters, which has just been inveighed against. It is probably as a kind of metaphor that the Rajah's story (like Colney's serial later) may best be seen - a comment on an aspect of the

theme presented in this extended way, and summed up as the Indians, their purpose served, are ushered out, continuing to "hold debates over the mysterious contrarities of a people professing in one street what they confound in the next, and practising by day a demureness that yells with the cat of the tiles at night" (p. 41). It is to point up the element of hypocrisy that the whole elaborate diversion on the Rajah was embarked on anyway - and it is with a kind of idealising hypocrisy that Victor is charged immediately Meredith has given vent to the sarcastic taunt that the novelist is expected to shirk the disagreeable. He is accused of too emphatically embracing the transfiguring of London accomplished by "clouds of high colour"; accepting the transformation without querying the actuality.

At this stage the parallelism of A and B resumes: "The figures of the hurtled fair ones in sky were wreathing Nelson's cocked hat when Victor...emerged..." (p. 42) - and the second part of the chapter is devoted to Victor's reflections as he joins in "The London Walk Westward". There is fairly direct presentation of his thoughts, and revelation of the quality and motivation of his interest in public benefactions, summed up in "He revelled in benevolent projects of gifts to the nation, which would coat a sensitive name", a statement which has authorial sanction but is still within the compass of Victor's own consciousness.

There are some alterations of a minor kind at this stage in the original version, generally tending towards a harsher judgement on Victor than that proposed in A Conqueror in Our Time: for instance, A has a straight

avowal, "He wanted pictures, [but deleted] he wanted the best, and he was not a judge; he owned it" (A,57); B's form of words implies a resentment that he has been misled, "He had [relied and]reposed on the dicta of newspaper critics..." (B,92; p.42). Similarly, A at this point gives him a claim to some kind of artistic sensibility:

"Music was his passion, a true passion with him, and his Nataly shared it, and Nesta Victoria, promising to be a genius in music. So he preferred the scheme of the [Fountaining flowering/word deleted] Square and [afternoon] bands for the poor: comfortable seats, and a shelter, and in it a ready supply of good cheap coffee or tea; - tobacco? why not..." (A,59-60).

The passion for music is not mentioned in the corresponding paragraph in B, which has undergone other typical minor changes, notably towards the end, where Victor's comfortable vision of the means to alleviate the misery of the city-itself conceived in sentimental terms of "a moaning outcast round the policeman's legs" (p.43) - is exposed both by comparison with the view of London earlier on, and by the comment which follows, on how such plans for reform are often taken as palliatives by those capable of implementing them, and never acted upon. Victor is at least partially excused on this score: "He meant to make deeds of them, as far as he could, considering their immense extension; and except for the sensitive social name, he was of single-minded purpose".

After the mysterious rap on the elbow, B adds to A's account of Victor's reactions the lengthy reflection on opera, with his ideas of Harlequin and Columbine revealing his romantic optimism. Colney, in his role as

Victor's conscience, also appears in the later version. Again, the later version (B,95-9; pp. 43-5) gives a fuller and more inward view of the protagonist's mental processes, with less directive commentary by the author, than in the earlier one, which also repeats much of what has already been established:

...his head and his elbow responded immediately to the thought in another [simultaneous] twinge; yes, and that explained everything; - except his consequent rightabout from the chemist's shop. But who can account for all our minor distractions and involutions, notably in the case of the exquisitely strung of human creatures! He knew that he was finely strung as well as enviably robust, designed by nature to show the wisdom of the wholesome enjoyment of the pleasures; and Fortune had, omitting a single episode, done her best to back him. Reasonably we suppose that she means to [make good/repair deleted] her [one] omission.

With this idea, he hopped on [to] Fenellan's hint regarding the intentions of 'Mrs. Burman'.

Thence he sprang in a celestial glow to his Nataly. Embracing that dearest of souls, truest of women, helpfulest of mates, he raised her on wings to the spheres originally promised by him for her happiness.

She might have to go through a short sharp term of scorching-Godiva to the gossips! His eyelids moistened.

She would come out of it, come out of it glorified; ay, crowned at last; the tried, the choicest on earth, in a phalanx to honour and uplift her! (A,61-2).

Similarly, as Victor goes along Pall Mall and so home (B,99-104; pp. 45-7), reflecting on his dreams in youth of alliance with a great house, the revisions tend

to make judgement on him harsher than in the earlier version: for instance, in A he puts the burden of his whole history with Mrs. Burman and Nataly on Fate (A,65) - this is honest enough. In B, he is seen wilfully to choose to be hypocritical - and the choice is revealed as a much more complex one into the bargain, with Colney again an arbiter. In style as distinct from content, the two passages are pretty similar; though the interior monologue which represents Victor's conscious thoughts in A becomes somewhat less direct in B.

The second part of this chapter presents with increasing depth and intricacy the psyche of Victor the conqueror, soon to be counterpointed with the introduction of his de facto wife, Nataly. Possibly only expediency led to Meredith's cutting most of this analysis for the serial version (pp. 39-46 are deleted): certainly it is the greater testimony to the importance of the Rajah interlude that it survives in the serial.

6. NATALY

It is not only the character of Victor which is rendered more complex, and with greater complexity: Nataly, who is introduced in chapter vi, is also treated in particular detail in the revision. Clearly she is a most important character, and the division of chapter iii A into two is no doubt more than the result of the need to break down an excessively long segment, in that it serves to highlight her appearance - an event which is of consequence in itself, and the more so because as usual Meredith goes straight inside his character, and in presenting her thoughts gives yet another dissenting view of Victor's behaviour from the one he himself claims to hold. Nataly's long reflection on Victor and their situation which follows his announcement about Lakelands is considerably expanded in B, partly by incorporating material from a later stage of A.

At first, the representation of Nataly's thoughts is quite direct, giving her conscious reflections:

She caught herself languishing at her toilette-glass, as if her beauty were at stake; and shut her eyelids angrily. To be looking in that manner, for a mere suspicion, was too foolish. But Nesta's divinations were target-arrows; they flew to the mark. Could it have been expected that Victor would ever do anything on a small scale? O, the dear little lost lost cottage! (p.49).

So far, this is relatively straightforward, except for the suggestion that Nataly sees herself as in jeopardy, even to the point of martyrdom. But she is in control of her reactions, and confident of her perceptions both of Nesta and Victor. Now there is added a comment on the feeling

behind her words: "She thought of it with a strain of the arms of womanhood's longing in the unblessed wife for a babe. For the secluded modest cottage would not rack her with the old anxieties, beset her with suspicions...(sic)" (p.49). This goes to a reach just out of Nataly's control: the cottage, sighed for as 'dear little lost lost', is as symbolic of her desire for safety and repose as Lakelands is of Victor's for dominance, and seems to her a consummation of their relationship as devoutly to be wished as a child to an 'unblessed wife'. With ambiguity rife, there is no simple comparison set up: the similitudes are not complete, for Nataly is indeed 'the unblessed wife', when unblessed is read as unsanctified, and hence she is no wife at all; but their union has been blessed with issue, and it is Nesta who is the crux of the problem. Thus the strains are suggested almost as they are in her mind, half-articulated, revealed unintentionally, repressed: the statement that the cottage would not expose her to worry and attack lets slip that there are such anxieties.

There follow objectively true perceptions, in an increasingly personal progression: "We are distracted, perverted, made strangers to ourselves by a false position" (p.50; this is an insertion, B,110); "he never acknowledged a trouble, he dispersed it"; "Let anything be doubted rather than the good guidance of the man who was her breath of life!" (p.51). The nature and basis of the relationship becomes increasingly apparent, and so does Nataly's awareness of a kind of schizophrenia in herself, which lies in the sense of discrepancy between her thoughts and her actions, clearly stated in "This was the prudent woman's clear deduction from the state wherein she found herself, created by the one first great step of the mad woman. Her

surrender then might be likened to the detachment of a flower on the river's bank by swell of flood..." (p.51; from 'Her surrender' on is inserted, B,112). This suggestive figure of the flower in the torrent came later in A, just after Victor's outlining plans for a day at Lakelands, and before the account of that day.

Nataly sighed her way down to the [desperate] laughter he caused. He was inveterate, & had to be taken as he was: he amused, fretted, tickled, [vexed], exhilarated, intoxicated her; & had done so ever since his first wild wooing. Her surrender then might be likened to the detachment of a flower on the river-bank by swell of flood: she had no longer [a] root of her own: away she sailed, through beautiful scenery, with occasionally a crashing fall, a turmoil in darkness, [emergence from a vortex ,]and once more the smooth sunny whirling surface (A,114).

B expands on how Nataly has been swept along by Victor, and forced to concur in his own account of his actions, the sense of increased inwardness with her being conveyed not merely by statement, but by the manner of statement. So, for instance, in B's substitution of "He had ideas, he mastered Fortune" (B,113, p.51) - an acquiescence in Victor's own attitude - for A's "It would almost seem that Victor was driven by some Fate to provoke it" (A,73), where Nataly's complicity in his stance is not hinted. In the paragraph preceding this, there is a different kind of contact with Nataly, where she dramatises her self-justification. Referring back to the distinction of the prudent and the mad woman in herself, she pleads

But, [say not the mad,] say [the] enamoured [woman.] Love is a madness, having heaven's wisdom in it - a spark. But [even] when it is driving us on the breakers, call it love: and be

not unworthy of it, hold to it. She and Victor had drunk of a cup. The philtre was in her veins, whatever the directions of the rational mind (B,114-5; p.51).

The point of B's fuller account of Nataly on her first appearance is that it prepares more for Victor's highhandedness in announcing the Lakelands visit, where the account of her reactions can proceed without the arrest required to sketch in the history which makes them as they are. Both versions conclude their chapters with a quiet "Nataly had likewise her thoughts" (p.57), but the reader's sense of these thoughts is stronger in B.

From this stage of the narrative, much of the revision may be seen as in the interests of easier or more effective local transitions and juxtapositions. The chapters entitled "Between A General Man Of The World And A Professional" (iv A and vii B) are basically similar, giving a good deal of information which is important for plot development. There are slight differences in the arrangements for dining which Carling and Fenellan make, and the couple of pages in the later version which deal with society's dues to fallen women are an addition strengthening the treatment of social wrongs. However, the strongest impression of the rewriting is of the tautening and shaping of material: for instance, in B, Carling asks Fenellan about Victor, whereas A simply has Fenellan launch into a long testamentary statement on Victor's generosity and vitality. B, by the way, considerably modifies the romantic view Fenellan originally gives of Victor's capacities both for business and leisure:

The man [is a grasshopper: upon my word, it might be his crest! The man] you see in the City directing an engine to startle Australia, give a rouse to the Americans, electrify the Cape, and set the West Indian and Pacific Islands in motion, besides planting new Companies over the land at home, is happy to run catching butterflies with boys and girls in the fields, or sow and dig in his garden..." (A,94-5).

By the same token, B has Fenellan give more detail on the meeting of Victor and Nataly, repeating the arguments Victor used and adding his own interpretation:

My dear dear sir, the state of sin was the continuing to live in defiance of, in contempt of, in violation of, in the total degradation of, Nature...He was a small boy tempted by a varnished widow, [with pounds of barley-sugar in her pocket;-] and she already serving as a test-vessel [or mortar] for awful combinations in druggery! (B,142; p.65).

The imagery Fenellan employs - of Mrs. Burman as necromancer and witch with Victor and Nataly in Hansel and Gretel roles - picks up earlier suggestions, and modifies an equivalent reference at this point in A. While the insertions in B, it should be noted, intensify the witch image, not all the revisions from A to B heighten the figurative language.

One sentence in B - "You have only to look on them, you chatter out your three Acts of a Drama without a stop" (p.67) - is all that survives of a more developed image of theatre and acting in A, where Fenellan says of Nataly and Victor, "It's a story for within the walls of old Drury here, if ever one was, though we don't know yet what the curtain falls on" (A,88), adding of Mrs. Burman,

"She played the part of witch...(sic) But [I'll not/I won't deleted] get excited. [And stirred them together in the cauldron! It's true, it's not figurative. You/You deleted] know what she does now" (A,88).

With Victor and Nataly now introduced, other prominent members of the cast brought forward, and the direction of events indicated, Meredith begins to set in train the complex of attitudes and reactions to Victor's great Idea which centres on the country seat, Lakelands.

7. LAKELANDS

The fifth chapter of A Conqueror in Our Time, "A Visit to Lakelands", corresponds to chapters viii and ix of One of Our Conquerors, running almost parallel to within a couple of pages of the end of chapter viii, from which point more extensive rewriting occurs. Again, this is not so much a divergence from the original as a reshaping to achieve particular effects in particular ways.

"Some Familiar Guests" opens with Nesta's observation of Nataly's responses to Lakelands, and thus provides a similar introduction to her "character", in the sense that qualities of sensitivity and innocence are displayed which would not necessarily be evident in her observable behaviour, to that given for each of her parents. Since she is not blind to his failings, his daughter's view of Victor is possibly the most sympathetic and least prejudiced so far advanced. Thinking of her father's benevolence, part of Nesta's musings in A runs

And he was hospitable, generous, the truest, helpfulest of friends; the kindest, [the very] brightest of parents; he was his girl's playmate. She could be critical of him, only to love him the more justly; for if he had an excessive desire to win the esteem of people, he strove to deserve it (A,102).

B adds an exclamatory "O" to take the reflection a shade closer to Nesta's idiom; rearranges the superlative epithets applied to Victor; and adds one significant piece of information, that Nesta does see Victor as being overanxious to please (p.73). A passage like this reflects favourably on Victor, as well as Nesta's simplicity.

From her reflections on her parents, the focus shifts to Dudley Sowerby, whom she does not in fact particularly notice. In introducing Sowerby and the other guests, the revision is both ampler and smoother: alterations tend to be small sharpenings, arming shafts of wit. The passage on Lady Grace is a convenient example, and also typical of the kinds of minor change Meredith is generally making. At first, the paragraph goes

Lady Grace Halley had brought him. She [~~came/was deleted~~] of the earldom of Southweare; between which ~~and~~ the [~~Sowerbys/Earldom deleted~~] of Cantor Hymen had woven [~~films of~~] a cousinship. She stated it, with mouth and fan at work, ineffably indicating total distinctions, from the egg to the empyrean: and [~~they were changed from it was~~] manifest; she was rather short, conversational from the eyebrows and shoulders to the finger-tips, and talked in dashes [~~through and~~] among these hieroglyphs, [~~and deleted~~] was loosely and funnily candid (A,106-7).

By book publication, however, two pieces of information not unimportant in terms of motivations, have been added at the beginning of the paragraph: "The one person among them a little out of tune with most, was Lady Grace Halley. Nataly's provincial gentlewoman's traditions of the manners indicating conduct, reprov'd unwonted licences assumed by Lady Grace" (p. 76). The implication, of course, is that Victor is prepared to overlook Lady Grace's fastness - if he even is aware of it - for the sake of her connections. The rest of the passage becomes more epigrammatic in revision - "Her stature was rather short, all of it conversational..." and a similar pithiness is evident in the section on the chorus figures. Both versions point out the conscious control and selection Victor has exercised in assembling this circle: A hints in a mimicing of Victor's explanation and anticipation of criticism "Antithesis was, no doubt, rather strained or

implied in the contrast of them, but so we have to treat our friends if we would get a picture or extract the humorous" (A,106), where B is more explicit, summing up and passing judgement from a detached vantage: "All of them were pointedly opposed, extraordinarily for so small an assembly: absurdly, it might be thought" (p.75), and adds a mitigating passage on their community through music which is not in A.

But these are minor and local adjustments. A more important change bearing on presentation of character occurs at the end of the chapter, after Lady Grace's observations to Fenellan on the Radnor family, when Victor proposes an excursion to Lakelands for the next day. The earlier version proceeds directly through dialogue, which in B has been assimilated to an indirect presentation of Nataly's reactions and point of view. Much detail of A is dispensed with - this includes some of Nataly's thoughts about Victor, presumably because these have been adequately enough indicated at this stage for the dramatic intensification of them to proceed without excessive exposition. The revision shows much more clearly Victor's peremptoriness and some of his hardness

After the list of pieces had been played and sung, amid the talk over them, and Victor's compliments, Nataly heard him invite the [~~ir deleted~~] company to a pic-nic the next day at Lakelands. She could have laughed; so like him was that! [And] She could have wept; so fated she was! She had often likened herself to the being tied to the tail of a comet. He went his pace, and she was always too late to remonstrate. [She was too generous a mate to utter complainings.]

"Who accepted for to-morrow?" she asked him at night.

....."Nearly all of them, I think. I sent Skepsey with a letter to the Duvidney ladies, inviting them to join us [at the Station to-morrow,] if they have not yet returned to the Wells. [They are acquainted with Mr. Sowerby's people.]"

"But, Victor, you knew they would refuse!"

"Perfectly. But in the end the accumulation of invitations [may will deleted] soften [s] them, you will see."

"Is it so necessary to soften them?"

"Dear girl, we have [to] think of Fredi?"

She was used to the long reaches of his forecasts; past [any effort to phrase her thought/ complaining that deleted] that his exceeding ingenuity would have been needless in a position dictated by simple prudence, and so much happier for them (A,112-3).

Then follows a long reflection on her powerlessness in face of him, part of which B incorporates in her first appearance in chapter vi, leading straight in to her reactions at Lakelands. The talk of Mrs. Burman, and Nataly's recognition of her own hypocrisy by ceasing her prayer, at the end of chapter viiiB, more tellingly present the disturbed guilt, without reiterative reflections .

"An Inspection of Lakelands", ch. ix B, opens with Victor's voice in the splendidly proud announcement, "There you see Lakelands" (p.81). This opening sentence, by remaining indefinite until near the end, both points to and excuses his demeanour, in the incorporative "One may not have an intention to flourish, and may be pardoned for a semblance of it, in exclaiming, somewhat royally, as creator and owner of the place..." Then, sustained in Victor's tone and mood, follows a description of the mighty seat:

The [railway station deleted] conveyances [from the railway station] drew up on a [rise of road/mound deleted] fronting an undulation, where our modern English architect's fantasia in crimson brick swept from central gables to flying wings, over pents, [crooks,/& deleted] curves, [peaks,] cowled porches, balconies, [recesses, projections,] away to a [red] village of stables and dependent cottages; harmonious in [irregularity/variety deleted]; and [coloured] homely with the greensward about it, the pines beside it, the clouds above it. [Not many palaces would be reckoned as larger. The folds and swells and stream of the building along the roll of ground, had an appearance of an enormous banner on the wind] (B,176; pp. 81-2).

In his article on "Stylistic Revisions of One of Our Conquerors" Fred C. Thomson quotes this passage, calling it "a freshly impressionistic vignette that captures not merely the impact of Lakelands upon visitors, but the sweeping, exuberant energy of Victor, who created it".¹ True enough; but this is an instance where the superficiality and inaccuracy of Thomson's comparison of the two manuscripts is readily revealed. He cites the passage as an example of how "When...Meredith was dealing with more purely visual experience, the revisions frequently were genuine improvements"², suggesting that the writing of this piece is better than the 'relatively prosaic' description of Lakelands which he quotes from A:

1. Yale Univ. Library Gazette, XXXVI (1962), 71.
2. Ibid.

Returning to the house, [which was to be inspected after their pic-nic repast & the short tobacco-stroll succeeding it,] they admired the station he had selected for the dark-red gabled pile, harmonious in irregularity, on its shell-white terrace, fronting a plantation of his pines; a mounded and full-plumed company, noble to behold. All was finished, no sign of the workman anywhere. Conservatories ran in files; one was a dome leading to them from the drawing-room. A liberal calculation gave the length of glass in extension at a quarter of a mile (A,117-8).

(Thomson misreads admitted for admired).

Now the relevant sentences may indeed be less prosaic in the published version, but Thomson is misleading in suggesting "This becomes in B, after much tinkering, a freshly impressionistic vignette...." It is true that the A version is considerably recast, and page 176 in B bears the scars of second thoughts in composition. But while much of the earlier description is incorporated into the passage quoted from One of Our Conquerors, some of it survives at a different point a couple of pages into the chapter, which also corresponds more closely to the position of the passage from A.

Admiration was the common note, in the various keys. The station selected for the South-eastward aspect of the dark-red gabled pile on its white shell-terrace, backed by a plantation of tall pines, a mounded and full-plumed company, above the left wing, was admired, in files and in volleys. [Marvellous, effectively miraculous, was the tale of the vow to have the great edifice finished within one year: and the strike of workmen, and the friendly colloquy with them, the good reasoning, the unanimous return to duty....the most glorious of sights-the grand old English working with a will!.....and they conquer, there is then nothing

that they cannot conquer. So the conqueror said. - And admirable were] the conservatories running three long lines, one from the drawing-room, to a central dome for tropical growths...Again the lake was admired, [again deleted] the house admired (B,181; p.84).

As well as transposition of pieces from A, there is also some transformation, especially in the sentence dealing with the workmen which, it will be noted, is an addition to B. A's negative statement of the perfect finish to Lakelands - "no sign of the workman anywhere" - is dramatised into a complete implied anecdote of Victor's prevailing on the strikers to return to work, very much in the terms of Victor's telling (compare his satisfaction with his handling of men here, to his manner of dealing with the Cockney on London Bridge), but reported in the passive voice with an uncritical admiration which places the reporter among Victor's chosen group. The ventriloquist's trick is highly complicated: Meredith is writing as if Victor is putting the words into the reporter's mouth.

My quarrel, then, is generally with Thomson's failure to acknowledge that there is more to be done than a straight comparison of passages, and with his refusal to consider the context of particular revisions. The 'improvement' in the B version is not simply related to the fact that "Meredith was dealing with more purely visual experience"; nor is the conclusion that there is in B an "intensified metaphorical quality and the profusion of images supporting the dominant theme of conquest in all of its manifestations"³ quite justified. Thomson hints

3. Thomson, op.cit., p.72.

at what has happened when he writes of the passage's capturing some of Victor's exuberance: the whole account of the visit to Lakelands has, it seems to me, been revised primarily to emphasise Radnor's attitude to and expectations of his creation and his guests.

Meredith's feat in the second paragraph of this chapter ("The conveyances from the railway station...", pp.81-2) is no mean one, for instance, and his adjustments in the manuscript indicate the care he took for the sake of the effect (see above, p.302). The predominant note is indeed exuberance, achieved largely by the list "from central gables to flying wings, over pents, crooks, curves,...." and so on, where the rapid piling-up of a first impression is imitated, slowed down by copulatives once the impressions begin to be absorbed into some kind of likeness of the whole: "The folds and swells and stream of the building along the roll of ground, had an appearance of an enormous banner on the wind." This exuberance is not, however, a simple effect. The description is representative of the view of Victor as "creator and owner", capturing both his bondage in convention (many of the phrases he uses smack of the estate agent or guide book's jargon - 'conveyances', 'a rise of road fronting an undulation', 'not many palaces would be reckoned as larger') and the quality of his imagination (best implied in 'fantasia in crimson brick', acted out as it is in a welter of archaic terms and the vision of the house dominating nature). It is in seeing only part of the point of such changes that Thomson misses the most interesting and significant aspects of Meredith's rewriting.

In A Conqueror in Our Time, as I pointed out earlier, there is a transition straight from Nataly's reflections on Victor after their musical evening, to her thoughts on seeing Lakelands, whereas in revision Meredith opens a new chapter resoundingly with Victor himself conducting the tour, continuing, after a first survey of the house, into Nataly's response. The transitional sentence - "The folds and swells..." - is the kind of floating observation possible with Meredith's manipulation of authorial distance: the imagery is appropriate for Victor, and can be a vision shared by Nataly, though her attitude to the fantasia is quite other than his.

Again the manuscript shows clearly the pains Meredith took: of course other passages may have cost even greater labour and been copied afresh, so concealing the false starts.

Nataly looked. Her next look was at Colney Durance. She sent [the expected] nods to Victor's carriage. She would have given the whole prospect for the covering solitariness of her chamber. [A/She had a deleted] multitude of clashing sensations,...[she was deleted] compelled [her] to summon so as to force herself to feel [a groundless/an illogical deleted] anger, ...her only resource for keeping down the great wave surgent at her eyes (B,176-7; p.82).

This version is much more evocative of Nataly's attitude than A, partly because the stimulus of Victor's triumph to which she is reacting has been shown, and largely because her response is seen to go below particulars. Here is a comparable piece from the draft:

Nataly laughed [resignedly] again when, [after sighing at sight of the bigness of Lakelands, partially stupefied by the clash of her immediate impressions with the apprehensions they aroused, she was shown, /at Lakelands he showed deleted] by means of an outlining finger at a corner of the house, his original design for a cottage. Things grow, he had remarked....(A,115).

Meredith has rearranged some of the incidents at this stage. The altercation of Colney and Dr. Schlesien occurs in the following chapter in A, and the consultation of Nataly with Durance which does not appear in B until after the arrival of Skepsey, takes place at this point in A. The main effect of such revisions is to take the focus in this chapter from Nataly, and to dramatise Victor's tour, with interludes from the assembled guests; then in chapter xi B, to achieve a local effect by having Nataly's worries as revealed in discussion with Colney, juxtaposed with her manner towards Victor as they talk over the events of the day. Moreover, Victor's doubts and questionings at the end of chapter ix are highlighted by this arrangement, and by the more succinct though less direct representation of his emotions which occurs in revision.

In the first version of chapter vii A, as in the later drafts, most of Victor's anxiety relates to Nataly's cool reception of the whole Lakelands project. However this draft does not associate his disappointment with a recollection of his consternation after the fall on London Bridge, as happens in the second version. Meredith uses the occurrence of the name of Armandine the cook in a comment from one of the group seeing Lakelands to trigger such thoughts in Victor - an accurate psychological

observation of how the relevant associations could be made, recalling his similar reaction to "punctilio" in the opening chapter.

With that utterance of her name, he saw in a flash London Bridge [& masts & funnels, & the] orangey pavement, & himself being restored to his legs: for he recollected that, just before the fall, he had Armandine's name on his lips, as the key to the certain success of Lakelands.

With that utterance of her name, he saw the orangey spot on London Bridge, and the sinking Tower and masts and funnels, and the rising of them, on the return to his legs; he recollected, that at the very edge of the fall he had Armandine strongly in his mind (p. 94).

Strange, to think of a man prostrated the [very instant/moment ~~deleted~~] after his crying of victory! - But why dwell on a simple accident? - Only, the immediate succession of it looks ominous; as a comment; - Barnby's pulpit[comment] on human scheming (A, 172 - second version).

B retains, with a few alterations, the vision of the fall, but explicit statements such as Victor's regarding Armandine 'as the key to the certain success of Lakelands', and the paragraph drawing ominous conclusions about the significance of the fall, are discarded. As well, A's spelling out of the elements of Victor's conception is condensed. This account is quite detailed:

He would have liked to tell the story without the tumble in it; & not seeing how, he laughed at Fenellan & Colney, who had struck up a duett (sic)

of extravagances in
 laudation of
 Armandine: [four words
 deleted] general of
 the Roast, Admiral of
 the Boiled. [four or
 five words deleted]
 They carried on [a
 string of passable
 nonsense till/three
 words deleted] they
 revived in Victor his
 feelings before the
 descent to the pavement,
 when a vision of
 Lakelands receiving
 [press of] company
 approved his defiance
 of the world & his
 resolve to set the
 dear pure noble-hearted
 woman, who had so
 compassionately,
 devotedly, lovingly
 joined her fate with
 his, on an enviable
 height, safe from all
 assaults; - not
 forgetting Fredi's
 future. Fenellan &
 Colney had been [to
 the front] in his
 reckonings as well as
 Armandine & the choice
 quartets. The object
 of Lakelands being to
 attract, so that once
 tasted it could not be
 resisted, whatever the
 upshot of events (the
 strokes of the
 Vengeful), he wanted
 those two for his
 talkers at table...
 Victor wanted all this
 for the sake of his
 guests, for the
 fortifying of his house

She was to do her part:
 Fenellan and Colney on the
 surface, she below: and
 hospitality was to do its
 part, and music was
 impressed - the innocent
 Concerts; his wealth, all
 his inventiveness [were to
 serve;] - and merely to
 attract and win the tastes
 of people, for a social
 support to Lakelands! Merely
 that? Much more:- if
 Nataly's coldness to the
 place would but allow him
 to form an estimate of how
 much. At the same time,
 being in the grasp of his
 present disappointment, he

in the campaign to come. His [own] tastes were neater. [But deleted]

Let it never be forgotten that the man with an [object in aim/aim deleted] is the man of his [object/aim deleted]; & the nearer to his mark, often the farther is he from [a/his reputable deleted] sober self; he is the arrow of his bow instead of bow to [the deleted] arrow. This is our payment for scheming: & success costs us more; we find that we have pledged [the better half of] ourselves for it - hard to redeem!

Victor, [one of] the least self-conscious of men, though a dramatically self-communing at times, had a thought that rather shook him... (A,172-5; second version).

perceived a meanness in the result, that was astonishing and afflicting. He had not ever previously felt imagination starving at the vision of success. Victor had yet to learn, that the man with [a material/an deleted] object in aim, is the man of his object; and the nearer to his mark, often the farther is he from a sober self; he is more the arrow of his bow than bow to his arrow. This we pay for scheming: and success is costly; we find we have pledged the better half of ourselves to clutch it; not to be redeemed with the whole handful of our prize! He was, however, learning after his leaping fashion. Nataly's defective sympathy made him look at things through the feelings she depressed. A shadow of his missed Idea on London Bridge seemed to cross him from the close flapping of a wing within reach. He could say only, that it would, if caught, have been an answer to the thought disturbing him (B,201-3; p. 94).

Meredith keeps the account in A from Victor's point of view, adopting the mode of authorial omniscience with a gesture towards the character's own idiom (as in 'his resolve to set the dear pure noble-hearted woman... on an enviable height, safe from all assaults; - not forgetting Fredi's future', which is obviously a free indirect representation of Victor's attitude). In B,

however, the information expressed at some length in A is condensed and presented in a mode which approaches more closely the character's direct expression of his feelings. For all the attention given in A to specifying Victor's aim of achieving social recognition by means of Lakelands, there is little evocation of the quality of his reactions at this turn of events. Discomfiture and pride are indicated, but eventually described only as 'a thought that rather shook him', with the general assertion about 'the man with an object in aim...' not being related to his present condition.

In B, there is still a coherent train of thought represented, but the clauses almost twitch in an imitation of the leaps of Victor's mind in frightened disturbance, to the question whether the great scheme is proving an empty triumph. At the very point where the reader is first granted a glimpse of what Victor's Idea involves in practice, doubts and fears have already beset and undermined the character's confidence of success. Victor may yet have to learn the cost of success - but he is learning, and the process is seen at close quarters. Meredith's analysis in the final version may seem to be couched in terms as vague as A's 'a thought that rather shook him', but really gives a much finer appreciation of his psychic state than that which must be deduced from the earlier draft. Victor's mental characteristics are already known: 'his leaping fashion' of thought, his tendency to be activated by emotional stimuli, and his dependence on approval, have been variously demonstrated from the opening episode on - and the fall and its trauma are now recalled, with the 'shadow of his missed Idea'. As expressed, the Idea is ethereal

indeed, its elusiveness arising not from uncertainty or inadequacy in the author's presentation, but from an uncertainty attributed to the character. Victor's unaccustomed helplessness is shown precisely: 'He could say only, that it would, if caught, have been an answer to the thought disturbing him' fits with the case-history which has by now been made evident.

While it is not always possible to discern a conscious purpose in Meredith's revisions, it is difficult not to see in his rewriting here, I suggest, calculated intensification of the sense of what Lakelands means to Victor, and his thoughts and feelings as the grand design nears fulfilment.

8. "THE COUPLE JUSTIFIED OF LOVE"

That Meredith was somewhat exercised from the outset as to what best to present here, and how, may be assumed from the fact that there are two attempts at chapter vii in the A manuscript. The second draft is a modification and amplification of the first; but when Meredith came to revise again, he presumably felt that much of what the chapter contained was redundant, and almost entirely dispersed the incidents which occur. Chapter xi of One of Our Conquerors, "Wherein We Behold the Couple Justified of Love Having Sight of Their Scourge", might be expected to correspond to A's chapter vii, "Wherein the Couple Justified By Love Have Sight of Their Scourge". However, the chapter in B is mainly concerned with the colloquy of Nataly with Colney, postponed from an earlier point in A. This scene follows general talk about the neighbours at Lakelands, and a renewed discussion of national characteristics - here, specifically revolving round the Celt (or as Meredith will have it here, Kelt) - which are the only real vestiges of vii A; and leads on in B to the scene between Nataly and Victor at night.

The main change over the three versions is the enforcing of the notion of the complicity of Victor and Nataly at the end of chapter xi, which concludes "The common burden on their hearts - the simple discussion to come of the task of communicating dire actualities to their innocent Nesta - was laid aside" (p.122). In the first draft, Meredith is concerned mainly with Nataly's alienation by Victor's statement of what he plans to achieve

through Lakelands. Offended by his constant calculations of money and influence, and noticing his new habit of dashing his hand to the back of his head, she begins to realise "a naked truth" (A,165 - first version) and fears catastrophe - "Victor's bitter scheming for their girl caused her this weakness" (A,172 - first version). Her thoughts turn to Nesta, for whom she would be prepared to risk anything, if only because this suffering would lift her from her own concerns. In passing, it is noteworthy that, whatever its motivation, there is an awareness of the consequences for Nesta of her father's scheming which might not have been expected from Thomson's account of A Conqueror in Our Time. The first draft of chapter vii. A ends with Nataly's recognition that she is no match for Victor, who seems to require a gambling mate. This is a nod towards Lady Grace, of course, and like other omens of an affair between her and Victor, it subsequently disappears.

In the second draft, Victor's point of view is first presented as he presses Nataly again to be enthusiastic about Lakelands, which she resists as a symbol of his ambition for Nesta. We are told that he knows her to an exact degree, and recognises her aversion from "his aerial outlines of the future for their girl" (A,179). In her turn, Nataly recognises that he is too strong for her, and there is a development well beyond anything which occurs in the first draft as she resolves to have the matter out with him (Meredith uses the image of rolling up a curtain on their past). But "To speak would be to succumb; ~~and~~ shamefully after the effort; ~~and~~ [&] hopelessly after being

overborne by him" (A,180 - second version): she recurs to the day of their union, and the day at Lakelands, beginning to rationalise and excuse her own weakness: "An unregretted day not the less, if Victor would but think of the dues to others: that is, if he would but take station with the world to see his position, instead of seeing it through their self-justifying knowledge of the honourable truth of their love" (A,181 - second version). With this, she cocoons herself a stage further - "They had done evil to no one as yet" - and Meredith moves in to support her on the grounds that Nataly, the embodiment of Nature against the institutions of men, would never have been as cruel as Mrs. Burman, who is against Nature. A discussion of the need to tell Nesta and her suitors of the irregular union follows, with more talk of the day that has passed; then, as in the printed version, they lay aside 'The common burden on their hearts'. This draft in A has a couple of paragraphs not surviving in B, which comment that Nataly is better able to tell Nesta than is Victor, who also pleaded love in their defence but did not like to look back (A,186-7).

The effect of this revision, as I suggested earlier, is to enforce, by a fuller explanation, the notion of complicity in the parents' attitude to Nesta. Both Nataly and Victor are rendered more complex, being seen as hypocritical and not merely misguided, Victor because of his arrogance, Nataly from fear. This failure to acknowledge and live by their true feelings precipitates the gathering tragedy.

The next chapter, viii A, and the corresponding xii B, show another aspect of the kind of revisions Meredith made in developing his "fuller portraiture".

The theme of the chapter is intimated in its title: the fear for Nesta which keeps her parents from talking freely with each other; and the development of this from the analysis of Nataly and Victor's feelings towards each other in previous chapters is clear. For a couple of pages (pp. 122-4: A,188-91; B,264-7), the openings run almost exactly parallel, as Meredith in his involved essayist's manner explains how this failure of communication between two people can occur, taking up again the image of a log on the torrent which earlier had been attributed to Nataly's own vision of her relationship with Victor; and also the parliamentary reference applied before to Victor's mental debates, an illustration of how he develops an image out of preceding ones, expanding and qualifying the original ideas.

Both Nataly and Victor recognise that Nesta must soon learn they are not married, but Victor, "leaping in his fashion to the cover of action as an escape from perplexity" (p. 123), goes ahead with his mental schemes for the great match for his daughter which will protect her and vindicate her parents. A couple of details are added here in B, namely Victor's imagining himself "stating the facts to a son. 'And, my dear boy, you will from this day draw your five thousand a year'" (pp. 123-4); and the remark which follows about "His desire for his girl's protection by the name of one of our great Families" (p. 124) - an attitude which has been quite apparent earlier in B, but not so far stated outright as in A (even here, it is given as authorial description and not in direct speech as in A). Each version then has Victor

going on to imagine himself squaring things with Nesta's prospective husband: in this case, too, he sees money and its power as the obvious means of dealing with any situation, and again resorts to the bribe - a straight £100,000 in A, a mere £10,000 a year in B. Another emotional pitch in A is omitted, and the matter-of-fact comparison of him to a lecturer substituted for his own poetical telling of his romance with Nataly, which brings tears to his eyes.

From this point on, though both versions continue with Victor's musings, the drift is different. In A Conqueror in Our Time, Victor becomes disturbed about and then irritated with Nataly, who is mechanically performing his will by furnishing Lakelands and obeying his wishes for Nesta's welfare. His impatience with her intensifies because she does not join with him wholeheartedly: "The girl well wedded, their cares were at an end. Lakelands was a commanding stage on the road: how, then, could her mother be faint-hearted?" (A,193). He feels himself becoming a Moralizer - "He composed sentences [concerning 'life', and 'what creatures we are']" (A,195) - and also is aware that he is losing dominance over Nataly - "her soul was missing" (A,196). There is a similar comment made in B, at the end of the chapter, which typically presents a further insight than the barer statement of A: "But the silence upon what they were most bent on, had the sinister effect upon Victor, of obscuring his mental hold of the beloved woman, drifting her away from him" (p. 129). Here the language echoes notes struck earlier - Nataly as the log floating on the stream, the vicious results of their conspiracy of silence, the whole context of unspoken struggle - and suggests that Meredith is not unconscious in his revision of the resources of figurative language.

But meanwhile, back in A, Victor imagines Nataly finding solace in confiding in Colney Durance, and this leads on to the passage on Victor and Colney as the Optimist and Pessimist of their society which appears, expanded, in chapter xix of One of Our Conquerors (p. 212). The chapter ends with his going to seek Fenellan, whom he finds comforting: Simeon has the friendly word rather than the blade, "With Fenellan he could speak as he pleased, ...act the momentary thing he was" (A,200).

These doubts of Nataly disappear in revision, and Victor's thoughts of Nesta's marriage are followed immediately by his plans to entice Dudley Sowerby. "He talked randomly of money, in a way to shatter Nataly's conception of him" (p. 126) provides a transition to Nataly's reactions to Sowerby, and also subsumes an indication of Radnor's crassness which was eliminated from an earlier part of A.

In the mother's eyes, seeing "his quality as a man of principle and breeding" (p. 126), Dudley comes off quite well. The couple of paragraphs in the B version centring on Nataly's reaction to Sowerby were revised in minor details as Meredith worked out a straightforward omniscient authorial account, larded with the odd sentence of interior monologue, describing her honest awareness of the situation by comparison with Victor's confident assumptions. Once again, the revision passes severer judgement on Radnor, in statements like "She was a closer reader of social character than Victor; [from refraining to run on/four or five words deleted] the broad lines which are but faintly [illustrative/significant deleted] of [the

individual] one in being common to all - unless we have hit by chance on an example of the downright in roguery or folly or [simple goodness.]" (B,272; p. 126); or "She counselled herself, as if the counsel were in requisition, to be passive; and so doing, she more acutely [word deleted] than Victor - save in his chance flashes [of perception deleted] - discerned [the twist] of her very nature caused by the[ir] false position" (B,273-4; p. 127). And of this twist she is very well aware; and even more aware of her inability to withstand Victor. The final paragraph moves from intimacy with Nataly to the public show she puts on with Victor; and then to his point of view again as he sets off to Fenellan, but this time for the particular purpose of finding out if anything further has been heard of Mrs. Burman.

The rewriting of this chapter is described in the addition of one word to its title: "Of The Dumbness Possible With Members Of A Household Having One Heart" becomes "Treats of The Dumbness...", and it is treatment of the most Jamesian kind that the revision involves. Meredith's changes develop the pattern already evident of giving more precise insight into Nataly, and hence depth to the sense of conflict behind the outward calm and composure of the Radnors' facade. The characters' interactions are dwelt on more than in the original draft. From this stage, a shaping and focusing in B of the material of A is marked. Compression is apparent, as if Meredith, with a firmer grasp of his characters and method, is able to be more summary and selective, because he sees just how much (or how little) he needs to say. Thus

chapter xiii B, "The Latest of Mrs. Burman", incorporates both chapters ix and x of A, "Later News of Mrs. Burman" and "Dr. Themison" (incidentally a case where second thoughts dictated a reversion to the original scheme: these two chapters were originally one, being divided mid-page at some point during composition). Much that is repetitive in Victor's long self-justificatory speeches to Fenellan in A is omitted; and again some statements are taken out of direct speech and put into an interior monologue - for instance, in both versions, Victor's assertion of his immunity, his moment of sympathy for Mrs. Burman and admission of her power, and the reflections on how men's support can be won collectively, but women's must be sought individually, are presented, but differently expressed. The dinner party designed to woo the neighbours of Lakelands is omitted from B, probably because it is not the incident in itself which is significant but the motivation underlying it; though it reappears vestigially when Nataly has to receive various of the ladies roundabout whom Victor is in some sense wooing - "a tasking of her energies equal to the buffeting of [recurrent] waves on deep sea" (B,392; p. 182. This addition of an adjective in B is a typical touch). Similarly One of Our Conquerors incorporates Victor's railings against Mrs. Burman, and his thoughts about the neighbours which accompany the party in A, into his reflections during the walk with Fenellan. The long speech on opera, and what he plans from enlisting the aid of Dr. Themison, are additions in B (Victor's attitudes to opera being a characterising device); which operate more economically than the appeals to Nature and so on which they replace.

Similarly information expounded in x A is compressed in a retrospect at the beginning of xiv B, the introduction of Dr. Themison to the narrative, and the proposal of the French trip, having taken place overleaf and offstage. One small detail pointing towards the ending in A, is omitted from B, which contrives to leave the impression that Themison acquiesces in Victor's scheme without there being any physical weakness apparent to him in either Victor or Nataly - "Change of air was prescribed to each for both" (p. 143). In A, however, Themison had warned Nataly "small contrarieties might cause an upset to a man unceasingly at high pitch" (A,233).

Both versions have a lengthy passage of Nataly's concern for Nesta, B having Colney's sage sayings in his suggested method of baring girls to the world, giving them knowledge as defence (B,318-21, p. 147); and also an added paragraph on Nataly's awareness of how the contrast of precept and practice may strike Nesta - an awareness not shared by Victor. A's criticism of his belief in "Repression and mystery" for girls is made fuller and more savage in B. Where A reads "[He exaggerated <right and left & within himself, as/as deleted> men do when a romantic sentiment possesses them.-]" (A,242), B goes as follows "-He was one of the many men to whose minds women come in pictures & are accepted [pretty deleted] much as they paint themselves. Like his numerous fellows, too, he required a conflict with them, and a worsting at it, to be taught, that they are not the mere live stock we scheme to dispose of for their good:-unless Love should interpose, he would have exclaimed" (B,322, pp. 148-9). This is another variation on the scheme of indictment by generalisation.

There are various changes in the account of the Channel crossing, one of the effects again being a mitigation of the possibility of an affair between Victor and Lady Grace, though their flirtation continues. The end of the chapter has yet another deletion of Victor's thinking of Nataly as weak: the later version concludes with her point of view, submitting to destiny and determining to live in the hour, instead of A's comparison of Victor to a swimmer carrying out a rescue - "The question, who plunged Nataly out of her depth, did not come to him" (A,273).

Changes in "A Patriot Abroad" (xii A, xv B) are slight: there are small adjustments of Skepsey's language and his military opinions are cut; Colney is given more scope for whimsy; there is a discussion of French cuisine not in A. Omission of commentary on Sowerby's narrowness (he has also been treated more gently on the crossing), and cutting of some of the by-play between Victor and Lady Grace, confirm tendencies already apparent in the revision.

The revision of chapter xiii A, "Accounts For Skepsey's Misconduct, Showing how it affected Nataly", mainly concentrates on these consequences for Nataly, which derive from the boost to Victor's hopes given by the news that Mrs. Burman is sinking. At the beginning of the chapter, there are few changes: A has a play on the boxer's name - Scroom and Scrimmage - which does not survive into B; while the later version has a little more on Mrs. Burman's assurances that she will reappear as a spirit. The pages (B,369-72; pp. 171-2) on the musical

performances on tour are added in B, partly perhaps to give more of an account of the French trip, and at least partly to show Dudley Sowerby in a more favourable light (a fairly consistent tendency); and are followed by a couple of paragraphs showing Nataly's heightened awareness of Victor's scheming since his announcement concerning Lakelands (B,373-4; pp. 172-3). These additions are significant of the trend of the revision generally, and of the chapter in particular, in that a more complex psychological account of the relationship of Victor and Nataly is developed, with Nataly being forced to judge Victor. Meredith is showing a mental process which is at first the conscious stocktaking of his character in the paragraph beginning "From the day of the announcement of Lakelands, she had been brought more into contact with his genius of dexterity and foresight than ever previously" (p. 173). After this omniscience, the account moves closer to Nataly's awareness in "But since that red dawn of Lakelands, it was almost as if he had descended to earth from the skies" - 'since that red dawn of Lakelands' was a revision in manuscript (B,374) which enforces the sense of her foreboding. The next couple of sentences were also adjusted to intensify her realisation:

She [now] saw his mortality in the miraculous things he did. [And deleted] The reason of it was, that [through the <perceptible> various arts and shifts <on her level, an> opposing spirit had plainer view of his aim to judge it./ she read & seeing for good his aim deleted] She thought it a mean one (B,374; p. 173).

In the following paragraph the point of view is again overtly that of the narrator, and to convey the state of doubt and fear in which Nataly finds herself, the image of a log borne along by the current is picked up:

The power it had to hurry her with the strength of a torrent to an end she dreaded, impressed her physically; so far subduing her mind, in consequence, as to keep the idea of absolute resistance obscure, though her bosom heaved with the breath; but what was her own of a mind hung hovering above him, criticizing; and involuntarily, discomfortingly.

Those demurs - 'involuntarily, discomfortingly' - are developed by a conditional construction: "She could have prayed to be led blindly or blindly dashed on: she could trust him for success; and her critical mind seemed at times a treachery. Still she was compelled to judge." Such a usage of 'She could have...' does more than hint at how nearly she falls completely to her earlier unthinking and unprotesting state, and is underlined by the confidence of 'she could trust him...', where 'could' recurs but in a totally different construction.

How insidious an omniscience this is may readily be seen in a comparison with Trollope's handling of a roughly similar situation where a character is in a quandary and unable to admit her true feelings.

When Lady Macleod had gone Alice sat alone for an hour thinking of what had passed between them, - thinking rather of those two men, the worthy man and the wild man, whose names had been mentioned in close connection with herself. John Grey was a worthy man, a man worthy at all points, as far as she knew him. She told herself that it was so. And she told herself, also, that her cousin George was wild, - very wild. And yet her thoughts were, I fear, on the whole more kindly towards her cousin than towards her lover. She had declared to her aunt that John Grey would be incapable of such suspicion as would be shown by any objection on his part to the arrangements made for the tour. She had said so, and had so believed; and yet she continued to brood over the position which her affairs would take, if he did make the objection which Lady Macleod anticipated.

She told herself over and over again, that under such circumstances she would not give way an inch. 'He is free to go,' she said to herself. 'If he does not trust me he is quite free to go.' It may almost be said that she came at last to anticipate from her lover that very answer to her own letter which she had declared him to be incapable of making.

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Trollope imitates Alice's mental debate for a little - 'She told herself that it was so', and so on - but shies off continuing to the point of showing in some way how her thoughts favour the wild George, or even of describing the quality of her preference, in resorting to 'And yet her thoughts were, I fear, ...more kindly towards her cousin...' There is a similar switch in the second half of the paragraph which builds on the hint already given that she is not entirely happy in her engagement, as she begins to conjecture about John Grey's likely behaviour, persuading herself that he will act as according to her view he is unable to - but this statement comes from Trollope, coyly suggesting the possibility: 'It may almost be said...' Meredith's concluding 'Still she was compelled to judge' is equally an authorial assertion, but based on a much more intimate presentation for all the detachment imposed by omniscience.

In accordance with this more sombre and complicated presentation of Nataly in One of Our Conquerors, the end of the chapter has less of her exulting when Victor tells Skepsey's news of Mrs. Burman, and an emphasis instead on the admixture of grief in the clash of her intellect and reverence. The revision includes in her thoughts an awareness of the consequences for Nesta, and a glance at Dudley Sowerby, which are not present in her more joyful

1. Can You Forgive Her? (1864-5; W.C. edn. 1953), ch. ii, p.24.

reactions in A. Her sensitivity registers against Victor's crassness, which appears in both versions in his reference to having Barmby perform their wedding ceremony once Mrs. Burman is finally dead.

In the next chapter Meredith again adds a long paragraph of Nataly's self-appraisal, which repeats her earlier perception of her helplessness before Victor, showing the operation of 'her critical mind' rationalising and defending. Scrupulously, the author once more indicates how nearly his character is able to articulate her attitude, but how strongly she resists doing so.

Nay, she beheld herself as the outer world vexedly beholds a creature swung along to the doing of things against the better mind. An outer world is thoughtless of situations which [~~prepare us/fit us deleted~~] to meet the objectionable with a will benumbed; if we do not, as does that outer world, belong to the party of the readily heroical. She scourged her weakness: and the [intimation of the] truth stood over her, more than ever manifest, that the deficiency affecting her character lay in her want of language.....(B,394-5; p. 183).

Again Meredith manages to convey what the character realises of a total situation by means of a generalisation which expresses the state of affairs, but by its impersonality absolves Nataly from participating in the awareness it reveals. There is some confusion, though: it is not clear whether Nataly, like the outer world, in some obscure way believes herself heroical. The rest of the passage, however, with her inner debate and process of self-justification, is confused only in so far as Nataly herself is, in arguing why she and Victor have never spoken a word of criticism of the other. Meredith's slight revisions in manuscript sharpen his presentation - 'prepare' is suitably

less confident than 'fit us', and the addition of 'intimation' similarly qualifies the assertion that the truth is accessible to Nataly. This sense of her horrified awareness and almost complete impotence in the face of Victor's schemes becomes even stronger as his plans involve the marriage of Nésta.

9. NESTA AND HER SUITORS

Chapter xiv A provides material for what ought to be an interesting analysis of Meredith's methods of composition, since he had five attempts at beginning the chapter - or at least, five survive. Thomson prints the various versions, and tries to show Meredith's successive onslaughts as moving from fairly straightforward writing to "calculated obliqueness" which "gives at least the illusion of weight"¹. The task is a difficult one since each attempt takes off in a different direction, and so the opportunity for tracing successive refinements of thought and expression does not occur. Again, the more interesting changes take place in other ways at different stages of the chapter (xiv A; xvii B), the title giving the clue as to its central interest in Nesta - "Chiefly Upon the Theme of a Young Maid's Imaginings." Though the substance of each version is the same, dealing with Barmby's proposal and the various reactions to it, the B chapter is markedly shorter than its counterpart in A, having sharper detail and fewer irrelevancies: a fair amount of character analysis, even, has been pruned, no doubt as redundant. Similarly, there is some modification of A's directness in such instances as the replacement of a straightout statement by Mademoiselle de Seilles that Barmby had not had two minutes alone with Nesta, and would not have been capable of profiting by them even so, by the governessy circumspection of "We are at present much enamoured of Bethesda" (p. 182).

1. "Stylistic Revisions of One of Our Conquerors", Yale Univ. Library Gazette, XXXVI (1962), 69.

More fruitful comparisons of A and B may be found in the next pair of chapters, xv (untitled in A) and xviii ("Suitors for the Hand of Nesta Victoria"). Once again, Meredith had a couple of false starts in getting the chapter going, and there are also variant versions within the first draft of two later passages.

The first attempt at beginning the chapter goes as follows:

The card of the Rev. Septimus Barmby was handed to Victor on his rising from his dinner-table in the company of Lady Grace Halley, a Great Alderman banker with his wife, & others.

"Barmby; some parish charity; I'll bring him upstairs in five minutes," he said to Lady Grace; & she closed her eyes, for a simulation of patience under the dose of Bethesda coming (A,330).

This is rejected in favour of a classical image:

When, upon a well-known errand of his, the delightful singer Orpheus took [that changed from his] downward way, coming in sight of old Cerberus centiceps, he waved his plectrum over the submissive lyre, & with the stroke raised voice (A,346?).

Next time he gets into full swing, and with numerous insertions and deletions achieves a version practically identical with the one eventually published (pp. 188-9):

When, upon a well-known quest, the delightful singer [two or three words inserted and deleted] Orpheus took that downward way, [five or six words inserted and deleted] coming in sight of old Cerberus centiceps, he [astutely changed from wisely] feigned an inattention to the hostile appearances of the multiple beast, & [, deleted] waving plectrum over a submissive lyre, he with the stroke raised voice. [This much you know.] It may be communicated to you, that there was then beheld the most singular spectacle ever exhibited on the dizzy line which forms the border of the living & the dead. For those [unaccustomed] musical [tones/notes deleted] in the thin remainder of our sustaining air were so smartingly delicious as to

pierce to the [vitals of the faithful Old Dog before his offended sentiments had leisure to rouse all their heads against a <poor beggar of a > mortal. Nor could he growl, nor bark, though growl & bark were in him: <the batteries/his range? ~~deleted~~> of jaws expressed it. At the same time, his eyeballs gave up. The pouring of the persuasive sweetness into him charmed to silence his commendably sour distaste of an impudent intruder. ~~deleted~~] vitals of the faithful Old Dog before his offended sentiments had leisure to rouse their heads against [a/the ~~deleted~~] poor beggar of a mortal. [Between them & ~~deleted~~/There set free ? inserted and deleted] The persuasive sweetness poured into him [caused an encounter & a/three words deleted] wrestling; the batteries of jaws expressed it. They gaped; at the same time his eyeballs gave up. All the Dog, that would have barked the intruder [an hundredfold] back to earth, was one compulsory [centurion] yawn. [And ~~deleted~~] Moreover tears, issue of the frightful internal wedding of the dulcet & the sour [(a ravishing rather of the latter by the former),] rolled [off changed from from] his muzzles.

Now, if you are not for insisting that a simile shall be composed of exactly the like notes in another octave, [if ~~deleted~~] you will catch the [fine] flavour of analogy, [and be/the light and airy give us <illegible word> ~~deleted~~] wafted [you ~~deleted~~] in a beat of wings across the scene of the application of the Rev. Septimus Barmby to Mr. Victor Radnor, [that he might enter the house in the guise of suitor] for the hand of Nesta Victoria. Here we have the excelling merit of comparisons & metaphors: they spring you to vault over thickets. But, as with the visits of Immortals, you must be ready to receive them. Beware, too, of examining them scrupulously; [they have a trick of wearing to vapour when closely scanned:] let it be reverently, gratefully for their aid.

So far the simile is absolute, that Mr. Barmby passed: he was at liberty to pursue his quest (A,330-332).

In passing, it is noteworthy that the Orpheus image appears to derive from a jotting for future reference which Meredith did so use. A bundle of miscellaneous manuscript

the palate the comparison begins to have hints of more of the novel's ingredients than are immediately evident. Thus there is the connection of Barmby and Orpheus, both singers and both venturing to claim a bride, which is the basis of the conceit and pretty far-fetched at that. But then Victor is likened to Cerberus guarding the underworld: again this is not a strict analogy, but there is relevance in 'the dizzy line which forms the border between the living and the dead' for the condition of Mrs. Burman, and also increasingly for Nataly and Victor himself. This kind of manner can too easily be labelled and dismissed as sheer perversity on Meredith's part. It may indeed be oblique and uneconomical - and wilfully difficult - but paradoxically it is enlightening, in warning how such passages must be read, and moreover, for all its sportiveness the warning is very much in earnest.

The rewriting of this chapter, apart from the issues raised at its opening, illustrates most of the promptings to revision already discussed. Thus, after Barmby has been permitted to press his suit, the A manuscript raises more explicitly the questions of whether Barmby is suggesting that the match would be advantageous to the Radnors, and Victor's reaction to the proposal, which has elements of identification ("Honourable passion,...we ought not to be hard" - A,333) though he regards the idea as preposterous (quoting witticisms on Barmby - "a voice, Fenellan says, like Bacchus up from the cellar-bin" - A,333). In the later version, in line with the general softening of ridicule of the comic characters, there is some sympathy permitted for Barmby (comments like "he has a tone" are added as afterthoughts - B,409; p. 190), but the episode

is treated more in terms of the reactions of Nataly and Victor: particularly, Nataly's reflections include yet another realisation inserted in B that Victor is not impregnable (B,410; p. 190).

One of Our Conquerors has in indirect speech the mention of Mrs. Burman which provokes Nataly's seizure: in the earlier version, Victor's report is made more directly. His reflections which follow are fuller and more imagistic in B, the presentation of his state of mind being summed up in the addition of the characteristic recognition and rejection of the true state of affairs: "Then, was that day of the announcement of Lakelands to Nataly, to be accounted a gloomy day? He would not have it so" (p. 192). The whole paragraph following, also an addition, enacts his disturbance, first in the uneasiness revealed in his monologue, and then in authorial description, both objective and figurative, culminating in

...he suddenly felt foreign to himself. The shrouded figure of his lost Idea on London Bridge went by.

A peep into the folds of the shroud was granted him:- Is it a truth, that if we are great owners of money, we are so swoln with a force not native to us, as to be precipitated into acts the downright contrary of our tastes? (p. 192).

This is the same kind of image, suitably darker in its implications, as was introduced at the end of chapter ix B, "An Inspection of Lakelands", to conclude the notation of Victor's disturbance at that point: "A shadow of his missed Idea on London Bridge seemed to cross him from the close flapping of a wing within reach. He could say only, that it would, if caught, have been an answer to the thought disturbing him" (p. 94). The Idea is now 'lost',

not merely 'missed'; its being 'shrouded' draws tighter the ominous mesh of references to spectres and death which hangs about the central characters; and part of its import is beginning to become clear to Victor, though he is still unable to ask himself quite the right question - acting to "the downright contrary of our tastes" is not solely a result of excessive wealth.

The equivalent kind of statement in A is more summary, and by the same token more detached. The uncomfortable feeling of understanding too well, without the protection afforded by identifying completely, that is engendered in B is quite absent from such remarks on Victor as "being one of the men who see themselves [whole] only in the flashes of a storm, he stood commonly blind to the creature that he was" (A,337), which is direct and implies an adverse judgement.

Though mention of Lady Grace Halley has consistently been deleted earlier in the revision, the longish scene of her visit to Radnor in his office is added, presenting succinctly the temptation she is to him, and prompting him to muse on women generally. The scene with Dudley Sowerby which follows has been handled with some care, if the fits and starts indicated by various attempts in the manuscript are any indication. Meredith appears to have written pp. 338-42, discarded them; gone ahead with pp. 338-45; rejected 343-5; written 343-7, cast 347 aside half-way, begun again and then proceeded more easily (or else destroyed subsequent spoiled pages).

In B, the news of Barmby's proposal for Nesta is not baldly stated, but gathered by Lady Grace in the course of her conversation with Victor (B,416; p. 194): in A, however, he had "dropped a word concerning Mr. Barmby's pretensions to Lady Grace Halley, in a simple way" (A,338). By the same token, both versions of A indicate that Dudley's appearance is expected by Victor: "Next day, at four o'clock of the afternoon, the Hon. Dudley Sowerby surprised the eyebrows at least of [Mr.] Victor Radnor by calling at his office. In truth, Mr. Sowerby had not been expected thus early".³ By the published text, however, the paragraph has become "Next afternoon the announcement by Skepsey of the Hon. Dudley Sowerby, surprised Victor's eyebrows at least, and caused him genially to review the visit of Lady Grace" (p. 197). This is an instance where the final revision makes a process of deduction by the reader necessary. However, mystification of his audience is not the only effect Meredith achieves, since the revision by suppressing the statement that it is Victor's conscious intention to lure Sowerby through Lady Grace's intervention, in its minor way supports the sense of subtlety of psychological representation developed in the final text: the point about the character of Victor is not his conniving in itself so much as the state of mind which produces it.

3. In each case, I quote the second version of A,338 which is altered only slightly from the first: e.g. (i) has "The day following,...Mr. Dudley Sowerby.."

There is another suppression which is perhaps less artistically motivated. In both versions of A, the couple of paragraphs which follow Sowerby's appearance give Victor's comparison of him with Barmby:

Compared to Mr. Barmby, he looked eclipsingly handsome. [Victor was bent on thinking well of him: but <Mr. Sowerby/two words deleted> was taken for the occasion to manoeuvre him against another, <&> the need of keeping him in contrast with Mr. Barmby, to give him vantage, was in itself an estimate of his qualities....As usual with him in such states of internal opposition, he soon had Colney Durance at his ears, like a revival of an irritation. The dryness of this young lover provoked it.] Mr. Sowerby hit the perfection of the English modern aristocratic type, or popular notion of it. He had what Colney Durance maliciously named the "sick falcon" in the features of a nobility "given to prey [languidly] within the range of clipped wings" (A,338-9; first version).

The second time around, the two short sentences which precede this comparison are expanded in an implicit contrast of the two lovers before it is made explicitly. It is noteworthy that Meredith momentarily revives to the 'fine flavour' of his Orpheus analogy, though dispensing with it in B.

He was commercially brief & bald. It could be seen that an agitation was in his frame. Although neither a Pagan nor a classical Orpheus, he might have spoken in rather more coloured style (the conventional blotches or bridal rosettes of the occasion), & he would better have expressed his feelings, if he had imagined it to be agreeable to a City merchant, whose preference for the plain positive, upon the question of a marriage, lends him for once a resemblance to lords. Mr. Sowerby named, in justice to himself, his expectations: & they were brilliant; as is also the sun upon a desert.

Hard for poor Fredi! Victor thought she deserved more of a poetical wooer....Compared [to/with deleted] Mr. Barmby in appearance, he was eclipsingly handsome: [only deleted] one had to keep him in contrast with Mr. Barmby ['s exterior] to give him

vantage. What was named by Colney Durance the "sick falcon" in the features of a sunken nobility, distinguished the young gentleman; [and he was not as Colney said of the class/nor was he deleted] one to "enliven the state of domesticated fowl with a [n hereditary] turn for preying"; eminently the reverse, he was of good moral repute, a worker, a commendable citizen (A,338-9; second version).

All of this, and another paragraph from the A manuscript ("With him was no bewitchment...Love was unmentioned, quite a matter of course..." - A,338, second version), gets incorporated into one long paragraph in B, a peculiarly dense piece of Meredithese. For once it is possible to follow the author distilling his expression to such obscure succinctness.

Whether or not Colney Durance drew his description of a sunken nobility from the "sick falcon" distinguishing the [handsome] features of Mr. Sowerby, that [beaked/plumed deleted] invalid was particularly noticeable [to Victor] during the statement of his case, although the young gentleman was far from being one, [in Colney's words,] to enliven the condition of domestic fowl with an hereditary turn for "preying;" eminently the reverse; he was of good moral repute, a worker, a commendable citizen (B,422; p. 197).

Beginning to discuss this particular process of revision, I said that the result was perhaps less artistically defensible than in other instances; and this is certainly true if intelligibility and a 'realistic' imitation of the character's process of thought are criteria of judgement. But there is a different kind of imitation which is very typical of Meredith, distinguishing his style as early as Richard Feverel. Here, the formal and rational qualities of the language of the printed version represent the effect of Sowerby's elaborate and sterile politeness on Victor.

The indication of Colney's function as a kind of superego for Victor is reduced to the mention of his name and his epigram, with Radnor's conjecture about the basis for the epithet 'sick falcon'. Where the first draft actually uses the expression 'states of internal opposition' (A,338) to describe the processes of Victor's mind here, and gives a broader hint of Colney's role which develops almost to explicitness in the second draft ("...he was perforce critical, which was a condition always bringing the buzz of Colney Durance at his ears, either for dissent or a reluctant agreement" - A,3~~39~~40), no such cues survive in the final version. Rather, Victor's disturbance is enacted. The ambivalent attitude to the aristocracy comes through in Colney's 'sick falcon' conceit, with its various synonyms - 'sunken nobility', 'beaked invalid' ('beaked' presumably being substituted for the original 'plumed' to make the phrase more closely parallel with the others and to prepare for 'preying' later on in the sentence - B,422) - and the witty artifice is deadeningly offset in the sentence as in Victor's mind by the sensible 'eminently the reverse' and the solid bourgeois virtues with which Sowerby is credited. The very use of a logical formula like 'Whether or not....' to open an account of asking for a young lady's hand in marriage (and the description of this a little later as 'the statement of his case') warns of a lack of passion, which is more clearly seen as the focus of the paragraph shifts to Sowerby in the next sentence.

Sowerby's feeling in the situation is conveyed through a free indirect representation of his speech. "But there was the obligation upon him to speak - it is expected in such cases, if only as a formality - of his

'love': hard to do even in view and near to the damsel's reddening cheeks: it perplexed him" (p. 197). The mimicry of the faltering pompous phrases was originally commented on in the following sentence: in manuscript, Meredith wrote "He spoke of his passion hesitatingly" (B,422), but, apparently in proof, changed this to read "He dropped a veil on the bashful topic" (p. 197), which images and does not merely describe the hesitation. So he continues to outline his case: "his tone was the same as when he reverted to the material points; his present income, his position in the great Bank of Shotts & Co., his prospects, the health of the heir to the Cantor earldom". The second version of A makes the point in a simile on Sowerby's expectations: "they were brilliant; as is also the sun upon a desert" (A,339); and just as B is less direct in spelling out his sterility, so the earlier straightout statements of how the young man is suiting his tone to his impression of Mr. Radnor is modified to a generalisation which further mimics his tone and attitude of superiority: "When [three words deleted] a person is not read by character, the position or profession [is called on to] ~~supply~~ changed from supplies] raised print [for/two lines deleted] the finger-ends to spell" (B,423; p. 198). While the mimicry is cruel in its accuracy, some of the imputation of conscious calculation on Sowerby's part is removed by making the statement a generalisation of his instinctive reaction, and imaging his insensitivity as the result of blindness and over-reliance on a code of etiquette.

Insofar as Meredith is condensing and complicating in his revision, he seems to be proceeding with some purpose, since the interplay of desire and expectation, warm feeling and cool appraisal, in each party is

dextrously evoked. He frequently protests that he means to make the reader work, and indeed succeeds in his aim; but he is not generally so perverse that no guidance at all is to be found, given that the reader is not limited by his expectations of how the author should develop inner action.

Not all the revision withdraws obvious aid to the reader, however. The paragraph beginning "Hard on poor Fredi! was Victor's thought...[She deserved a more poetical lover!]" His paternal sympathies for the girl besought in love, [revived his past/called up his deleted] feelings [as a wooer/on like occasion deleted]" (B,423; p. 198) sets out Victor's feelings and thoughts at this juncture, soliciting a more sympathetic and so less comfortable attitude towards him, because we are made aware that he is not simply ignoring Nesta's wishes in his scheming. Not all the exposition is made readily accessible, of course: "the cognizant eye of a Lucretian Alma Mater having seat so strongly in Victor, demanded as a right an effusion of the promising amorous graces on the part of the acceptable applicant to the post of husband of that peerless" signals his veering back to treating the situation as a mercantile transaction, but the narrator's omniscience adds a classical reference which underscores earlier hints of the tragic outcome, in that Victor, like Lucretius, goes mad and in a sense destroys himself. Moreover, a Lucretian philosophy, attempting to explain the course of events without resort to a postulate of divine intervention, contrasts ironically with Victor's confidence in his election by Fortune and his attempts to master Fate. These fine flavours of analogy help defend the language here against what may seem unanswerable charges of periphrasis and pomposity; though even if the import of the mention of Lucretius is missed, the tension

between the business-man's dry style and vocabulary, and the subject, young love, makes Meredith's point.⁴

The succeeding paragraph is also freshly written in B, following the hardening of Victor's decision as every possibility of his acting naturally is shut out.

Victor loved clear honesty, as he loved light: and though he hated to be accused of not showing a clean face in the light, he would have been moved and lifted to confess to a spot by the touch at his heart. Dudley Sowerby's deficiencies, however, were outweighed by the palpable advantages of his birth, his prospects, and his good repute for conduct; add thereto his gentlemanly manners (pp. 198-9).

Then his own awareness of the situation is described, with a couple of revisions in manuscript which sharpen the account - he is not only conscious of his power, but confident of how to use it: "Victor sighed again over his poor Fredi; and in telling Mr. Sowerby that the choice must be left to her, he had the regrets of a man [aware of/ who knew deleted] his persuasive arts [and how they would be used, to think] that he was actually making the choice" (B,424-5; p. 199).

Now Meredith is able to weigh in with the full force of an authorial directive. There is some manuscript adjustment (B,425) before he finally settles on the terms of the address: "Observe how fatefully he who has a scheme is the engine of it..." (p. 199). The corresponding section in A is discreet in the extreme about Victor's

4. Meredith may have been supplementing his recollections of classical training with a more recent treatment of the Roman poet, Tennyson's "Lucretius" (1868).

motivation here: the first version reads simply "Many were the reasons (in other words, his heart was under the [eye/gaze deleted] of an imperative one) why he wished to postpone an explicit understanding & agreement with the young gentleman" (339-40). In the second draft, this becomes

Deploable as it certainly was to think that the baldness [of this] lover [made him acceptable as the/was the deleted] Fairy Prince for the winning of the Peerless, it had to be thought, [with satisfaction for the kernel of the thought,] to serve a purpose unwritten, unsketched, quite undefined. He who has a scheme is the engine of it, no longer the man of his tastes; he is on a line of rails for a terminus; [& he may cast languishing eyes over waysides right & left, he has doomed himself to proceed, with <a self-devouring >hunger for the object.] Reason connected with the idea in Victor's mind as to why he wished to postpone anything explicit: the present move being merely to check Mr. Barmby, leaving its issues to Fredi & Fortune (341).

The advantage gained from making Victor's reasons - as he sees them, and as the reader suspects them to be - more explicit in the published text is evident. Fuller comprehension makes outright censure of Victor more difficult and complex. And Meredith rams home this advantage in expanding the image of the man with a scheme as the engine of it: 'Observe how fatefully...', the paragraph begins, and the small changes made stress the destructive effects of such a fixation. Not only tastes but principles are jettisoned; the object of the machinations is qualified, being only 'half-desired'; moreover 'probably manhood gone at the embrace of it' - and if not this loss, at least 'the forfeit of pleasure'.

Observe how fatefully he who has a scheme is the engine of it; he is no longer the man of his tastes or of his principles; he is on a line of rails for a terminus; and he may cast languishing

eyes across waysides to right and left, he has doomed himself to proceed, with a self-devouring hunger for the half desired; probably manhood gone at the embrace of it. This may be or not, but Nature has decreed to him the forfeit of pleasure...(p. 199).

The verdict, though compassionate, is unequivocally "Guilty".

The next little incident, Dudley's proposing a meeting of the families, is similarly exploited in successive revisions. At first in A:

Mr. Sowerby spoke of visits between the families.

"Honoured," Victor said, hurriedly, smilingly. "But at present we will go on as we are...." (340).

This is only slightly altered the next time:

In reply to Mr. Sowerby's allusion to an interchange of visits between the families, he said, hurriedly, smilingly: "Honoured. But just for a while we will go on as we are" (341).

and so on through a much lengthier series of excuses than the first draft offers. The suggestion is added:

Mr. Sowerby bowed. "I was to say from my mother," he observed, "that in the event of an intention to present Miss Radnor at Court....
(sic)"

"But not this year?" said Victor, [looking as if his head had come out of hot water.] "We think it rather confuses - too heavy a dose for a very young girl - Yes, yes, her time will come" (342-3).

B puts much of the substance of the conversation into indirect speech which has the ring of a parliamentary report:

Young Dudley fully agreed that the choice must be with Miss Radnor; he alluded to her virtues, her accomplishments. He was waxing to fervidness. He said he must expect competitors;

adding, on a start, that he was to say, from his mother, she, in the case of an intention to present Miss Radnor at Court....(sic).

Victor waved hand for a finish, looking as though his head had come out of hot water. He sacrificed Royalty to his necessities, under a kind of sneer at its functions: 'Court! my girl?... there's plenty of time...By and by perhaps' (pp. 199-200).

(The conciliatory 'By and by perhaps' is an insertion in B, 426). The formality of the minute-book is dissolved with the comment that Victor looks "as though his head had come out of hot water". Meredith is perhaps using an idiomatic sense of Victor's being in hot water as well as the more literal inflammatory properties of such an immersion in talking of Radnor's rare discomposure. However, the detachment of reporting from the outside is retained: comment on Victor's reaction has already been made, this is an inevitable instance of his fateful course.

In the published text, Victor makes no statement to Dudley concerning an introduction to Inchling, but merely ushers the young man into his partner's office. The incident does not occur in the first draft of A; in the second draft, Inchling at first appears under another (indecipherable) name - "He had originally been the head of the Firm" (343): this page is rewritten, and his eminence pushed even further back - "He had been once the head of the Firm" (343); and by the published version he is without equivocation "the figure-head of the Firm" (p. 200). It is presumably to Mr. Inchling's unblemished respectability that Victor has recourse after having been taken off guard with the suggestion that Nesta be presented at court. Only in the final version is a clue to Victor's purpose given: "a respectable City merchant indeed, whom Dudley could read-off in a glimpse of the downright contrast to his partner...." (p. 200). Later in chapter

xxvii, Victor's attitude to Inchling is accounted for when after he has kissed Lady Grace he again goes to his partner:

Victor went in to Mr. Inchling's room, and kept Inchling from speaking, that he might admire him for he knew not what, or knew not well what. [The good <fellow changed from man> was devoted to his wife...] He had a curious recollection of how his knowledge of Inchling and his wife being always in concert, ~~entirely~~ [-whatever they might think in private-/~~& deleted~~] ~~devoted~~ to him in action, had influenced, if it had not originally sprung, his resolve to cast off the pestilential cloak of obscurity shortening his days, and emerge before a world he could illumine to give him back splendid reflections. Inchling and his wife, it was: because the two were one: and if one, and [subservient/devoted ~~deleted~~] to him, knowing all the story, why, it foreshadowed a conquered world! (B, 643; p. 328).

Without exploring all its implications, this later incident clearly marks a heightening of Victor's overweening pride. His arrogance is underlined in a substitution like that of 'subservient' for 'devoted'.

Otherwise the digression on Inchling serves to add something to Victor's history (the cotton speculation in India - only in the last draft) and to the satire of English merchant classes kept up through Colney and Dr. Schlesien. Meredith cuts short the first run on this when it threatens to get out of hand: the version he finally accepts for A spells out Sowerby's mental processes more deliberately than the final version, which does it all very neatly:

Victor's African room, containing large wall-maps of auriferous regions, was inspected; and another, where clerks were busy over

miscellaneous Continents. Dudley Sowerby hoped he might win the maiden.

He and Victor walked in company Westward (p. 202).

The tone of the first sentence of the paragraph compels acceptance of Radnor's own arrogant yet off-hand attitude to his business, and certainly intimates later fatal manifestations of the same pride. Phrases like 'African room', 'auriferous regions', 'miscellaneous Continents' are overwhelming in their assumptions, and prepare for the very abrupt 'Dudley Sowerby hoped...'. The earlier version, as I said, was more explicit:

Two other rooms of Victor's, devoted to Continents, were shown. Skepsey was [on a ladder] at pigeon-holes of the last room.

Mr. Sowerby's habit of thinking backward, in the hour for the stamp of observation, put him at a social disadvantage. He was not so stupefied [or stolid] as he appeared while conversing on the walk Westward; he was [only deleted] painfully picking up the trifles he had dropped [behind him, or mindful of those he ought to have dropped; and as a scanning/memory and as a scanning deleted] memory notified to him that he had not spoken [of Miss Radnor] what was worthy of a place in recollection, [of Miss Radnor deleted] & had thereby been unjust to his feelings (A, 345; ~~second~~ second version).

Chapter xv A continues on for a page or so past the point at which xviii in B breaks off. There is mention of the preparations for the great concert at Lakelands in August (which is effectively subsumed in chapter xx, "The Great Assembly at Lakelands") and more talk of Nesta's reactions to her two suitors in the same fairy-tale terms as the previous chapter, which is no doubt omitted from B because it is redundant.

10. NEW DIRECTIONS

It was apparently after writing the untitled chapter xvi of A Conqueror in Our Time that Meredith became so dissatisfied with the progress of the novel that he began the complete rewriting which was eventually to be published as One of Our Conquerors: at all events, p. 374 is the last page of chapter xvi, and the last which survives of the earlier manuscript. Even in revision, however, the author appears to have experienced some difficulty in determining the direction of his novel from this point, since there are two rejected drafts of chapter xix of One of Our Conquerors (which corresponds to A's chapter xvi). As with the various attempts at beginning chapter xiv of A, these drafts do not provide convenient evidence for tracing a gradual and painstaking working over the original text: some passages, more or less altered, appear at different stages of the four versions, but one does not build directly on its predecessor.

The very existence of such drafts of a complete chapter raises the question of whether Meredith habitually wrote whole sections more than once before determining on a satisfactory continuation of his story. In the surviving manuscripts of his novels, there is no similar example except for the two versions of chapter vii A, and a draft of chapter i of Lord Ormont and His Aminta. Various versions of parts of The Amazing Marriage may be considered a special case since the novel was composed over a long period, and took several new directions in this time. Of the existing alternative versions, a first draft of a first chapter does not necessarily imply a habit of writing a

chapter more than once; and as I commented in discussing chapter vii A, the alternatives occur at a stage of the narrative where new developments are expected. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, then, while admitting that this is a tenuous basis for assertion, it seems likely that these chapters are the exception rather than the rule in Meredith's processes of composition. Generally, Meredith seems to have worked with one draft only, recopying spoiled pages as necessary, and while this claim must be made in the absence of much evidence, it is supported by the appearance of the manuscript of the unfinished novel, Celt and Saxon, which, page for page, is not significantly different in the pattern of insertions and so on from The Egoist, a completed work of similar date.

In the case of the successive attempts at this chapter of One of Our Conquerors, Meredith may be discerned playing a kind of "How many children had Lady Macbeth?" game. He gives much fuller and more explicit accounts of characters than are strictly necessary for the evolution of his plot, but gradually sorts out the balance of analysis and exposition and authorial directives he feels to be suitable.

Chapter xvi in A deals with Victor's view of his situation as he lies sleepless waiting for the death of Mrs. Burman and the entry into Lakelands, giving a much more explicit statement of worries and doubts than in any subsequent version though some of what is said here is in fact contradicted later. Despite himself, he feels compassion for Mrs. Burman, but resorts to constant activity "to keep him off particular slides into

[subterranean occult] reflection...Was he then actually on that sharp edge where the best & the worst of a man meet, not to break in opposition, but to commingle & be indivisible, [each] inextricable?" (A,357-8). Meredith is using similar techniques for developing the inner action of his character as have been employed elsewhere: omniscient description and interior monologue mainly, since it is a fairly conscious and controlled process of thought which is being presented, with quite detailed perception and self-knowledge manifested directly "in character", or indicated by the author. And so we get such clear descriptions of his state of mind as this:

Victor...asked himself a thousand questions in the dumb language of men under stress, who are on the border between sensations & ideas. Why was he looking at Nature [& the world] with the eye of Colney Durance? How came it that he, of all men alive, had gloomy views of the object he was gaining? No, the object was bright...but the situation glowered:- or no again, the situation was fair....(A,358-9).

Meredith announces what Victor is to do, and then produces the character in action. Victor thinks of Mrs. Burman:

Poor soul! - [but not forgetting/except deleted] that she was against nature all her life.

...So, unwilling though they be, the constitutionally slow are incited to move faster & relieve us of incubi! - Us? Ay, the favoured of Fortune. Victor was religiously thanking his Goddess in this naming of himself as her favourite: it was her due, although he had deserved the favours by the exercise of his wits & his audacity...

...Victor...struck himself a blow that sent him diving for the consolation of pretty pearly sophistries: he wished her to be relieved of pain: she would be happier in the next world:- these were fine ones, they were fine sham ones, good for the purpose.

They refreshed him, as a chemical scent a crowded room (A, 360-2).

Some of this (the piece about the sophistries, for instance) survives into the published text in a modified form; and the manner of the final form is similar too, in the alternation of Victor's voice and the author's, at varying distances from him.

The end of the paragraph which begins with the 'chemical scent' epitomises the obviousness of this draft:

And at present, lying on his back, beneath a weight of darkness, [&] one heavily craped figure distinguishable through the gloom by density, as a blot on a black pad (craped to a certainty she would be, after losing her second husband: next to matrimony, her passion was for crape), at present his elasticity was at moments ineffective in jumping from thrusts & shielding weak places (A,362-3).

By the published text, this comes out very differently (it is omitted in the first draft of chapter xix, but reappears in the second): the beginning of the sentence is practically the same, but the jibe about Mrs. Burman's passion for crape is omitted, and Victor's paralysis in the face of the threat she represents acted out:

...one heavily craped figure...accused the answering darkness within him, until his mind was dragged to go through the whole case by morning light; and the compassionate man appealed to common sense, to stamp and pass his delectable sophistries; as, that it was his intense humaneness, which exposed him to an accusation of inhumanity; his prayer for the truly best to happen, which anticipated Mrs. Burman's expiry. They were simple sophistries, fabricated to suit his needs, readily taking and bearing the imprimatur of common sense. They refreshed him, as a chemical scent a crowded room (pp. 206-7).

The dissolution and recombination of elements in the chapter in the process of revision is apparent here. And

Meredith uses an indirect interior monologue putting himself at a remove from his authorial omniscience in the A version, on the one hand, and the kind of medley of soliloquy and direct interior monologue quoted earlier on the other, achieving a much more demanding juxtaposition of Victor's private appraisal of himself and public judgement of him (for instance, in 'They were simple sophistries...').

The next paragraph in A describes the transition it makes: "He directed resolutely the course of his mind to business...But his turmoil...made play of the effort" (A,363). And there is a jump to thoughts of the Tyrol, and a couple of pages of description of the liberty and happiness of bygone days there which appear almost unchanged in the published text, and which prompt sharp questionings in appropriately staccato clauses, and with the exaggerated and idealised imaging of a situation so typical of Victor:

Then why not away at once for the revival of it?

Lakelands imposed a dungeon presence.

[But deleted] What had caused him to build a dungeon for himself & his dearest!....

Nataly's little country cottage, her shadowy cool dairy cottage, would never have been an encumbrance or hindrance.

Living in shade, too -& have we not heaven's own sunlight [within us]? as the dear woman thought, [he knew]- in shade we are covered & guarded. And obscurity is no disgrace: it means peace; the external & internal peace (A,366-7).

Of course this is not an attitude Victor can accept and he resorts to Colney's exorcising epigrams for defence - "he named it for the stuff it was, [asinine nonsense,

'the very hee-haw of nonsense,' in Colney's phrase; & he attributed its prevalence with him/& attributed its prevalence deleted] to a sort of wakeful nightmare" (A,368) - but even so, he cannot set his mind at rest. This whole section is a 'wakeful nightmare' which is now presented more fully in language according with Victor's florid vision:

The pile of brickwork stood against every idea that plumed a wing for flight.

Views of London Bridge were a pleasant alternation with it. The ridiculous word of the man who had helped him to rise to his feet, & imagined an offence, began to drum & trumpet... And singularly, the recurrence of the word [in a brassy note, & the drum punctuating under it,] launched him as from the swing of a catapult on his deepest reason for erecting Lakelands.

It was to do battle; [for he loved battling. It was] to show himself with his Nataly [erect? inserted and deleted] beside him eminent in daylight. It was to command, subject the world to the queenly woman, so rewarding her for the sacrifice of herself to him: that, instead of the two truest lovers on earth running and plunging like a pair of water-rats before dogs & boys from hole to hole of abominable [ignoble]weed-banks, with choice of the town-sewer for [ultimate] safety! Victor insisted on the [extremest] contrast. It pronounced absolution (A,370-1).

So far this is the accustomed presentation of Victor's mind at work, opening with the move possible in this kind of monologue, of Meredith's image of how Lakelands inhibits the character's thoughts. Several senses come into play - after the visual, the auditory - again, while Victor experiences "drum and trumpet", this description is not his, but is a metaphor supplied by the narrator and kept in play for a little in 'a brassy note, & the drum'. The articulation of his motivation in building Lakelands, as he sees it, is made quite direct, however, and though Meredith weighs in at the end with two short sentences of

authorial comment - "Victor insisted on the extremest contrast. It pronounced absolutism" - these only explain quietly what is already evident.

The next paragraph is not controlled with such integrity. It opens with Victor making an admission of which in the light of what has gone before he simply is not capable; and then resorts to a conditional construction to say what he would have realised had he been accustomed to introspection. The passage goes on almost as if Meredith is outlining to himself what his character's motivation really is.

He saw that what he had designed was, by an imposition of his will [on his fellows,] to conquer [them changed from his fellows]. He [still] deemed it [still deleted] possible that he might override them. The flash of introspection did not go further. It would have exposed grounds for a reason so dead against right reason that he would scornfully have rejected it. For [intimacy does not come by flashes, &] we must have the long habit of knowing ourselves if we would know ourselves thoroughly.

Lakelands was Victor's gauntlet flung at the world... 'for Nataly's dear sake'. It would have confounded him (his Nataly too) to hear [that the primal notion of the vast edifice had sprung as a form of his confession of cowardice in having thrown up Craye Farm & Creckholt; or to hear] even a suspicion that his challenge & defiance came of a desire, born of weakness, to conciliate the offended world, be friendly, be petted, be successful socially as he was in public affairs. Being intensely social, he fretted at a division. But he knew no way save by conquest of the world to be in amity with it. Obscurity was the life of the water-rat. Homage, on the contrary, homage of the world to his beloved, offered the sole possible signature & seal of a treaty of peace. Lakelands would exact it.

Upon that he slept, no wiser of himself than previous to these involuntary pierceings of a [fitful] moral lightning (A,371-3).

Such an anatomising of Victor is somewhat repetitive in itself, and also, because of its comprehensiveness, less productive of the reader's participation in the character's awareness than in later versions. An explanation of Nataly's blindness to his true motives is also provided:

The downright motive for the raising of the big house, was absolutely hidden from an intelligent woman, who could not join his native instinct for battle to the grounds for using it in this instance, & imagined that he braved the social world because of his having, as she in her heart's deeps, a sustainment of Nature opposing the world (A,374).

And with a further paragraph on women's closeness to Nature relative to men, the draft ceases.

Turning to the revision of chapter xvi A, Meredith had already incorporated all the analysis of Nataly and Victor which occupied him there, at earlier stages and in a more oblique manner. In the first draft of chapter xix B accordingly, he takes off on a different tack, opening with the conversation between Victor and Dr. Themison which concludes the chapter in its final form. This is followed by several pages on his hopes from Mrs. Burman's death and Dudley Sowerby's courting Nesta, stressing his inability to confide in Nataly, to whom the focus then shifts. The mother is likewise concerned about Sowerby's suit, with the increasingly imminent prospect that Nesta must be told of her illegitimacy.

A thought came: Would it be well while the girl was free at heart?....And the thought came closer: Would it not be prudent now to raise the veil, expose to her how she stood before the world?

But it would be to cast a cloud over the girl's fair day of youth, a blight on the flower she was!

Nataly deferred [it deleted]; knowing the why of her conduct behind the golden robe of sentiment clothing it (B,439; first version).

As in the treatment of Victor in chapter xvi A, this is both a more explicit statement than elsewhere of Nataly's mental processes, and one which indicates her conscious recognition of evasiveness.

Meredith next discusses at some length Nesta's own attitude to Sowerby, gives an estimation of the young man, ("he could boast of qualities besides the distinctive negatives to common vices: good son, good citizen, good husband is the assured deduction" - B,445; first version), suggests Nesta's influence on him ("his intelligence...grew, though rather in height than breadth, with the expansion of his feelings of late") and turns to Dudley's view of her, emphasising the confusion into which association with the Radnors plunges him ("He would quit the Radnor household with a feeling that he had left a foreign family behind him" - B,452; first version). The chapter ends with Victor, whose doubts and regrets are less fully formulated than in the earlier manuscript:

Victor, while stoutly defending Dudley, & still holding to him & his purpose, had become the slave of a distaste, that rendered him [dubious/two words deleted] on behalf of his Fredi...Colney, [aside to Victor & Nataly,] granted the improvement [in his courtship.] "He says plainly to everybody, Do you not think I promise to make an excellent father of Philistines?" And there was just enough of truth in this labelling, to madden Victor with the thought of his [becoming/being deleted] the grandfather of Philistines" (B,454-5; first version).

Modified, this glance at posterity which first appeared in chapter xv A, survives into the published version (p. 204), in a passage which brings together other reflections

originally scattered through the draft - "Lakelands & Dudley, if not originally conceived as one object in aim, had now to be thought of as one" (B,457; first version). It is in the last few pages of the chapter that Victor's bafflement fully emerges:

It seemed almost as if, in the original conception of Lakelands, a half of him had rushed to action independent of counsel with [the deleted] another half, that loved sweet sunniness & pastoral fluting & the gentle embrace of friends, abhorring gossip, scandal, fingers of scorn; naturally abhorrent of a nest of reptiles.

He distinguished the fact of what he had done; unable to trace it to the how; yet aware, as in a silence of the elements around a driving engine, of the whirr of the masterful force within him, stronger than himself. He would not have been in disunion with it, he thought, had his Nataly possessed more courage. He refrained from thinking that he might have consulted her voice upon a matter closely touching her fortunes.

All this belonged to the mood of a minute dampness.

He summoned his will to love Lakelands & whatsoever it involved; & Dudley had the benefit of it. Any regrets for a step he had taken was like a shakeing of his foundations to the man who had assurance of the golden future from the firmness of his foothold (B,458-9; first version).

The substance of this passage is not quite the same as in that discussed from the A manuscript, but the process of dissecting Victor is precisely the same. To begin, however, Meredith in using indirect interior monologue adopts a sort of privy stance between objective authorial comment and the character's own reflections, so that the movements from Victor's assessment of himself to Meredith's transcribing of this, are those of amplification, and not of a change of vantage which involved unwieldy conjectures

in the earlier draft. The indication of what Victor does not consider - 'He refrained from thinking that he might have consulted her voice...' - follows more easily than the comparable 'The flash of introspection did not go further. It would have exposed grounds for a reason so dead against right reason...' (A,371-see pp.352 ff. above). And this case derives ultimately from the tentativeness of 'It seemed almost as if...' which hints that Victor himself can nearly articulate the nature of his rashness: certainly the opposing images of 'pastoral fluting' and 'a nest of reptiles' figure forth his attitudes though they are not attributable to his consciousness. Analysis is not so simply definitive as before. There is a precise discrimination of how much Victor is capable of realising which is not evident in the earlier draft, conveyed primarily through the images, each of which relates to similar images elsewhere (of the engine, and of building). Nevertheless, to some extent the summary is repetitive: little is added, even to intensify the sense of guilt and of being ensnared.

The third try brings the chapter - now given a title, "Containing Divers Matters Inside And Out On The Road Of Our Story" - very close to the published version, "Treats of Nature And Circumstance And The Dissension Between Them And Of A Satirist's Malignity In The Direction Of His Country", the inflation mirroring both the greater length of the chapter itself, and also the stretching of its range. The analysis which has constituted the previous drafts is absorbed into a wider framework in this third attempt, where the sense of Meredith's suddenly achieving the synthesis he had been searching for to launch him on his new direction is quite strong. Even now, the chapter is almost exclusively presented from Victor's point of view:

digressions onto other characters such as occurred in the first B version are cut, and the process continues in revising this second B version into the published form. An extreme example is represented by one sentence in the novel, which is all that remains - because it is all that is needful - of more than a page in manuscript: "Her effort was a poor one, to conceal her dread of the day of the gathering at Lakelands" - p. 215 - summarises B,454-5; second version. There is progressively a refinement and intensification of the handling of Victor's dual concerns of Dudley and Mrs. Burman, the focus moving more subtly and more embracingly. The stage of Radnor's conflict has been set, and in the third draft Meredith begins to set in play also the drama of broad social observation, which is developed more fully still in the published version, as well as the close analysis of individuals with which he is everywhere concerned.

The chapter now opens with a disquisition on Nature and Circumstance, condensed for the published text, followed by the application of this universal conflict in the case of Victor Radnor.

Victor [~~Radnor knew sufficiently/knew very deleted~~] well that it is the [~~word deleted~~] lowest of pleasures to dwell on a pleasure, & the poorest kind of pride which is proud of a gain. He was not to be numbered among the sensual misers. But loving as he did the world he had challenged, he was a susceptible creature to chills from a breath of it: not to speak of wounds: & positive wounds quicken the blood, they count for less. He wanted in consequence to feel his hearty grasp of an equivalent for the apprehensions if not pangs that he & his Nataly (he through his Nataly, as he said to himself) must undergo at Lakelands: though no doubt they would be for the most part imaginary. And here was a Dudley Sowerby, the direct issue of the conception of Lakelands...(B,436; second version).

The successive revisions of this chapter have moved closer to Victor, seeking a more economical and cogent means of showing the mixture of his feelings. As has been seen, this is not necessarily the most apparently direct mode, of interior monologue, because of the difficulty of showing Victor's hypocrisy in this mode. Here again, Meredith gives a third person commentary which verges into erlebte Rede: he is again explaining and analysing the quality of Victor's perceptions. In his final revision, for the published text, he is able to dispense with this kind of meticulousness, deriving quite directly the question of how profitable is it to attempt to go against the decrees of Nature from the opening conceit about Nature and Circumstance, and using the generalised discursion to permit immediate entry on Victor's situation without setting it up in particular terms. So the consideration of him starts right at the heart of the matter:

Why be scheming? Victor asked. Unlike the gallant soldiery, his question was raised in the blush of a success, from an examination of the quality of the thing won; although it had not changed since it was first coveted; it was demonstrably the same: and an astonishing dry stick he held, as a reward for perpetual agitations and perversions of his natural tastes. Here was a Dudley Sowerby, the direct issue of the conception of Lakelands....(p. 204).

The consideration of what has in fact been achieved in Victor's view so far in the Lakelands campaign is condensed into the one sentence, his bewilderment at the emptiness of his apparent success being in part conveyed through his questioning the seeming logic of his proceedings. After the 'father of Philistines' passage, the published version adds a few sentences which intensify the dramatisation of Victor's quandary: "What if his Fredi turned out one of

the modern young women, who have drunk of ideas? He caught himself speculating on that, as on a danger. The alliance with Dudley really seemed to set him facing backward" (p. 204). Additions in the third (published) draft of chapter xix are generally of this order, quietly guiding interpretation rather than developing a full-scale analysis. So, for instance, the short paragraph beginning "He was as little disposed to reject it..." (p. 205) is added to indicate how the deferment of telling Dudley of Nesta's illegitimacy arises from Victor's self-deception - which, as has been shown in the preceding paragraph ("Why had he roused a slumbering world?") is an active process of refusing to see. This passage incorporates a similar evasion from the second draft, which is however much less revealing:

He disrelished his companion's minceing tone of security....not awake & muscular of the strenuous outer world; and a wretched piece of tenuity to stand against a satirist's remembered epigrams & Dartrey's figure of [~~scorn/anger~~]. It would really be nothing of a task to let this young man hear an item of family history. On the other hand, why be troubled by thoughts of doing it! (B,447-8 - second version).

In the paragraph following the 'father of Philistines' in the second draft (beginning in the published version "Nataly was busy with her purchases of furniture..." - p. 205), there is a sentence deleted: "Nataly was bleeding visibly, & he felt for her, but thought of her as a subordinate bound to be submissive with a cheerful faith, if only because of his control of himself to keep the direst matter of their domestic intercourse from troubling her weak bosom" (B,438; second version) - presumably there are second thoughts about Nataly's showing her hurt, and about the accuracy and

desirability of such an account of Victor's view of their relationship. Mrs. Burman's dream as recounted by Jarniman via Skepsey, of appearing on 23rd August does not figure in the rejected version: it is one more detail in the heightening of the apparent discursiveness in the drift of Victor's thoughts, indicating his fixation, and his involvement in the web of intrigue.

This tautening is continued in the next few paragraphs. There has been a series of similes omitted from that beginning "Victor had to keep silent and discourse of general prosperity", (p. 206), which read

He had to keep silent & discourse of general prosperity, showing a coloured mist when his passion was to disclose a landscape, that he might dote on Nataly's delight in it, & so doing extinguish the fearful anatomy of the sketch of [one/the deleted] incident intervening - horribly desired & required: [hateful/terrible deleted] to hold locked within oneself. The thousand lively distractions of daylight & fellowship buoyed [him] over his deeps until the hour for a rest that would not come by treaty. Nataly heard him in the night... (B,439-40; second version).

Again it is feasible to conjecture that this passage is omitted because the kind of vision it presents is adequately conveyed by other means - in the paragraph which follows about the 'heavily craped figure' for instance (quoted earlier).

Similarly, several sentences on the theme of "A Dudley Sowerby who could have excited his enthusiasm, would, Victor was conscious, have obviated these annoyances" (B,440; second version) are omitted in favour of one which summarises the position ("Not being allowed to impart the distressing dose of comfort he was charged with, he

swallowed it himself; and these were the consequences" - p. 206) and a couple which mention the Duvidney ladies and their fussing, with the effect of putting Victor's sleeplessness into a domestic context and also indicating something of his restlessness in the very fact of the reference to them as his mind roves. The piece on his sleeplessness in the published version is condensed from the second draft, and generally the sense of Victor's circling round the point heightened. Thus two passages in the draft are merged in the published version: "Open air (an opening of the heart) would have been saner; pride in Dudley more exhilarating. But Nataly was weak, the young fellow personally flavourless...The comparison of his girl [~~with/~~ deleted] Dudley became a grimacing contrast" (B,441-2; second version), and a little later,

For she had the touch of the romantic....she had it, & this dry stick - certainly of quality wood, but dry, conventionally varnished, - well! she would have to be like the May-day posy, of the urchins of Craye Farm & Creckholt, upon him. That was how they would suit together. Happily the young fellow's temper was good: an amiable Philistine (B,443; second version).

(The next couple of sentences - omitted from the published version - contain an ominous reference to Dartrey:

"Dudley Sowerby was not a fiery wild Dartrey Fenellan - admired by Nataly, rightly enough; [~~but deleted~~] a problem [~~nevertheless~~] for a girl calling him husband" - B,443-4; second version. It is interesting that in the published version it is Dudley only who reacts to Dartrey - p. 208 - this touch of unconscious clairvoyance on Victor's part being deleted). In the final draft, the two passages are conflated:

All because he could not open his breast to Nataly, by reason of her feebleness; or feel enthusiasm in the possession of young Dudley! A dry stick indeed beside him on the walk Westward. Good quality wood, no doubt, but dry, varnished for conventional uses. Poor dear Fredi would have to crown it like the May-day posy of the urchins of Craye Farm and Creckholt! (p. 207).

Here the compression elicits more forcefully the vehemence with which Victor espouses his rationalisations while perceiving the actuality which requires them.

Victor's interior monologue continues. The interpretation of Dudley's willingness to please is from Radnor's point of view, thinking of himself in the third person as "the great City-merchant", a phrase similar to earlier ones in which he has occasionally revealed his self-image. This particular image moreover is one he has sedulously fostered for Dudley's benefit. His mind wanders from these thoughts to Colney and Dr. Schlesien, formulating the project for "A well-conducted Journal of the sharpest pens in the land" (p. 208) which will reform the English nation. This appearance of the theme of national rivalries is unique to the final draft, and again, the passage might be one of those which support charges concerning Meredith's "propensity for crabbed and superfluous virtuosity"¹ in circumlocutory sentences like "Victor's blood up to the dome of his cranium knocked the patriotic negative" (p. 207). But again it seems to me

1. F. C. Thomson, "Stylistic Revisions of One of Our Conquerors", Yale Univ. Library Gazette, XXXVI (1962), 67.

that Meredith is defensible. "Superfluous to what?" is a question which leads to some inkling of his purpose, since this apparent digression is in its way integral to the presentation of Victor's physical and mental perambulation. That authorial description interrupting the character's soliloquy is inflated so as to convey the exaggerated and dramatic view Victor has of the whole question of English supremacy, and is a cue to his absurdity quite as effective as Jane Austen's quiet undercuttings of her characters. On this occasion, too, the theme of national interest relates quite closely to Victor's current state of mind. His uneasiness is making him assertive; indulging in schemes for social betterment to compensate for his guilt; ironically, stigmatising in others faults such as resentment of criticism which he blatantly displays. A comparable inflation of language, and a similar reaction in the character, occur in chapter v, "The London Walk Westward".

After the plan for "The Whipping-Top" has run itself down, following through from Victor's monologue to Meredith's description of his writing a memorandum about it that night (an example of Victor's seething with schemes, which is oftener talked about than seen), there is a jump to "Young Dudley had a funny inquisitiveness about Dartrey Fenellan" (p. 208). The second draft has none of this abruptness - the progression from one subject to another is more gradual and conventional. Through the rest of the chapter, Meredith's revisions are of much the same order as those described. He transposes conversations and runs a number of distinct occasions together, always developing the nagging sense of disappointment and insecurity in Victor. There is the significant addition

of the paragraph beginning "For Victor Radnor and Colney Durance were the Optimist and Pessimist of their society" (p. 212), which expands a similar passage in chapter viii A, where Victor wonders whether he, like Nataly, should confide in Colney. The opposition of the two men as Optimist and Pessimist is set up, suggesting the need of the Optimist as author for the opinions of the Pessimist as critic, but is not as fully developed as in the later text.

For Victor Radnor and Colney Durance were the Optimist and Pessimist of their society. They might have headed those tribes in the country. At a period when the omnibus of the world appears to its quaint occupants to be going faster, men are shaken into the acceptation, if not performance, of one part or the other as it is dictated to them by their temperaments. Compose the parts, and you come nigh to the meaning of the Nineteenth Century: the mother of these gosling affirmatives and negatives divorced from harmony and awakened by the slight increase of incubating motion to vitality. (p. 212).

This piece is in the highflown essayist's style frequently adopted at times when Meredith is generalising on the broad social theme, and takes up the ideas of various strains in the English character which have been pointed out in previous like expatiations. But though much of what is said here seems portentous, in the extension of the contrast of the personalities of the two men to an embracing statement about qualities of discord in nineteenth-century society, very little is made of it elsewhere. Clearly Meredith intended to focus his "broad & a close observation of the modern world", and present an interaction of the personal and national themes, but does not place a constant emphasis on the parallels. As has been seen, he frequently in revision stresses Colney's

function as a sort of super-ego for Victor, but the wider significance of the tensions between the two men is only hinted here. Whatever else, this passage gives an effective contrast and definition of some aspects of the two personalities, summed up, along with Dudley, as "The three walking in the park, with their bright view, and black view, and neutral view of life, were a comical trio" (p. 213).

One of the biggest changes in the second draft of the chapter is the introduction of Colney's serial story. It is not easy in conscience to argue for this as an improvement; but it is possible to discern Meredith's probable purpose in adding the serial, especially in the light of his revisions of it for the final text.

In the first place, the saga of The Rival Tongues provides the occasion for harping on national characteristics: as Nesta describes it, "a Satiric Serial tale, that hit incidentally the follies of the countries of Europe, and intentionally, one had to think, those of Old England" (p.216). Any comment to emerge is in terms less of the basis for national contention (which is generally obscure) and more in terms of the fact that such contention occurs, with a good deal of ridicule of jealous scheming for a country's pride. It seems to me that the fresh grip Meredith takes on his story at this stage is mainly evidenced by the confidence of his treatment of Victor, where in the process of revision so much bolstering exposition is cast aside, and partly by the return to diversification of the narrative with such intrusions of "broad...observation" of the society.

In certain aspects, the serial as well as touching on wider social issues, comments on the situation which is the main current concern of the novel. For instance, in Dr. Gannius and his daughter Delphica, who is courted by various of the voyagers, including the Rev. Mancate Semhians, there is a parody of Victor, Nesta and Sowerby. The likeness is confirmed in two additions made for the final draft. One of these is Nesta's querying of Dudley's reaction at the end of Colney's narrative, when he replies that he does not take to Delphica, and she wonders "Had Mr. Semhians been modelled on him?" (p. 221), which gives a broad hint that perhaps there are identifications with characters to be made. Characteristically, Meredith does not set up direct analogies, since while Dudley resembles Semhians in his awkwardness and anxiety to please, it is Nesta's other suitor Barmby who is a clergyman.

Another addition when the Rev. Dr. Bouthoin approaches Dr. Gannius (pp. 219-20) further illustrates the way these identifications may operate. Qualities of both scholars relate to Victor: Bouthoin "has no alliances, and he must diplomatize", while Gannius "presents on all sides a solid rampart of recent great deeds done, and mailed readiness for the doing of more, if we think of assailing him in that way." This we, in context Bouthoin, generalises the plight: "We are really like the poor beasts which have cast their shells or cases, helpless flesh to his beak. So we are cousinly" (p. 220. This is part of an insertion in the manuscript, B,461). Meredith is saying again, amongst all this, that Victor is really very vulnerable.

There are numerous other adjustments, mainly stylistic, in the revision of the serial: thus "Blushing over his white necktie, like the coast of Labrador at a sun that peeps passing, Mr. Semhians refers to a conversation he has had with the artless Delphica" (B,460 - second attempt in second version) becomes "Blushing over his white necktie, like the coast of Labrador at the transient wink of its Jack-in-the-box Apollo, Mr. Semhians faintly tells of a conversation he has had with the ingenuous fair one" (p. 219). Most of the revisions similarly render what was anyway a mandarin tone even more precious, a tendency that was noted also at the beginning of chapter iv, the Rajah in London passage, where the same kind of loose and diffused metaphorical comment is offered on the action, and the elevated essayist's note sounded.

Chapter xix concludes with Victor giving Dr. Themison the assurance that he will go to Mrs. Burman if required, an encounter slightly compressed in the published text from the second manuscript draft; and with chapter xx, "The Great Assembly at Lakelands", Meredith shakes free of the trammels of working over what he had already done and proceeds to develop the tragedy. Unless - to be totally pessimistic - there was an earlier draft of more of One of Our Conquerors which has vanished from our ken. But this is unlikely in view of the three chapters xix, which seem to indicate Meredith's difficulty at the point of his fresh departure.

11. REVISION FOR SERIAL PUBLICATION

The course of One of Our Conquerors has by this stage been fairly thoroughly prepared. There is indeed more concentration on Nesta from this point, but clearly as a consequence of the situation which has been set up with such pains from the beginning. Action now proceeds relatively swiftly, with the long-heralded concert at Lakelands, the almost equally loud-proclaimed appearance of Dartrey Fenellan, Nesta's sojourn with the Misses Duvidney and the various dramas associated with it, Nataly's revelation to Dudley, Nesta's realisation of the stigma attaching to her, and her plighting with Dartrey, the visit of Nataly and Nesta to Mrs. Burman, and finally the bitter ironies of the collapse of all Victor's schemes. It hardly needs to be said that much of this is action of the mind - characters' analysis of themselves and conjecture concerning each other - but it is noteworthy that Meredith's marginal and interlinear afterthoughts tend to confirm the pattern of intensifying his presentation of inner action which emerges from consideration of his revision of A Conqueror in Our Time. Similarly he continues to supply glosses on his technique, as in the discussion of metaphor in chapter xxvi. The theme of national characteristics fades away, except in "Mr. Durance's incomprehensible serial story, or whatever it was" (ch. xxvi, p. 315), which continues to operate in the same seemingly haphazard commenting fashion, more on a personal than a social level.

There is one other piece of evidence concerning Meredith's own notions of his novel, provided by the serial

version of One of Our Conquerors which ran in the Fortnightly Review from October 1890 to May 1891. Book publication was in April 1891. The letters do not cast any light on when Meredith actually completed writing the novel; nor is it certain - though it is surely a fair assumption - that he was personally responsible for the cuts made for the serial version. To achieve the required abridgement, Meredith cut out whole chapters rather than subjecting his text to a condensation by omitting a paragraph here and there. Certainly there is some of this kind of cutting: discursive comments through chapter i go, as do pages of reflection in chapter ii, and again in chapter v. But such changes, which generally have the effect of reducing the emphasis on analysis of motivation and thought processes, and making the narrative less turgid for the hypothetical reader, merely whittle at the bulk of the novel. Real slashing begins when chapters vii and viii go completely; there are small cuts in chapter ix, and more extensive ones in chapter x; then seven more chapters (xii-xviii, which include the French expedition, Skepsey's misconduct and Barmby's proposal) also vanish. Chapter xix is quite severely dealt with, though perhaps unexpectedly Colney's serial survives unscathed, while chapter xx is omitted, and chapter xxi broken to make a new chapter, "The Guests at Lakelands", presumably to fit the length required for the second instalment. But from chapter xxii to the end, the serial and the first edition are virtually identical.

Given Meredith's general perversity, this manner of abridgement might indicate expediency only. In serialising Diana of the Crossways, the novel immediately preceding One of Our Conquerors, he had made a mockery of

his protestations about his heroine's being different from the run-of-the-mill romance character by so cutting the novel as to make her exactly that, and her story merely sensational. But there is the unsolved mystery of the apparently premature termination of the serial which may mean that no comparison is really possible between Meredith's procedure in the two instances. Writing to John Morley concerning the serialisation of Beauchamp's Career, Meredith outlined the kind of condensation one would expect: he agreed to

...cut it short as much as I can, without endangering the arteries...It strikes me that the parts to lop will be the letters, a portion of the Visit to Normandy, the heavier of the electioneering passages, introductory paragraphs to chapters, and dialogues passim that may be considered not vital to the central idea (Letters, p. 241).¹

1. Of Meredith's other novels which were published in serial form, Vittoria, Beauchamp's Career, Lord Ormont, Tragic Comedians and The Amazing Marriage appear - on cursory examination - to have been treated in the manner outlined in the letter to Morley. The Egoist was serialised in The Glasgow Weekly Herald without Meredith's permission. Evan Harrington was designed for serial publication and bears the marks of demands for incident in each instalment, etc. The revisions of Harry Richmond, both for the serial and editions after the first, were substantial but erratic (private information from L. T. Hergenham).

However, in One of Our Conquerors, while it may be that Meredith is repeating the performance of Diana, and scornfully hacking his novel for the ruck of the reading public, the alternative possibility, that his revision for the serial version represents a proportion in the novel that he regrets not having sought, can be entertained. Since he did not, in re-reading the full text for the Edition de Luxe, choose to embark on such a full-scale revision, the alternative may not be entertained very far; but if the abridgement is considered to have been undertaken with any responsibility at all, then the manner in which it was carried out is indeed worthy of consideration.

Quite simply, what happens is that the slow-moving analysis of characters is dispensed with at the beginning, making reactions and attitudes less complex; and all this meticulous preparation of the first half of the book is assumed in presenting the actual happenings of the novel, which mainly occur in the second half. Various minor characters like Carling the lawyer are amputated; the lengthy introduction to the members of the Radnor circle is cut (so that Mr. Peridon and Co. appear later to perform without having been fully explained in their idiosyncrasies, though this hardly matters, of course); the national theme is generally played down. All this has the effect of producing a much less cluttered narrative, concentrating more on events, whether physical or mental, though by no means all the digressions and sportiveness are eliminated - which suggests that such apparent escapades may be more germane to the drift of the novel than is conventionally allowed. And I have tried to explain this relationship as a loose and fragmentary

metaphoric one, where only a "fine flavour of analogy" is to be detected. Nevertheless, while finding that such seeming excrescences as Colney's serial remain, and using this as support for arguing its relevance, it does appear that there is much skirmishing which Meredith, preferring to concentrate on the central situation of Victor and his family, considers expendable. He makes no stylistic concession, however: the texture of the serial is almost as dense as that of the full version.

From this disinterring of Meredith's processes of selection in revising his manuscripts and in preparing the serial, I turn to a consideration of the substantive work, the novel finally published as One of Our Conquerors.

IX. THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ONE OF OUR CONQUERORS

When I was struggling to extricate myself from intense engagement with the minutiae of the texts of One of Our Conquerors in order to refocus on the novel as a whole, by chance I found the following testimonial to the book. My first reaction was of identification with this history of involvement with One of Our Conquerors; succeeded by impatience with the reading of the novel as a counter-imperialist tract. Then I realised that the speaker, a Cambridge undergraduate during the Boer War, was as much conditioned by his context to emphasise certain preoccupations, as I by mine to see the novel in terms of subtle personal interplay; and moreover I saw that with the passage of his initial excitement, the real pleasure of the book for him, and that not purely cerebral, was the same as mine, the satisfaction of recognising a whole scheme.

A book that stands out among these memories, that stimulated me immensely so that I forced it upon my companions, half in the spirit of propaganda and half to test it by their comments, was Meredith's One of Our Conquerors. It is one of the books that have made me. In that I got a supplement and corrective of Kipling. It was the first detached and adverse criticism of the Englishman I had ever encountered. It must have been published already nine or ten years when I read it. The country had paid no heed to it, had gone on to the expensive lessons of the War because of the dull aversion our people feel for all such intimations, and so I could read it as a book justified...

One consequence of the patriotic chagrin Meredith produced in me was an attempt to belittle his merit. "It isn't a good novel, anyhow," I said.

The charge I brought against it was, I remember, a lack of unity. It professed to be a study of the English situation in the early nineties, but it was all deflected, I said, and all the interest was confused by the story of Victor Radnor's fight with society to vindicate the woman he had loved and never married. Now in the retrospect and with a mind full of bitter enlightenment, I can do Meredith justice, and admit the conflict was not only essential but cardinal in his picture, that the terrible inflexibility of the rich aunts and the still more terrible claim of Mrs. Burman Radnor, the "infernal punctilio," and Dudley Sowerby's limitations, were the central substance of that inalertness the book set itself to assail. So many things have been brought together in my mind that were once remotely separated. A people that will not valiantly face and understand and admit love and passion can understand nothing whatever. But in those days what it^{is} now just obvious truth to me was altogether outside my range of comprehension.... (sic)¹

In fact my experience of Meredith in general and One of Our Conquerors in particular is radically other than that of Wells' character, though there is an affinity which derives from the feeling that we are talking about the same Meredith even from such opposed viewpoints. This Meredith is the novelist who announces that he writes for "that acute and honourable minority which consents to be thwacked with aphorisms and sentences and a fantastic delivery of the verities" (Sandra Belloni, ch.11, p.528). That I choose to give Meredith's own histrionic account

1. H.G. Wells, The New Machiavelli (1911), pp.132-3.

of his treatment of his ideal audience indicates a respect for his seriousness notwithstanding, and I hope an understanding of the sometimes grotesque and capricious forms in which that seriousness emerges. For Meredith does not trifle, however he may mock his own deep-seated and informing earnestness concerning both life and art; and the conventional critical balance-sheet for One of Our Conquerors could not adequately express my sense of the intelligent, generous, unifying and above all expansive constancy of purpose in Meredith's work.

A NOTE ON MEREDITH'S NOTES

Commentators on Meredith are accustomed to point out how frequently portraits of the artist are to be discerned in his novels, and identifications ranging from Evan Harrington, who shared with his creator ancestors engaged in the trade of tailor, to Arthur Rhodes, the young poet in Diana of the Crossways, are made. Such identifications have varying degrees of plausibility and relevance, if for instance Evan Harrington is read as projecting Meredith's own defiance of his origins "in trade", and a personal avowal in terms of the subtitle, He Would Be a Gentleman; or if it is suggested that as well as depicting in Arthur Rhodes his younger self on the fringes of both society and literary circles, Meredith compensatorily identifies with Diana's witty poise. In this vein, it would be possible to sketch out a Meredith who put himself into every novel in a kind of Hitchcock signature appearance; but that prospect aside, I wish to examine another aspect of the sometimes intimate relationship between the author and his characters.

That Meredith was an inveterate picker-up of verbal trifles could be inferred from the bower-bird quality of his prose even if the garnering were not demonstrable. His propensity for scribbling down odd lines of verse or rough epigrams on whatever material he found at hand is well attested. E. V. Brewer has printed a sheaf of aphorisms culled from "a German music book containing exercises for the violin, on the back cover of which Meredith had evidently jotted down these passing thoughts for future use",¹ and the Yale University Library holds an extensive

1. "Unpublished Aphorisms of Meredith", Yale Rev., n.s. XIV (1925), 621.

collection of notes and notebooks which reveal the same tendencies. There are two portfolios of papers, with a truly miscellaneous collection of odd scraps and sheets in Meredith's hand, written both in pen and pencil, and at various stages of his career judging by calligraphy. Like these papers, the eight small and two quarto notebooks in the Altschul Collection contain a variety of random jottings - scraps of verse, impressions of people and places, anecdotes, dialectal idiosyncrasies, thoughts on possible projects - recorded presumably out of interest and for future reference.

The identification of this habit of the author with that he attributes to Sir Austin Feverel is irresistible, and certainly indicative of a stronger kinship than even that inherent in both men's being deserted husbands. Meredith's description of Sir Austin making notes - "He pencilled on a handy slip of paper...and consigned the skeleton of a great Aphorism to his pocket, there to gather flesh and form, with numberless others in a like condition" (ch. xvii, p. 148) - makes their association the plainer when it is recognised that Meredith in fact disinterred some of his own skeletons to supply Sir Austin, just as his own early poetry provided the source for the versifying of both Richard Feverel and Diaper Sandoe.² As for the aphorisms, in one notebook are found on adjoining pages "It is probable that Woman will be the last thing civilized by man", which appears in Richard Feverel as one of the opening citations from Sir Austin's Pilgrim's Scrip

2. Phyllis Bartlett, "Richard Feverel, Knight-Errant", Bulletin of the New York Public Library, LXIII (1959), 329.

("I expect that Woman will be the last thing civilized by Man" - p. 1); and "Who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered", which finds a place in the Scrip in chapter xii (p. 93). Both these entries have had a line run through, probably to indicate that they have been used. Some pages over, another entry reads

Sir A. Fev.

"we want a God to correct the horrible vindictiveness of nature."

and while this is in keeping with Sir Austin's accustomed sentiments, it does not seem to have been incorporated into the Pilgrim's Scrip: not surprisingly, since the entry must date after 1861 (it succeeds notes made during Meredith's holiday in the Alps and Italy that year).³

3. These notes are in the Maroon Notebook in the Altschul Collection, at the Yale University Library. The other manuscripts referred to in this note are also at Yale. Meredith habitually used each notebook - quite unsystematically - over a period of years, and he appears to have begun this one about 1859 (he gives his address on the first page as Esher, Surrey, where he moved early in 1859: also, presumably the epigrams used in Richard Feverel were not transcribed into the notebook after publication of the novel in June of that year), and continued it through the composition of Emilia in England (published 1864). Gillian Beer, "George Meredith and The Satirist", RES, n.s. XV (1964), 293 n., in her discussion of Meredith's thinking of his characters as living beings, remarks that he "assigns an epigram to 'Sir A. Fev.' some three years after the publication of Richard Feverel".

It may however have been intended for the collection of aphorisms to be called "The Pilgrim's Scrip, by Sir Austin Feverel", from which Meredith read to William Hardman in the summer of 1862.⁴

Perversely, Meredith is not above self-plagiarising. Lady Butcher recalls an occasion when he was delivering himself of moral instruction:

He reminded me of the saying in Richard Feverel:

'Who rises from his prayer a better man, his prayer is answered,' and added, with an intonation that I shall never forget: 'My dear, it is right and wholesome to kneel! A woman without religion is a weed upon the waters, or she is as hard as nails!'

And Lady Butcher adds in a footnote, "I found this well-remembered saying of his published later in The Amazing Marriage"^{4a} - to be precise, in chapter xl, when Lord Fleetwood remarks "A woman without religion, Gower Woodseer, is a weed on the water, or she's as hard as nails" (p. 421). Gower himself, of course, is a note-taker and indeed made Fleetwood's acquaintance through the accident of misplacing his notebook (ch. viii).

4. L. Stevenson, The Ordeal of George Meredith (1953), p. 110.

4a. Memories of George Meredith, O.M. (1919), pp. 51-2.

Sir Austin is not the only character in Richard Feverel who is supplied directly from Meredith's notes. Mrs. Berry, describing Lucy's innocent sleep to Richard and Ripton, says "The Black Ox haven't trod on her foot yet!" (ch. xxviii, p. 273), which takes up one of a list of proverbs, "The black ox has not trod on your foot (no grief)"⁵. Austin Wentworth is also a beneficiary. A brief comment in the Maroon Notebook, "Evil is the longest way to good", is expanded in his advice to Richard after the rickburning: "there are two ways of getting out of a scrape: a long way and a short way. When you've tried the roundabout method, and failed, come to me, and I'll show you the straight route" (ch. vi, p. 46). Various of the notes on Thames scenery and country landscapes may also lie behind the natural descriptions in this and later novels.

5. A loose sheet in an early hand in the portfolio headed "Original MS notes on Aristophanes", &c., in the Yale University Library.

At this point, I should perhaps make clear that I am not claiming to give an exhaustive series of identifications "from notebook to novel", but to point out some of the implications for the novels of Meredith's habit of making notes. The fragments of verse have not been considered.

Other of the novels in various ways also draw on material in the notebooks. Sometimes, as in the examples so far given, a gnomic utterance is incorporated into narrative. Further similar instances are to be found in Diana's witticisms: "Proverbs are chalk-eggs, from which nothing is hatched, but which tempt the hen to sit" emerges in chapter i of Diana of the Crossways as "these lapidary sentences, that...have merely 'the value of chalk-eggs, which lure the thinker to sit,'...besides flattering the world to imagine itself richer than it is in eggs that are golden" (p. 9). Almost immediately, we find Henry Wilmers reporting "The talk fell upon our being creatures of habit, and how far it was good: She said:- It is there that we see ourselves crutched between love grown old and indifference ageing to love?" (pp. 9-10), which takes up "Habit is Love grown old; or Indifference aging (sic) to Love". Again, a loose sheet has a note "It is not merely English but profoundly human to take an interest in the well-being of the dog that has bit you. (Ireland)", which is used with slight modifications (p. 10). Even the famous Seraglio Point remark (p. 10) may be intimated in a chapter-title proposed for Adiante: A Romance (which eventually became Celt and Saxon).⁶

6. The first note is in the small Green Notebook; the second in the Maroon Notebook; the third in the "Aristophanes" portfolio; and the last in the "Original manuscript notes for a dramatic dialogue,...etc." portfolio.

Sometimes there are notes made in planning a particular book - one notebook contains a series of anecdotes under the heading "Heroism - martial - domestic", which obviously relates to Meredith's evolving Beauchamp's Career⁷ - but such drafts are the exception rather than the rule. Planning at various stages of the Emilia novels can be traced, however. The Maroon Notebook contains a list headed "Scenes", two of which are marked Emilia - "The Weir: moon rising behind cedars over smooth greensward" (no doubt this hint is worked up in Sandra Belloni, chapter xx, "By Wilming Weir") and "Frost on a May night: the larch-wood & nightingales" (chapter lviii, "Frost on the May Night"). In another place in the same notebook, "The Rival Picnics" is one of a list of "Novels/Tales/Stories &c" - presumably chapter ix, "The Rival Clubs", arose from this. There is also a page outlining possible developments when Emilia learns of Mr. Pole's bankruptcy; and a loose sheet kept with the Quarto Notebooks and headed "Emilia" gives an incident Meredith may have contemplated including, probably in Vittoria, in which soldiers play cards by the light of glow-worms (it is the kind of weird situation that would have struck Meredith's fancy). In the "Aristophanes" portfolio there is a page, numbered 203, with a central heading Vittoria: Chapter 9 and Emilia in Italy on the left, with a couple of lines following: "There were two daughters of a parasitical

7. Green "Poems" notebook. One of the incidents included relates to the sinking of the Northfleet, the date given being 23rd January 1873, which fits with the publication of Beauchamp's Career serially in 1874-5.

Italian nobleman, of whom one had married the patriot Giacomo Piaveni, and one an Austrian Commendatore". Chapter ix of the novel as published opens with Wilfrid reading Emilia's letter, which says at one point "If I could see you and tell you the story of Giacomo Piaveni... you would break your sword instantly" (p. 79). One of the earliest of the notebooks, the "Keepsake", has a loose sheet folded in, bearing hints of the idea of the Poles - "A family with the tinge of Romance in all their dispositions"; and over the page Meredith sketches a prototype Pericles: "Character: Polper a gentleman of universal influence. In all difficulties go to Polper". Appropriately in view of his powers, Polper is mentioned in other jottings as well.

Another character intimated about the same time (also in the "Keepsake" book) is Tom Cogglesby. Under the general title "Eccentrics" are noted three specimens: "One lives in a tower: One devotes his life to seduce a Duchess. One who appears daily at an Hotel for several years: pays his bill: fares highly: nobody knows his name." The last is expanded in the account of Tom Cogglesby's habits at the Aurora (Evan Harrington, ch. viii).

Many of the notebook entries are anecdotes which Meredith uses in different ways. His story in Once a Week at Christmas 1859 rejoiced in the resounding title "A Story-Telling Party: being a recital of certain miserable days and nights passed, wherewith to warm the heart of the Christmas season",⁸ and consisted of four yarns spun by

8. Op.cit., Once a Week, I (1859), 535-42.

travellers at an inn. Although these particular anecdotes do not appear in the notebooks, they are of the same ilk. Meredith's source on this occasion was a series of stories told by his friend F. C. Burnand, which he appropriated somewhat to Burnand's chagrin.^{8a} One of the stories tells of a man frightened by a dog in his bedroom; another of a burglar who scares a bragging Colonel; the third recounts a deception involving a jewel theft and the mistaken extraction of a tooth; the last presents a young man who in changing from cricket gear in a train is caught half-dressed by a lady entering the carriage and has to endure the embarrassment of continuing the journey trouserless - though huddled decently under a rug. This particular situation appears to have haunted Meredith in one form or another: a couple of times in the notebooks a cognate anecdote is recorded. The version in the "Keepsake" book runs "A great inventor, who wears a long cloak which he opens, displaying breechless limbs, and exclaiming: 'See what I'm reduced to!'"

"A Story-Telling Party", alas, is far from hilarious, though Meredith did imply a less than exalted opinion of it himself when submitting to the editor: "I think the stories are rather amusing; but I have not worked them up, & purposely not. Don't put my name" - and the letter goes on to request an immediate payment of ten pounds.⁹

Frequently, anecdotes from the notebooks are attributed to characters in a novel. So a brief note

8a. L. Stevenson, "Meredith's Atypical Novel: A Study of Rhoda Fleming", in B. H. Lehman et al., The Image of the Work (Berkeley 1955), p. 93, cites Burnand's Records and Reminiscences on this point.

9. ALS, 6th December, 1859 - Yale University Library.

"Bootmaker recognizing his drowned Brother - 'they be John's boots'"¹⁰ is made the crux of a much lengthier recital by Mrs. Sumfit in Rhoda Fleming (ch. xlii, p. 443). Sometimes, however, the anecdotes are more integral to the novel in which they occur. For instance, in one bundle there is a leaf which among other notes includes this:

'None of your impudence,' the young gentleman observed. 'And none of your damned punctilio', said the man.¹¹

Does this mean that the incident which assumes such obsessive importance in One of Our Conquerors developed from an altercation Meredith actually witnessed rather than from the free-ranging depths of his imagination? The other notes on the same page seem to be jottings from experience rather than composed epigrams: the next is

Two country girls: 'What sort of man do you like?' -
I like a good-tempered man&c.- 'I like &c' -
&c - 'I like a man who won't stand any of my nonsense.'

Apparently a favourite exchange, this occurs elsewhere among the notes, and a version is recorded by Lady Butcher, but it does not appear to have made its way into the novels.¹² Not so with the next entry on the same page, which is absorbed into Diana of the Crossways:

10. In the portfolio "Original MS notes on Aristophanes", &c.
11. Portfolio headed "Original manuscript notes for a dramatic dialogue,...etc."
12. Memories of George Meredith, O.M. (1919), p. 40.

Two men (on London Bridge). 'Have you tried any of that cold stuff they sell with cream?'
 'I haven't much opinion o' that. What's it like?'
 'Well, it's cheap, it's not bad: it's cooling, but it ain't refreshing.'
 'Just what I reckoned it.'

In the novel,

Thomas Redworth...had some of the amusement proper to things plucked off the levels, in the conversation of a couple of journeymen close ahead of him, as he made his way from a quiet street of brokers' offices to a City Bank. One asked the other if he had ever tried any of that cold stuff they were now selling out of barrows, with cream. His companion answered, that he had not got much opinion of stuff of the sort; and what was it like?

'Well, it's cheap, it ain't bad; it's cooling. But it ain't refreshing.'

'Just what I reckoned all that newfangle rubbish.'

Without a consultation, the conservatives in beverage filed with a smart turn about, worthy of veterans at parade on the drill-ground, into a public-house; and a dialogue chiefly remarkable for absence of point, furnished matter to the politician's head of the hearer (ch. xli, pp. 457-8).

And Redworth proceeds with "the meditations of a man in love" (p. 459). The verbal correspondence between the two passages is too exact for mere reminiscence on Meredith's part, especially when Andrew Hedger's boast, 'Ah could eat hog a solid hower!' (ch. viii, p. 98), which proves so frustrating to Redworth on his winter ride to Crossways in search of Diana, is noted further down the page:

Realistic "That man with a lift of the little
 finger could convulse the Bacon Market."
 Old man looking on at the cutting up of a
 'family' pig:
 "Ah could eat pig a solid hour."

(The "Bacon Market" remark also appears on another page of the notes, beside a projected title for a story, "The valley of Fattleland", and finds its way into One of Our Conquerors - chapter xxi, p. 202). The three entries on this page which have been promoted into the novels are scored through, presumably to indicate their unavailability for future forays, though not every jotting which assumes flesh and form is deleted. What is of consequence, however, is that Diana of the Crossways appeared in 1885, One of Our Conquerors not until 1891 (though probably commenced early in 1889). Even assuming this leaf to date from just before Diana, it is apparent that five or so years later Meredith returned in memory at least to his notes and developed the 'punctilio' anecdote.

There are other inroads made on the collection of notes in the course of One of Our Conquerors. Such depredations are made for Simeon Fenellan's speech in support of Victor Radnor as parliamentary candidate in chapter xli. The story of the Governor of Goa which is the first recounted derives from this note:

Old Pride: Don Juan de Castro of Portugal:
 mentioned by Camões with Albuquerque as
 Castro's 'forte': Governor of Goa: He
 wished to raise money, was asked for his
 security: could give none, but plucked
 out a few hairs from his chin & offered
 them. It was understood at once that
 these would be redeemed by him.¹³

13. Green "Poems" notebook.

Simeon's telling is given an appropriately oratorical cast, his rhetoric embroidering both this anecdote and the next, about "the foreign physician, probably Spanish", who changes nationality in the elevation of his story - which figures on the preceding page of the same notebook as the Governor of Goa:

Doctors: One in Portugal conceived a specific for liver-complaint: a dish of water-cresses. He cures a patient, who comes to him, saying that he is miraculously restored. The Doctor amazed at his own success, & yet more curious to see how his receipt had operated, takes the patient into his private room, & forthwith despatches him for the anatomy.

Both these anecdotes are, as Redworth observed of the dialogue on ice-cream, "chiefly remarkable for the absence of point." Fenellan tries to make a point out of his next story "of the wrecked sailor, found lying on the sands, flung up from the foundered ship of a Salvation captain" who is restored to life by hearing his parrot "shouting: 'Polly tho dram dry!'" (p. 503): there is perhaps a recollection here of the following yarn, and a glance back at Captain Welsh in Harry Richmond:

Old sailor upon Teetotalism: Relates how his captain swam from wreck & was taken on board a trawler exhausted, & would have been saved by a gulp of brandy, but there was not a drop of spirits - the craft was teetotal, so the captain died.¹⁴

However, in the wave of laughter aroused, "Simeon's application was drowned" (p. 503); and it is only with the next occurrence of material from the notes that an anecdote is brought to bear on the action of the novel.

14. "Original manuscript notes for a dramatic dialogue" portfolio.

A crossed-through entry, attributed to Con O'Donnell (who appears in Celt and Saxon and has other witticisms reserved for him in the notebooks, though turning out to be a different kind of character from the epigrammatist originally envisaged) reads

Con O'Donnell: "Keep that tongue of yours from committing incest on a lie." On platform, answering one who cries out: "Keep nearer to facts than when you courted the old woman for the money."¹⁵

As it appears in the novel, in addition to demonstrating Simeon's power of repartee so envied by his patron, this is made a sharp comment on Victor's situation, though presumably unintentionally so on the part of the interjector:

... 'You keep that tongue of yours from wagging, as it did when you got round the old widow woman for her money, Simmy!'

Victor leaned forward. Simeon towered. He bellowed: 'And you keep that tongue of yours from committing incest on a lie!' (p. 503)

Meredith's supplying Simeon with anecdotes from the note-books continues the pattern established with Sir Austin Feverel and Diana, who also derive witticisms and epigrams from their creator's own experience or invention in propria persona. There is at least one note made, though not used, for another epigrammatist in the novel: "The Church is an Institution to keep the human mind a child (Colney Durance)".¹⁶

15. "Aristophanes" portfolio.

16. Black Notebook.

Among the aphorisms Brewer transcribed from his German music book is "These British bear the troubled and perplexed looks of men begotten between business hours",¹⁷ which turns up in the comments of the Rajah in London (ch. v, p. 39); and the perplexing "mutual onion" lines in the same episode (p. 38) appear also to derive from an earlier note:

like man and wife
Pledged to each other, & against the world with
mutual onion.¹⁸

Very likely there are other of the notes which touched off incidents and phrases in One of Our Conquerors. It is possible, for instance, that the chapter "Treats of the Ladies' Lapdog Tasso for an Instance of Momentous Effects Produced by very Minor Causes", may have had its genesis in the cryptic "Incident: the Dog in the Drawing-room", which is followed by "A little incident involving great circumstances: instance the lost book, or paper-cutter &c-".^{18a} But such resemblances cannot usefully be pressed, nor in most instances is there any way of dating the note, since the notebooks seem to have been kept over a number of years, and the loose papers are generally unplaceable in this sense.

17. "Unpublished Aphorisms of Meredith", Yale Rev., n.s. XIV (1925), 622.

18. On a strip of paper folded in with the "Keepsake" notebook at Yale. This phrase is discussed in a note on p. 285 above.

18a. Loose sheet folded into "Keepsake" Notebook.

There is another leaf which is relevant, though in a different way, to One of Our Conquerors. This carries a draft version of the Orpheus conceit which opens chapter xv of A Conqueror in Our Time, and the corresponding chapter xviii of the published text One of Our Conquerors, and at some point has had three lines run through to delete it, possibly because of its use in the novel.¹⁹ Moreover, on a half-sheet in the same portfolio, there are five words - "When Orpheus passed by Cerberus" - written and deleted, perhaps the very first stirrings of the conceit. Without proceeding ad absurdum, however, it is interesting to consider these drafts. There is no way of telling, of course, whether the note is just a potential comparison, not originally composed for a particular purpose, or a rough sheet contemporary with the manuscript of the novel and always designed as part of it.

As it happens, this passage is one of which several versions survive in the manuscripts of the novel. Meredith had a series of attempts at the conceit before he was satisfied in A Conqueror in Our Time, and revised again in One of Our Conquerors. The survival of this even earlier version gives extra evidence for considering stylistic tendencies. Clearly successive revisions expand and refine the initial perception of a likeness between Barmby's situation and that of Orpheus; but the initial expression is by no means simple. These false starts confirm that Meredith's spontaneity need not necessarily be lucid or uncomplicated, and that his stylistic elaborateness is not always the product of much deliberate revision.

19. Portfolio headed "Original MS notes on Aristophanes" &c. This conceit is discussed above, pp. 329ff.

While the vision of Meredith methodically checking through a most unmethodical assortment of notes for good things laid by is inherently absurd, clearly he did refer to his notes from time to time, and much of the interest of these papers resides simply in the occasion provided for suggesting his habit of occasionally using material he had recorded at an earlier stage. There is a broader interest as well, in that his notes indicate how long-nurtured some projects were, and how constant his preoccupations with certain themes and subjects. Such propensities are perhaps to be expected from a writer in whom the ability to create fictions and live with them is so instinctive and spontaneous as Meredith's - and I am not referring to such matters as romanticising his Celtic lineage, but the often-attested fact that his characters were to him living people, and his capacity for telling stories deep-rooted and constantly operative. Lady Butcher, for instance, recalls his making up stories about people he knew, and also tells of his habit of extemporising from advertisements in the daily papers.

He would read them out, and then start making up stories, tragic, funny, and farcical, about the people who had inserted them, and declared that he was certain many authors had obtained ideas for their stories from the advertisement pages. Knowing this habit of his, we sometimes brought him cuttings from the agony columns and advertisement pages of the papers. I remember well his amusement at an advertisement we had cut from the pages of the Daily Telegraph:

Wanted by a firm of butchers...
A Christian young man to do the killing.²⁰

20. Memories of George Meredith, O.M. (1919), p. 100. She also recounts anecdotes told her by Meredith which are along the same lines as those preserved in his miscellaneous papers - e.g. p. 40; pp. 81-2; p. 97.

Small wonder, when any random mundane occurrence is susceptible to incorporation in a fiction whether oral or written, that Meredith could exclaim "I have an immense quantity of work in store" (Letters, p. 75).

From time to time he took stock of this store, and lists of possible projects are included among his papers. One of these is headed Comedies and lists twenty-one titles, some with comments in parentheses.²¹ Four titles have been deleted, suggesting that these works may have been written: "The Egoist. (Sir Willoughby Patterne)" and "The Tragic Comedians (Lasalle - Rackowotza)" certainly were, though "The Philogynist (Champion of Women) The Ladies' Friend" and "The Engagement" with the rubric, "She consents to marry a young man in every way fitting", are less readily identifiable. Other titles are indicative of characteristic concerns: "The Sentimentalists - among them old epicure, young free-hand, young widow", for instance (and Meredith did in fact begin a play with this title, partly in verse, in 1861-2 and returned to it subsequently), or "Nature's Gentleman" or "The World Divided: Or the New Order of Women". Others are tantalising: if "The World Divided" hints at a feminist novel, the reflection of contemporary events in "The Aristocrat (Salisbury)" or "The Rhetorician (Gladst:)" is even more specific. Given that Meredith was unlikely to have known of the Lasalle story before the publication of Helene von Racowitza's account in Meine Beziehungen zu Ferdinand Lasalle in 1879, the list is probably to be dated 1879-80.

Another leaf in the same bundle is headed Comediettas in Narrative. Two titles are deleted - "The

21. Portfolio headed "Original manuscript notes for a dramatic dialogue".

Case of General Ople & Lady Camper" and "The Egoist (Sir Willoughby Patterne)" - and of the other four, one, "Bulthorpe, the Saxon Laureate" was at least begun (there is a single-page fragment), two more could be attached to actual productions ("The Beauty of her Time" and "The Conqueror of Hearts"). The remaining "The Professor of Greek" indicates that this would have been a jeu d'esprit in Meredith's most ingenious vein: "The widow dazzles the squire with a few Greek quotations. He affects to be on the level of them, & compliments her. She finds it necessary to study Greek. So does he. Each takes the young Professor".

This list leads to conjecture only. Yet another prospectus in this portfolio is more intriguing. It begins with "The Tale of General Ople & Lady Cass", which has been scored through - incidentally, Meredith at first made Ople an Admiral, but thought better of it. The next entry is "The Amazing Marriage (Gossip as Chorus)", a not unreasonable conjunction of projects, since although the novel was published in 1895, Meredith began a draft of it immediately after finishing The Egoist early in 1879, and "The Case of General Ople" was written in April 1877 and published in the New Quarterly Magazine for July of that year. But the third title included is "Autobiography (with Contrivance Tom)" - which may be identified as an embryonic The Adventures of Harry Richmond. In May 1864, Meredith wrote "I have also in hand an Autobiography and 'The Adventures of Richmond Roy, and his friend Contrivance Jack: Being the History of Two Rising Men'" (Letters, p. 143). R.B. Hudson pointed out that this is a misreading by W.M. Meredith in editing his father's letter, since there can be little doubt that this "Autobiography" is the same work of which a draft outline was submitted to Samuel Lucas for consideration for Once a

Week in 1864 and of which Meredith was already talking in 1863 (Letters, p. 115); and similarly that most of this outline - "Opening. The meeting with Contrivance Jack on Wimbledon Common" and summaries of chapters iv to xv - survives in the Altschul Collection. As Hudson comments, while clearly the projected first-person novel, the autobiography of Richmond Roy, changed into The Adventures of Harry Richmond, nothing remains in the final version of the adventures suggested in the fragment, though Meredith, concentrating not on incident but on character, took up and developed the idea which is barely discernible in the outline, of the history of a young man growing up under the shadow of a charlatan father.²² It is not the transmutation which concerns me here, but the fact that the list of possible titles Meredith noted down gives grounds for suggesting that Harry Richmond was not unique among his works in enduring a lengthy gestation period: some were mulled over for considerably longer than the six or seven years between the first evidence of composition of what was to become Harry Richmond in the letters of 1863-4, and the commencement of serial publication in the Cornhill for September 1870.

It seems justifiable to suggest that this list dates from the mid-1860s, certainly before 1870 by which time the Contrivance Jack or Tom character had disappeared from the "Autobiography"; and to infer from the order of the titles that "The Case of General Ople" and The Amazing Marriage were both envisaged well before 1870. But if all the entries on the list can be assumed to have been made about the same time, then Meredith had laid plans for much of the rest of his career in fiction possibly only five years after

22. "Meredith's Autobiography and The Adventures of Harry Richmond", NCF, IX (1954), 38-49.

the appearance of his first novel (Richard Feverel in 1859).
For the stocktaking of ideas continues:

Freihard von Wohlgemuth (the young Austrian
Archduke in the Styrian Highlands.)

The Ferry

Adiante

Diana (Mrs N & Lord M.)

Katharine O'Carroll

Scene in Ireland: Irish:

Italy with "Skipp" in it, "Young Sir John". The
Lakewater family

The Cambrian

The Good Soldier (a good devoted soul who serves a
family of 3 children of her [his?]
dead master brings them to their
estates, & dies: on the tour to
the cemetery a band precedes a
soldier's funeral playing Dead
March in Saul

This last entry is possibly repeated overleaf, where
Meredith gives another nine titles, including "The Dead
March In Saul"; and he got as far in executing this
conception as heading up a sheet, which is otherwise
unsullied however. "Freihard von Wohlgemuth" was outlined
in a page preserved in the same portfolio; and there is a
fragment called "The Story of Pendle Ferry" which may
derive from the same inspiration as "A Ferry" given here.
The proposed Italian piece is not identifiable, nor is

"Katharine O'Carroll", though the title (as "Kate O'Carroll" and "Catherine O'Carrol")²³ occurs elsewhere. "Scene in Ireland; Irish;" and "The Cambrian" are good Celtic possibilities; while "Adiante" was an early name for the unfinished novel Celt and Saxon, published posthumously in 1910 though written about 1878 - and this same bundle of notes includes a couple of pages of chapter headings, names of characters and so on, made for the work.

Five of the twelve possibilities noted here burgeoned as published works, ranging in date from Harry Richmond (1870), through the three compositions of the late 1870's, Celt and Saxon, "The Case of General Ople" and the beginning of The Amazing Marriage, to Diana of the Crossways (1885)-for it is evidently to this novel that "Diana (Mrs N & Lord M.)" alludes. There is no basis for claiming that Meredith in fact began to write Diana until about 1883; but his inclusion of a note on the story of Mrs. Norton and Lord Melbourne as a possible idea for a novel in a list made out in the early 1860s,²⁴ may be explained by the fact that around 1860 he actually met Caroline Norton at the home of his friends Sir Alexander and Lady Duff Gordon at Esher. Incidentally, the Duff Gordons make their first appearance in Meredith's fiction as Sir Franks and Lady Jocelyn in Evan Harrington (1860), and also figure, less flatteringly, as Sir Lukin and Lady Dunstane in Diana.

23. Maroon Notebook and loose leaf removed from Quarto Notebook respectively. The latter has a full page of characters and hints of a plot.
24. "Diana (Mrs N & Lord M.)" is an afterthought inserted between "Adiante" and "Katharine O'Carroll", but nevertheless appears to be a roughly contemporary addition.

This indication of an interest in the Diana figure, twenty years before she takes shape in a novel, added to the other indications of Meredith's long-held notions of some works, points to an aspect of his creative powers which is hardly recognised or even suspected.

There are further insights to be gained from perusing his lists of projects. Overleaf from that just discussed are another nine titles, beginning with the fairly unremarkable "Good, Bad & Mixed", followed by one which possibly has a real-life basis, "Bentley & his Adversaries (Colbatch, Middleton, &c.)", assuming that this refers to Bentley the publisher. The next, "The valley of Fattleland" which has the comment added about convulsing the bacon market, is a project which recurred to Meredith more frequently than most: inside the cover of the Marbled Notebook is written

Characteristics
of the vale of
Fat o' the Land

and elsewhere there is an anecdote headed "Fatoland".²⁵ The "Fatoland" notes look as if they may relate to a work to be called "The Case of John Barstow" which Meredith seems to have contemplated, giving an outline in the following fragment in the portfolio:

vicar of Middenhurst. He has all to surround him that can delight a man: healthy children, loving wife, friends, comfort, & sight of a prosperous future.

He conceives doubts of the Truth of what he preaches. Two closely written pages develop the theme more fully: John's wife fails to sympathise with her husband's doubts - "if she had not dreaded the impiety of the wish she would rather have had her husband bright quick & transparent,

25. Portfolio headed "Original MS notes on Aristophanes".

more like the livelier sort of common men in orders" - and his clerical friends also fail to regard his worries seriously. Meredith sends John off on a restoring tour of the Alps, which confirms his sense that the round of his pastor's duties is impossible to him.

He takes the resolution to throw up his office. Birth of a fourth child. The christening, & scene between him & his father-in-law. He bids farewell to his congregation. Attempt to gain a livelihood by letters. Poverty. His wife's depression & illness. Her father offers to take her back home excluding her husband. She appeals to John for her own & the children's sake. They part. His wife sickens grievously. He is refused admission to see her.

The Argument: You engage yourself to do this work for the term of your natural life, & failing it are guilty of a breach of faith. Miss Bertha Cresset (Betty). Her efforts to reconcile John's father-in-law to the unfortunate man. John's wife dies.

Such a summary could serve for any number of mid-nineteenth century novels of the genre which culminates in Robert Elsmere, and it is the more surprising to find Meredith contemplating a work along such well-trodden paths. It may have been this element which forestalled his proceeding with the tale, though Evan Harrington and Rhoda Fleming, for instance, both have plots which sound fairly stereotyped in outline, and "The Case of John Barstow" may well have been conceived in a similar spirit of exploiting the success of certain kinds of fiction to that which seems to have motivated Meredith's earlier novels.

Other titles in this list are repeated elsewhere: "Scardifield" and "Juliana Ricardo", for example, occur in the Green "Modern Manicheism" Notebook under a general heading "Situations", all of which in some way relate to marriage. The appended anecdotes are of a peculiarly gruesome kind:

Mr Scardifield:- His wife leaves him. He sends for his nephew & has the boy to sleep with him. In the night the boy awakes & hears a dripping in the room. His uncle stands leaning against post of bed with cut throat

"Ricardo's daughter" fares no better:

After experience with[?] her husband she consents to leaving him with the man she rejected formerly & has always respected. He does not come to the appointment. She goes to his house & room; finds him in his blood. She drinks poison, falls on the body.

Such grisly denouements suggest "The Tale of Chloe", and are of an ilk which appears to have had a particular fascination for Meredith. Inside the front pocket of the Maroon Notebook is a newspaper cutting headed "A Tragedy (sic) in Humble Life"; perhaps one of those brought by the Brandreth children to set Meredith off on his storytelling? The subject is hardly one for a children's tale, however, since the clipping discusses recent suicides in and near Merthyr, particularly that of Rachel Morris, who at seventeen, "having lost her father by the cholera epidemic some years ago and her mother lately, found herself thrust on the world helpless and friendless". Of course the worst ensues. The hapless Rachel goes to live with a young man from the ironworks

until the arrangements could be made for the ceremony. She lived with him 3 weeks, but one day, being out, the mother of the young man came to the house and induced him to abandon her. When she returned it was to find herself destitute and a castaway. On Monday she entered a neighbour's house, and begged a girl there to give her a piece of bread, but the girl had none. She then asked leave to go upstairs in order to mend some of her underclothing. This was granted, and in a little while, when the neighbour returned home, and was told by the little girl of who had gone upstairs, the poor unfortunate was found in a bed-room hanging by the neck and quite dead.

While the suicide features in Goldsmith's Life of Richard Nash, Esq. which was Meredith's principal source for "The Tale of Chloe", its actual execution may have been affected by these incidents from real life, apparently noted down a few years before "Chloe" was written in 1868-9.²⁶

This preoccupation with the macabre manifests itself throughout Meredith's work, in varying manners and degrees, from the character of Clare Forey in Richard Feverel, and the Countess' dinner-table anecdotes in chapter xxii of Evan Harrington on; about 1862, when the bulk of these miscellaneous papers were written, emerging rather divertingly in an unpublished story called "The Friend of an Engaged Couple". In this tale, an engaged couple, their bridesmaid (the narrator), and a friend of the bride, Captain Herbert, are in a railway carriage, and seeing flames blow past, think the train is on fire. In the face of death, the bride-to-be throws herself into Captain Herbert's arms and declares her love for him. But the fire turns out to have been burning letters from former lovers let fly out the window by a newly-married couple in another carriage, who exclaim "Didn't we light Hymen's torch, & bring out the true love & extinguish the false?"

26. This date for the composition of "The Tale of Chloe" is proposed by Gillian Beer, "Meredith's Contributions to The Pall Mall Gazette", MLR, LXI (1966), 399 n. In this article Mrs. Beer discusses the significance of a list of possible subjects for Pall Mall Gazette essays which Meredith left in a pocket of the small Green Notebook.

There are other titles which occur on more than one of Meredith's stocktaking lists, some as titles only, some with appended anecdotes, some possibly connected with later works, others not apparently so. So "The Grey Adonis" figures three times; "Queen Justicia" twice; "Felman" three times; "The Woman of Ability" once, and "A Charming Woman" once (to be identified with Diana?); Lord Ormont and His Aminta is named twice, once scored through, and there is also a reference to "The young wife of the old Veteran". Any basis for suggesting that Lord Ormont was envisaged long before its publication in 1894 is tenuous in the extreme, depending on the appearance of some titles, like "The Story of Alphonse Maurelly", "Juliana Ricardo" and "Scardifield", on the verso of the list which I have dated as certainly earlier than 1870, possibly before 1864, and their reappearance on other lists with Lord Ormont: the association might be taken as evidence that Lord Ormont also dates from the 1870s. However, without even constructing a proof, the hypothesis can at least be framed tentatively, it seems to me, in the light of what has emerged already of Meredith's long-incubated plans.

As mentioned earlier, Meredith's constant concern with some subjects is revealed in more extended notes among his miscellanea. There are early plans for work on Joan of Arc,²⁷ and while he did not write extensively on this historical personage, his interest in such a heroine prefigures later developments in his treatment of women characters as mystically brave and fearless. The insistent marriage theme appears more frequently, forming

27. Loose leaf removed from Quarto Notebooks.

the substance of a series of "Situations" from which I have already quoted the macabre Ricardo and Scardifield anecdotes, though not all are quite so lurid.

Opening: The Wedding Day: at the altar: the bridegroom receives message in vestry from bride's father, that the marriage must be broken off. Grounds hinted. 28

The element of the grotesque is not lacking, however: the next situation is that of a girl whose husband goes mad on their wedding day. "Describe festivities: contrast her state. Dancing there, madness here." Some intimation of the situation in One of Our Conquerors is given in another note: "Marriage:- A man marries a woman part for admiration, part for her wealth - or prospect of wealth." The remaining note in this group toys with a somewhat Lammles-like prospect: "Or say: A Love match that has cooled. - Her uncle disinherits her. - She receives information of the Will & has to communicate it to her husband." Such conjecture about the nature of the marriage bond is manifested throughout the notes. Thus a list of possible "Stories" - including Lord Ormont and His Aminta - has a longish gloss on the title "Uxorial's Will":

...His wife his 'female self.'

His Will prohibits his widow from marrying: on pain of destitution of his legacy. - The friend who was at his death loves & is loved by her. He wears [?] through his impression of Uxorial's curse on her & the man succeeding him in his place, & proposes. She declines. Ultimately the scene. She will not marry him. But she will live with him. - Conflict between them. 29

28. Green "Modern Manicheism" Notebook.
29. Both notes on "Uxorial's Will" are in the "Aristophanes" portfolio.

Again it is easy to discern aspects of the relationship of Nataly and Victor hatching in the note; though another sheet, which is also headed "Uxorial's Will", bears a sentence giving a different drift entirely:

Lowry He married the widow of Captain Pearce; who turned him off after a two months' trial of him; without any stain upon his character, as he was the first to protest wherever he went

A clearer anticipation of the expectations from the death of Mrs. Burman occurs in the following:

Some illustration of the Irony of Fortune = a writer in failing health has a Reversion of £20,000 coming to him from an old Relative, an imbecile lady of 75 = the race between them: of the advantage the money wd be to him. She reaches 91 & dies one day after his burial₃₀

Another note, suggesting a Spanish setting, sketches a situation which depends on a marriage being kept secret, rather as in Lord Ormont; and there are hints of Diana of the Crossways and One of Our Conquerors in a one-page outline "Mighty Society (Novel)" where "a young fellow of good connections. Marries a splendid beauty of bourgeois family...Her husband compelled to spend beyond income. At last he forges to pay debts she contracted". The secret, and the kinds of bargaining about marriage which are described, find echoes in the novels even though "Mighty Society" apparently never eventuated.

The main conclusions to be drawn from a study of Meredith's notebooks relate to the long gestation of much of his fiction, and his constant preoccupation both in published works and manuscript memoranda with bizarre situations, witty characters, and themes like egotism and

30. This and the following notes are in the portfolio headed "Original manuscript notes for a dramatic dialogue".

marriage, for example. And such considerations do I think attest in an important way to Meredith's involvement with his work. Perhaps Coleridge, another "myriad-minded man", in distinguishing Fancy from Imagination, best describes the mental processes revealed in Meredith's jottings. In a sense, what may be discerned is the operation of Fancy, which "has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites" and is "indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space". But there is, it seems to me, an insight into the faculty which "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create"³¹, and something more than Fancy dwelling here.

31. Biographia Literaria (2 vols., 1817), I, 296.

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Diana of the Crossways - main MS. at Pierpont Morgan Library, New York; Yale has a thirty-page fragment; and there is also a ninety-page fragment in the Huntington Library which I have not seen.

One of Our Conquerors - Yale has the final MS., including rejected versions of some chapters; and also sixteen chapters of a draft entitled A Conqueror in Our Time.

Lord Ormont and His Aminta - Pierpont Morgan Library. Yale has a draft of chapter i and part of chapter ii.

The Amazing Marriage - Pierpont Morgan Library (lacks chs. i-viii). Yale has an early draft of chs. xii-xvii and xx-xxi.

Use has also been made of the collection of manuscript notes, notebooks, poems and letters in the Yale University Library.

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