

1969

Evan Harrington : George Meredith's use of comedy as a corrective to sentimentality

Joyce Stanley Scott

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/masters-theses>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Scott, Joyce Stanley, "Evan Harrington : George Meredith's use of comedy as a corrective to sentimentality" (1969). *Master's Theses*. Paper 1026.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.

EVAN HARRINGTON: GEORGE MEREDITH'S USE OF COMEDY
AS A CORRECTIVE TO SENTIMENTALITY

BY

JOYCE STANLEY SCOTT

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

AUGUST 1969

APPROVED:



Goethe

FIGURE 1

PREFACE

Because it leads an individual to increasing loss of perspective, George Meredith considered sentimentality a real tragedy. The deluded sentimentalist convinces himself that all his efforts and attitudes bear him steadily down the road of spiritual progress, when actually he is using his ideals of society as an excuse for willful blindness, a shifting of responsibility, and self-deception.¹ The sentimentalist's primary concern is to cushion himself against hard fact instead of training himself for encountering it, and he accomplishes this by drugging himself against the perception of truth.²

The problem of sentimentality was uppermost in Meredith's mind, and the unmasking of sentimentalists was one of his favorite operations. In the strata of society with the greatest pretensions of refinement, the observer will find that sentimentalists run rampant. Because of this rampage, the lack of refinement--especially in the

¹John Warren Beech, The Comic Spirit in George Meredith (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1911), p. 157.

²Ibid., p. 11.

midst of profuse pretension--is most striking when discovered. Here will be found those comic elements most provocative of thoughtful laughter.³ It is in this strata that sentimentality manifests itself, for a sentimentalist is primarily a snob of spiritual things: he congratulates himself on surpassing the common herd in quality and in merit; and, at the same time, he is in constant danger of exposure. Herein lies the comic element, an element which can be either destructive or constructive. George Meredith chose to employ the comic element constructively; for, according to him, the test of true comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter.⁴

Meredith did not put forward the comic as a special type of novel. Nor did he wish to establish a new school of fiction or compel all men to write comedy. "Life, we know too well," he says, "is not a comedy, but something strangely mixed."⁵ He repudiated neither realism nor romance, believing especially that romance is the quality that gives lift and inspiration: to leave out romance would be to leave out human nature.⁶ He conceived the theory that true human progress can be promoted by comedy

³Ibid., p. 157.

⁴John J. Enck, Elizabeth T. Forter, and Alvin Whitley, eds., The Comic in Theory and Practice, Appleton-Century-Crofts (New York: Meredith Publishing Company, 1960), p. 36.

⁵Beech, p. 19.

⁶E.A. Robinson, "Meredith's Literary Theory and Science: Realism vs. The Comic Spirit," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LIII (1938), 860.

because intelligent laughter destroys inflated self-importance and provides a sane sense of proportion: "Comedy is not hostile to honest feeling, but to that false sentiment that turns its back on truth and prefers to bask in the pink light of illusion."⁷ He proposed comedy as a corrective, a disinfectant, a leaven--for, to him, sentimentality is in need of comic discipline. This theory was held throughout his writing.

One of his works in which comedy "watches over sentimentalism with a birch rod"⁸ is Evan Harrington, a novel which reacted to the whole of the social atmosphere of the time when the middle class worshipped the nobility the more passionately as they came nearer to it.⁹ It shows the simple antithesis of a small-town tradesman's family and the country landowners of the early nineteenth century. Some of its characters are victims of the new malady of the middle class--sentimentality. In revulsion from the crudities of their forebears, they have cultivated artificial etiquette and "fine shades" as a substitute for emotions.¹⁰ Other characters provide foils in candor and the wise acceptance of natural facts.

⁷Beech, p. 11

⁸Meredith's Essay on Comedy.

⁹Robert Esmonde Sencourt, The Life of George Meredith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 118.

¹⁰Lionel Stevenson, The Ordeal of George Meredith (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953, p. 132.

Evan Harrington is a light-hearted novel, notable for its sketch of Meredith's famous tailor-grandfather, Melchizadek Meredith, a naval outfitter of Portsmouth, who seems to have been the first tailor in English history to have comported himself as an equal with his social superiors.¹¹ The great Mel's daughter, the Countess de Saldar, whose main purpose it is to conceal her family's background, is an unforgettable comic character as the Comic Spirit gibes social pretentiousness.

Evan Harrington is an heavily autobiographical novel. Meredith was similar to Evan in being without money, as well as in being a shop-keeper's son.¹² Like Evan, Meredith's conviction was that a gentleman can not lie, can not pass for something other than what he is, can not have false shame; for with all these go meanness, egoism, snobbery, and hardness of heart--all manifestations of sentimentality. They both underwent a battle with false pride in themselves. Evan runs a grave risk of being a foolish social climber as his sister tries to force him to be, and gives Meredith the opportunity to scoff at English snobbery, English complacency, and English inconsistency.¹³

¹¹Phylliss Bartlett, George Meredith (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1963), p. 23.

¹²Sencourt, p. 118.

¹³Stevenson, p. 83.

These three gems of sentimentality have many facets, but the one that looms largest was the idea of a gentleman. Was Meredith satisfied with the current standards for a gentleman? Did the real test of a gentleman involve certain advantages of fortune, appreciated by society as freedom from embarrassment or constraint? Or did it involve essential power of superior character? Meredith had an abundance of character, but not advantages of fortune. He had no claim on the world but his genius and character, for education had not rounded out these qualities and made him a gentleman in the same manner that it so often polished rich men's sons in England.¹⁴ According to the Countess de Saldar, of the novel under study, a gentleman must have at least one of two things--a title or money. But Evan had neither. A rich marriage, however, would make him blaze transfigured, and there was the person for him in Rose Jocelyn. George Meredith also had neither, and believing neither to be necessary, he held up a mirror for the society when he wrote Evan Harrington. This comedy of manners portrays a "chattering monkey" society devoted to snobbery and slander in which the hero is regarded a fool or worse by the fictional society, and yet impresses the real audience as having something more valuable than his society has.¹⁵

¹⁴Sencourt, p. 112.

¹⁵Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 4.

Some critics would have us believe that Evan Harrington is a "sort of safety valve whereby Meredith gave vent to much long-repressed emotion--old slights, old humiliations, bitter regrets that he, so aristocratic in aspiration and personal appearance, was basely born."¹⁶ I believe, rather, that this autobiographical novel is a prime example of resourcefulness and mettle. When events and experiences in a writer's life go to build up an integrated pattern, especially when this pattern is something larger than himself, or even simply the coherence of his attitudes, it is nothing less than resourceful to use them instead of searching elsewhere for a pattern. By the same token, oneself is the last person upon whom one turns the light of comedy,¹⁷ and it is nothing less than mettlesome when one puts comedy at work upon certain weak spots in his own character. Furthermore, Meredith has been condemned as an artist, but no novelist, i.e., he does not conform to models but has instinctive qualities far greater than form. This charge and this condemnation have lured me into a study of George Meredith and of his works.

According to George Meredith, it is for want of instruction in the comic idea that we lose a large audience among our cultivated middle class that we should expect to

¹⁶S.M. Ellis, George Meredith, His Life and Friends in Relation to His Work (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1920), p. 139.

¹⁷Beech, p. 10.

support comedy. Because I am a member of this large audience, the primary purpose of this study was to generate a higher degree of mental activity, which would result in my capturing the elusive Comic Spirit and, ultimately, becoming a citizen of what Mr. Meredith calls the "selecter world". During the course of this study I have come to submit that Evan Harrington is more than the alleged safety valve and that certainly the charge of Meredith's being an artist but no novelist is unfounded. It is my thesis that with Evan Harrington, Meredith wrote a successful novel in which he used comedy as a corrective to sentimentality.

I owe very special thanks to the English department at the University of Richmond for allowing me the privilege of studying. Dr. Edward Peple and Dr. William Guthrie are largely responsible for the new dimension of self which resulted from that privilege. Not only did Dr. Irby Brown serve as the inspiration for this study, but without his invaluable aid--along with that of Dr. James Duckworth and Dr. Garland Gunter--the paper's production would have been impossible.

Illustrations have been reproduced with the permission of John Grant.

CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	xii
INTRODUCTORY QUOTE	xiii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
HOW ATTITUDES AND CIRCUMSTANCES REGARDING SENTIMENTALITY VERSUS REALISM ARE EVI- DENCED IN <u>EVAN HARRINGTON</u>	
II. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INFLUENCES UPON <u>EVAN</u> <u>HARRINGTON</u>	22
III. COMEDY AS A SOCIAL WEAPON AS EMPLOYED IN <u>EVAN HARRINGTON</u>	29
IV. STRUCTURAL PARTS OF <u>EVAN HARRINGTON</u> THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE THEME	42
SUMMARY	58
BIBLIOGRAPHY	63
VITA	66

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURE	Page
1. George Meredith	iii
2. The Death of the Great Hel	16
3. Evan and Rose on Board the 'Jocasta'	35
4. Evan and Rose In The Conservatory	35
5. The Countess De Saldar	38
6. Tom Cogglesby's Arrival at Beckley Court .	47
7. Evan's Encounter with Laxley and Henry ...	55

INTRODUCTORY QUOTE

"The novel of modern life and society, in so far as it does not rely for its attractions on mere sensational incident, is generally a study of male and female character--mostly, indeed, of one male and one female character--with a few elaborate sketches of scenery for a background, and a clumsy caricature of some two or three well-known contemporary personages thrown in to give it an air of actuality. The close objective study of social types--not of their superficial peculiarities only, but of their inner being--appears to be becoming a lost art. Where, indeed, are we to look for the observation, the humour, to say nothing of the wisdom, which was brought to bear upon this branch of the art of fiction by its great masters of the past. We have but one living novelist with the adequate intellectual equipment; but Mr. George Meredith is poet, philosopher and politician, as well as novelist, and we must be satisfied, I suppose, that brilliant studies of manners form an element, and an element only, in his varied and stimulating work."

--H. D. Traill
(October, 1875)

CHAPTER I
HOW ATTITUDES AND CIRCUMSTANCES REGARDING SENTIMENTALITY
VERSUS REALISM ARE EVIDENCED IN
EVAN HARRINGTON

The dilemma of man being pulled in two directions at once, unable to combine the instinctive and the rational, was a problem that haunted George Meredith's generation. Meredith sought to redress the balance and was therefore engaged in the work of rehabilitation. In this work he did not ordinarily take up the struggle between the individual and society in such direct form as it occurred in some writers, George Eliot, notably. He preferred to deal with more purely personal relationships in which society figures indirectly or by implication. Society creates artificial situations, which in turn give rise to unnatural forms of behavior. The resultant complexity of impulse and confusion of motive may cause an individual to become involved in a conflict that is at once social and personal.

Such is the case of Melchisedec Harrington, whose influence pervades the novel Evan Harrington. The hero of the novel is Evan Harrington, but the dominant figure is the "great Mel" although he is dead before the action

begins. Evan himself is not much more than a chopping block for Meredith's strokes of wit and generalizations on life and conduct. The "great Mel," having been received as a gentleman while actually he was a tailor, set the stage for a struggle between sentimentality and a true depiction of reality. From him, his son Evan inherited more than four thousand pounds in debts and a duality of personality, ideals; and goals. Along with this inheritance came a constant pull toward reality by his mother on the one hand, and toward sentimentality by his sister on the other. Indeed, how his sister, the Countess de Saldar, contrives vaingloriously to uphold her own honor, though under the guise of upholding the honor of her brother and sisters, provides the plot of Evan Harrington.

It was Meredith's opinion that our vanities, pompousness, and kindred follies are the special sins chastened by the Comic Spirit in any cultivated society. This Comic Spirit, according to him, is the "ultimate civilizer in a dull, insensitive world."¹⁸ Not only is the Comic Spirit invaluable to this end, it also plays a large role in correcting the tragedy of sentimentality, the tragedy that causes an individual to lose perspective to a greater and greater degree. In Evan Harrington Meredith shows the difference between actual upperclass life and the hero's

¹⁸Meredith's Essay on Comedy.

illusion in order to give perspective. He does this by introducing a "gallery of effete, inept, and sensual persons," and he made great sport of the affectations of the upper classes.¹⁹ Rose's father is of no consequence or significance; her uncle Melville is a ridiculous statesman whose balance of power is of little or no practical value; her brother is so out of touch with reality that he drinks wildly and deeply to the birth of a baby, not knowing that it is his own. This same brother is absolutely foolish when the Countess de Saldar inflates him into unrestraint by convention or morality and then corrects his uncouth manners. The houseguest, a duke, is predisposed to be a seducer. Evan's rival, Ferdinand Laxley, is a dull, awkward lover. The Jocelyn Family, both as individuals and a unit, anxiously await Juliana's early death to get her inheritance, and they are as comic in their fear of declining socially as are the Harrington's in their efforts to rise. These characters merely fill in the pattern--the novel deals essentially with Evan's reluctance to reconcile the dream with the reality. This reluctance is dealt with in pure comedy. It is severe and inflexible, holding up a mirror for us to gaze at our own faults. Meredith used comedy for this because he believed that the ability of a society to appreciate comedy is an index of

¹⁹Walter F. Wright, Art and Substance in George Meredith (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953), p. 50.

its state of culture. The Comic Spirit, not to be confused with the comic character, is such a form of balanced perceptiveness as enables its possessor to avoid becoming himself a victim of comedy.

Evan Harrington shows Meredith consciously engaged in putting into practice his theory of the uses of the Comic Spirit. Its full title is Evan Harrington, Or He Would Be A Gentleman, and the central figure, Evan Harrington, is enclosed in a ring of comic irony as he combats the malady of snobbery. The comic aspect of his sister the Countess' pretensions is never for a moment lost sight of. Certain creatures of fantasy seem to accompany her, each differing according to the time, place, and circumstances. These creatures are the hounds of the Comic Muse, and they have scented the Countess as their game. Comedy is most effective, Meredith believes, when it is kept free of sentiment. Sentimental people, he says in the Essay on Comedy, dislike comedy because they object to facing the actual world. Comedy frightens them by showing them things about themselves that they wish to ignore. It should be noted at this point that this is the facet of sentimentality that is developed in this thesis--not maudlin emotion. If the term sentimentality is taken loosely, it very well includes snobbery, which is a condition under which self-importance is inflated and the individual affected by it has no sane sense of proportion. This lack of proportion is a result of attitudes colored by feeling rather than by reason and

this adds up to sentimentality. It is this facet that steps to the fore when I contend that Meredith was successful as a novelist when he wrote Evan Harrington and that in it he used comedy as a corrective to sentimentality.

The term "Corrective to Sentimentality" automatically implies dealing with a contradiction, and this contradiction is personified by the "great Mel" and in Evan's struggle between sentimentality and reality. It stems from the fact that Meredith himself suffered from lack of balance. A prophet of stability and harmony, he was torn by contradictions, and these contradictions found their way into Evan Harrington, an heavily autobiographical novel. It is obvious that he recorded his family history in this work and that he perceived folly, sentimentality, and conceit in his own existence. His attitude toward society had its roots in the conditions of his life and the people who surrounded him, and all these found their way into the novel, whose single purpose was exhibiting the damaging effects of snobbery. Everything begins and ends with this purpose. There is nothing in the novel that is not in some way tied to it, from the monkey that squatted at the feet of his dead master, the "great Mel," to the eventual marriage of Evan Harrington and Rose Jocelyn.

The fact that everything begins and ends with a purpose, with all elements of the novel related to that purpose, repudiates the charge that Meredith excels at putting words together but fails at writing a novel. True, he seemingly

decided that the telling of a straightforward story is not the sole purpose of the novel, which is a literary form that may legitimately be made to do the work of the philosopher; but he satisfactorily fused form and content, thereby achieving unity--albeit an artificial unity. Therefore, when we say that Meredith used comedy as a corrective to sentimentality, with the conditions of his life and the people who surrounded him as a fountainhead, it behooves us to determine what insights into the meaning and idea of Evan Harrington all its parts have provided, and to pass judgment on the relative success or failure on the basis of this type of unity.

Before going into the merits or demerits of Evan Harrington in the matter of fusing the inner idea with the outer structure, it would be well to look at Meredith's actual battle with sentimentality. With comedy as the social weapon, it was virtually humor of the intellect versus humor of the heart; and in order to understand Meredith's purpose, we need to look closely at sentimentality. An historical survey of sentimentality in the novel reveals that before 1740, when Samuel Richardson originated the novel of sentiment, the lack of sentiment is marked: Defoe, for instance, never thinks of touching the fountain of tears, and probably could not have done so had he wished. Swift, as another example, takes a cruel pleasure in exposing human frailty, and has no tears even for the

most pitiable of human miseries. Richardson, however, strikes a new note: he introduces sympathy and pathos into English fiction. He investigates the human heart to dignify its emotions, not to sneer at them. His sympathy with women is remarkable. He understands them perfectly, he reverences them, and he applies an analysis to them which is both delicate and acute. Not only was he considered the idol of female coteries, but he was the annointed Prophet of the Feminine.²⁰ Women read his books with a kind of breathless interest which the sentimental tales of Dickens excited later. They wrote him passionate letters, imploring him not to kill his heroine, or to save the soul of his hero, much as the early readers of Dickens implored him not to kill Little Nell. One of his favorite correspondents, Lady Bradshaigh, has vividly described her emotions over Clarissa Harlowe. She wept copiously over the book, laid it down unable to command her feelings, could not sleep at night for thinking of it, and needed all her fortitude and the active sympathy of her husband to enable her to persist in her agonizing task.²¹

There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of this confession. We have become inured to the sentimental novelist, and are on our guard against him. Our feelings have been

²⁰W. J. Dawson, The Makers of English Fiction (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1905), p. 24.

²¹Ibid. p. 25.

outraged so often, that if we yield ourselves to his spell it is with deliberation, and with a due regard to the consequences of our weakness. But Richardson dealt with unsophisticated readers, rich in virgin emotions. He produced a kind of writing which had not been seen before, and it surprised the world by its novelty as well as charmed it by its sympathy. Richardson thus began a movement whose effect was to be lasting. Henceforth fiction was to engage itself mainly with the interpretation of sentiment, and the influence of Richardson is obvious in Goethe and Rousseau as it is on our own long array of sentimental novelists.²²

If one has the time and patience to explore Richardson, he will not go unrewarded. In spite of all his verbose moralisms and prolix preachings, he was an artist. The method of novel-writing he adopted was detestable, for the epistolary novel was the most unsatisfactory of all methods. Yet it must be confessed that when the initial irritation of the method is surmounted, one is surprised to find how real the grip is which the story takes upon the imagination. The very repetition which the method involves gives definiteness to characterization, for the characters appear not in a single part, but in a variety of parts; and in the end we know them through and through rather than by

²²Walter Allen, The English Novel, A Short Critical History (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1954). p. 77.

a solitary phase of emotion. So, in spite of a cumbrous method, of a mind overwhelmed with copy-book maxims, of an acquaintance with life that never went beyond a narrow range of society, Richardson must be considered an artist, as anyone of discrimination will discover by a careful study of the latter half of Clarissa Harlowe.

In the development of English fiction, Richardson is the greatest name: he settled the trend of the novel for many generations. Among those who were the first to imitate him were Sterne and Goldsmith, but each in his own way. Sterne had an undoubted power of sentiment, unfortunately mixed with a fatal pruriency of taste. His humor and his pathos are equally remarkable and vital, yet both seem artificial owing to his lack of any real depth of feeling. Sterne himself was apparently the first to use the epithet sentimental, and by a curious coincidence, he so employed it in the very year that Richardson published Pamela. Unlike Sterne, however, Goldsmith is exquisitely sincere, and his one novel, The Vicar of Wakefield (1766), is the finest example of the sentimental novel in English literature. One rarely weeps with Sterne because there is ground for legitimate suspicion that he waits for our tears only to laugh at us, and he plays pranks with our emotions rather than purifies them. Goldsmith succeeds by his sincerity and his simplicity, for in him sentiment is genuine. Sterne will always be read by the student of

literature with mixed feelings of admiration for wit and dexterity and his contempt for the man; Goldsmith will be read by the humble and wise and the illiterate alike, with a genuine delight, and with a growing sense of personal affection for the writer.²³

The novel of sentiment did not take possession of the public mind without opposition. The eighteenth century was a particularly masculine age, and Richardson was a feminine writer. There will always be a large class of readers whose taste resents the sickly sweetness of the sentimental novel, and such readers will demand a more robust treatment of life. Just as in our own day we find that after a long debauch of sentiment the public demands a rougher and plainer meal, the novel of adventure ousting for a time the novel of emotional analysis, so, even while Richardson's sway was unquestioned, a counter-movement had begun. The revolt was led by Henry Fielding and Tobias Smollett, who together created the novel of masculine realism against the novel of sentiment.

Among others, George Meredith added one more counter-movement to the novel of sentiment. Whereas Richardson dealt with the unsophisticated readers, rich in virgin emotion, Meredith appealed to the cultivated middle-class, supposedly rich in intellect. This counter-movement,

²³Wilbur Cross, The Development of the English Novel (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899), p. 79.

aimed directly at the intellect, was the use of comedy as a corrective to sentimentality. By comedy Meredith does not mean farce and gaiety, but serious social ridicule on the border-land of the tragic and comic states. He makes a very nice distinction between humor and comedy. We usually roughly class Cervantes, Fielding, Sterne, and Thackeray together as humorists. But are not Cervantes and Fielding comic writers, and does not professional humor date from Sterne? Cervantes and Fielding ridicule folly: the former, among many follies, the reading of romances of chivalry; the latter, among many follies, clean-cut ethical maxims, the conduct of contemporary men and women and their education, and the presumption of taking as the subject of a novel a class of men and women concerning whom the reader is in the densest ignorance.²⁴ It is a correction of manners they aim at in the light of comic consciousness. Sterne fiddled the harmonics for amusement. The cast of Thackeray's mind was that of the comic writer. His setting out to correct Dickens, to teach him how to write a novel by making its heroine Becky Sharp instead of Little Nell, Meredith would call a comic situation. But there is another element in Thackeray, which came from Sterne -- a literary sentimentalism. This mingling of sentiment and comedy is humor; it lacks, according to Meredith, the

²⁴Ibid. p. 259.

high seriousness of Fielding; and its force as a social corrective is lost. Comedy he conceives of as a Muse watching the actions of men and women, detecting and pointing out their inconsistencies with a view to their moral improvement. She never laughs aloud--She only smiles at most; and the smile is of the intellect, for She is the handmaid of philosophy.²⁵ She "is impersonal of unrivalled politeness," occupying herself with the unnatural and conventional codes we have built up for ourselves, and She leads the way to a higher civilization. She may be called the humor of the mind, in distinction from the humor of Sterne and Thackeray, which is the humor of the heart; and the heart is sensation and material.

It is not the humor of the heart in itself that Meredith decries--it is the fact that the humor of the heart, or sentimentality, to be specific, is born of unreason. He maintains that there is pathos in his novels, although he shuns all unsound feeling and self-imposed misery. According to him, we see the intensest pathos in life itself; and as he mingles with society, detecting certain maladies, he aims at the artistic presentation of them. He would probe life with a clear perception, and, by pointing out our own absurdities--especially egoism and snobbery, show us what we are.

²⁵Ibid.

These absurdities of ours collectively make up sentimentality, which, in general, is the emotional disposition, sometimes excessively emotional, with reference to some object or class of objects. In its strictest sense, it is a mental attitude, thought, or judgment permeated or prompted by feeling. If one does not confine this definition to mawkish expression and allows the notion of "ideas permeated or prompted by feeling" free rein, he will admit that snobbery (as well as egoism) is a form of sentimentality. Instead of really being separate entities, they are merely distinguished by fine shades of character: the sentimentalist is more of a complex character; the egoist is a more refined one, and the character of the snob is superficial, not requiring as great subtlety of analysis as either of the others. They all share the common denominator of ideas being colored by emotion rather than by reason and trust. Snobbery and egoism, Meredith, too, had seen, are merely forms of sentimentality. "I see now," he said, "that the natural love of a lord is less subservience than a form of self-love; putting a gold-lace cap on one's image, as it were, to bow to it."²⁶

This natural love of a lord is most striking in the comfortable middle class. The lower class is too far down to hope or pretend; the upper class is so far up it can

²⁶Sencourt; p. 118.

afford to be magnanimous. But the well-to-do citizen, with every want supplied except what springs from vanity, has for his chief business in life the cultivation of "society."²⁷

The snob falls into two categories, both of which regard wealth and social distinction out of proportion to their real value. If he does not have wealth and social distinction, he is frantic to acquire them; failing this, he is even more frantic to appear to have them. The snob who is elevated in wealth and social distinction assumes an unjustified superiority and looks with scorn upon those beneath him. Evan Harrington is devoted to illustrating the world of snobs, and it offers many characters of both types. The hero himself is not always free from snobbery, but he manages to vindicate himself in the presence of the upper classes. His struggle to free himself from all traces of snobbery and his sister's struggle to uphold the honor of her brother and sisters constitute the bulk of Meredith's use of comedy as a corrective to sentimentality.

Evan's struggle on the one hand and the Countess' struggle on the other are both embodied in Melchisedec Harrington. Although he is proclaimed dead at the opening of the story and takes no part in it except that of a ghost, he and his influence pervade the novel. Lady

²⁷Siegfried Sassoon, Meredith (New York: The Viking Press, 1948), p. 61.

Jocelyn calls him "a snob and an imposter,"²⁸ but this is not entirely true. He was a snob, yes. He achieved the miracle of being received for a gentleman in the countryside which he served as a tailor, the most ignominious of trades in his day. He had a burning ambition to pass for more than he was, and on one occasion he let this ambition prevail by allowing himself to be thought of as a Marquis in disguise. Soon after that, however, he acquired the courage and good sense to avoid all pretension. He was not, however, an imposter, even though for a time he led a double life. This double life signified a paradox rather than dishonesty: he was bound to tailoring, but he had been bred like a gentleman and possessed all the manners and instincts attendant to gentle birth. Such also was the case with his son Evan.

Evan would not have had such a struggle to free himself from all traces of snobbery had it not been for his three sisters who have all managed to rise above their class by marriage and have cut themselves apart from their father's heritage as a common tradesman. Harriet has married Major Strike, and Louisa has become the Countess de Saldar. These sisters conspire to raise Evan into good society in like manner. It is agreed that they will not only rescue Evan from his father's trade, but will suppress

²⁸Richard Le Gallienne, George Meredith, Some Characteristics (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1893), p. 53.



*By permission of Messrs. Bradbury,
Agnew & Co.]*

*[From the drawing by Charles Keane
in 'Once a Week']*

THE DEATH OF 'THE GREAT WEE'

The curtains of the bed were drawn aside. The beams of a lamp fell soft through the window
the room, and cast a ghastly light on the figure of the vanquished warrior.
had not long before she found herself employed in her husband's
the widow standing beside her did not weep, gazing down on his mortal remains with a look of
saint friend. At the feet of his master, Soemo, the hooded man, had jumped up, and
was there squatted, with his legs crossed, very like a tailor.

—Evan Harrington. Chapter II.

FIGURE 2

all reference to their deceased father. This procedure will rescue Evan and, at the same time, allow them to maintain their own prestige.²⁹

The leader in the conspiracy for devising an advantageous marriage for the brother and laying the father's ghost is the Countess de Saldar, and, as such, she is the central comic figure of the novel. She has married a Portuguese Count and brings wonderful stories of high life from the Portuguese Court, in reality, we learn, figments from low life in Lymport, glossed over by a snobbish imagination.³⁰ She is extremely snobbish, a virtual parvenu. Thus she prefers to maintain the barrier between trade and nobility, always regarding the rank rather than the man.

A character similar to the Countess can be found in Jack Raikes. We see both Louisa and Jack as grotesque in their absurd magnificance, a ludicrous resemblance to the incipient snobbishness in ourselves. Our hero, Evan, also makes us recognize the snobbish instincts common to us all, but only in rudiment. This hero is delineated sharply by the introduction of Raikes as his foil and as a dreadful warning: Evan is able to develop a sense of humor about himself because he is able to "see something of himself

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Sencourt, p. 89.

magnified" in Raikes. Evan "would be a gentleman," but he has enough presence of mind to try to abstain from pretension. Jack Raikes is qualified to be a gentleman, but he is obtrusive; and, since Evan sees a burlesque of himself in him, it is Jack's insistence on the title gentleman that leads Evan to spurn that title for himself.

Great stress is laid on the word gentleman throughout the story; the trouble with Evan is that for too long he has accepted the false standards of others for himself. "He was of dull brain and it had not dawned on him that he might possibly be tailor and gentleman at the same time."³¹ This very word causes much of Evan's vacillation between snobbery and heroism. On the occasion when he finds himself directly challenged to fight for his friend, he feels obligated to let it be known that he, being no gentleman, is not qualified. Honesty, not cowardice, prompts this. On the other hand, he allows himself to be carried off to Beckley and become subservient to the dishonesty of his sister--the glimpse he got of Rose Jocelyn prompts him this time.

Another of Evan's lapses into sentimentality occurs in the scene in which he assures Laxley that he is, indeed, qualified to fight him, upon the strength of which Laxley admits him into the ranks of gentlemen. This lapse,

³¹Evan Harrington, Chapter XXIV.

seemingly, is caused by the fact that, at the time, it is Evan's express intent to leave Beckley for good. His good intentions fail him, however; and he knows himself to be managed when he is persuaded to remain on the pretext of Caroline's need for him, but at this stage of his career he is far from heroic.³²

Pride plays a large role also in Evan's vacillation between sentimentality and reality. It is not so much his fear of losing Rose as his fear of losing her respect that makes him hesitate in confessing to her. Once he summons the courage to do so, however, he finds Rose his staunch defender before the world. She now becomes scornful of the conventional use of the word gentleman. This supports Meredith's theory that even if true gentlefolk are inclined toward snobbery, a true form of sentimentality, they show a more open mind and more capacity for instruction. In the beginning Rose displays the prejudice of her class; but in the end, things are so completely reversed that her only doubt is not whether the tailor is a gentleman, but whether a certain nobleman might prove to be one.

Evan is caught between sentimentality (in the form of snobbery) on the one hand, and reality (the repudiation of false standards) on the other. On the middle ground Meredith is at war with sentimentality, and his attempt is

³²Sassoon, p. 65.

to show that benevolence, kindness, charity,--all the altruistic virtues,--are sentimentalities, unless the heart goes with the act. So too are equally self-pity and "sham-decency." The present social code has its foundation in sentimentality, and it comes to us from the bepraised age of chivalry, which was the age of barbarism.

This age of barbarism saw the beginning of the type of heroine that Meredith utterly repudiated. The heroine was usually a lady of chivalry. While she was in reality the slave of her husband or lover, he was ostensibly her worshipper. This lady of the castle still exists in our social ideal; and as a consequence she has stood in the foreground of our fiction. In contrast to her, Thackeray placed the rogue of the Spanish novel. In the lighter forms of fiction the woman of farce was omnipresent, to be pummelled by satire, jest, and innuendo. From these three ideal heroines, there had been some notable breakings-away, in Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Trollope, and George Eliot. Meredith did more than to break away--his repudiation gave the novel a new heroine. His women are never rogues, nor are they flawless; they are open to ridicule, and he ridicules them. Their heads are furnished with brains and with a dislike of losing their identity, even if this identity needs to be lost--as in the case of the Countess de Saldar.³³

³³Frances T. Russell, "Laurels for George Meredith," South Atlantic Quarterly, XXVII (1927), 370.

Meredith's preoccupation with sentimentality, his classing it with egoism and snobbery, can only be explained in terms of his philosophic principles. If one does not understand these, it is difficult to see why Meredith went to such lengths to forge his techniques of the Comic Spirit in order to attack these social evils. Meredith would attack the sentimentalist, the egoist, and the snob because, turning inward instead of outward, they make no contribution to society or to the progress of the race.

CHAPTER II
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INFLUENCES UPON
EVAN HARRINGTON

The philosophic principles of Meredith's had their foundations in the conditions of his life and the people who surrounded him. Evan Harrington is an autobiographical story which combines Meredith's present (1860) inextricably with his past. The present consisted of two major factors: first, that he loved Janet Duff Gordon; and, second, that Janet, daughter of aristocrats, married a man of substantial wealth at the time when Meredith, son of a tailor, was nearly penniless. We do not know what feelings he had when he discovered that his natural charm and wit could win him a place at the Duff Gordon's table, but were not enough to make his hosts take seriously any idea he might have had of becoming their son-in-law. Nor do we know if he ever suspected Janet herself of regarding his origins and his unpromising financial condition as the real barrier to their union. But we do know that the central characters of Evan Harrington were inspired by the Duff Gordons and

by Meredith's image of himself, and that the novel was written in 1860 during the period of Janet's engagement to Henry Ross.³⁴

In many respects the hero was a portrayal of Meredith's father, Augustus Urmston Meredith, the handsome lad with a soul above tailoring. Augustus' father appeared actually under his own name, "the great Mel"; his mother was there, with her indomitable common sense; the three sisters and their husbands were true to life in all essentials; even the neighboring shopkeepers in the High Street were reproduced, often without change of name. Portsmouth was "Lympport," and Petersfield was "Fallowfield," the place where the Harrington daughters went to school. It is thought that Dubbins Seminary for Young Ladies was located in an ancient building there. The death of the flamboyant old tailor and the unwilling accession of his son followed the real events of forty years before.³⁵

The most remarkable of the Meredith sisters, Louisa, was the original of her nephew's famous creation, the Countess de Saldar, in Evan Harrington. She was brilliant, ambitious, and the wit of the family. She married William Harding Read, who became Consul-General in the Azores

³⁴Norman Kelvin, A Troubled Eden, Nature and Society in the Works of George Meredith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), p. 17.

³⁵Stevenson. p. 81.

about 1832. He and Louisa maintained a high position in Court circles. They had a daughter married to Antonio da Costa Cabral, later created Marquis de Thomar, who was appointed Ambassador to the Vatican. Thus it came about that the granddaughter of Melchizedek Meredith the tailor, died as ambassadress in Rome. Her son was an attache at the Portuguese Legation in London, and his son was in the Portuguese Legation at Berlin. Other members of the family were officers in the army and Navy of Portugal. Such were the descendants of the diplomatic and strategic "Countess de Saldar"--she whose airs and graces and flapping laces, and talks of courts and nobilities, must have indeed created an excitement when she revisited, at rare intervals, her old home in Portsmouth. There is an aptly characteristic scene in Evan Harrington in which the Countess arrives after the death of her father, and, in low society, turns tactfully to the most welcome topic of conversation for that stratum of humanity--death and corpses.³⁶

Louisa's son-in-law, the Marquis de Thomar, had a brother called Silva Cabral, and here is found the source of the name "Count Silva" used by George Meredith in Evan Harrington. Another sister Harriet and her husband John Hellyer were the originals of the Andrew Cogglesbys; the Ellis', Catherine and her husband, were the originals

³⁶Ellis, p. 25.

of Major and Mrs. Strike. Meredith paid full tribute to Catherine; indeed, as Mrs. Strike, Evan loved this beautiful creature the best of his three sisters. It has been suggested that Sir S. B. Ellis had offended George Meredith by advising him to invest his small maternal inheritance in an unfortunate enterprise; hence, as Major Strike in Evan Harrington, he was the victim of a bitter attack.³⁷

As has been stated, Evan started out as a portrayal of Augustus Meredith. But when Evan rebelled against his mother's plans and set off to seek his fortune, the focus suddenly changed to Meredith's own immediate surroundings. Evan was now a projection of George Meredith himself, the man of humble origin received on sufferance in a brilliant, aristocratic household and constantly expecting some supercilious sneer from his fellow-guests.

The scene of this shift is Beckley Court, probably intended for Fair Oaks Lodge. As mentioned in the novel, it is about fifteen miles from Petersfield ("Fallowfield"), and this tallies with the location of Beckley Court. This is also substantiated by the fact that the river Rother runs through the grounds of Fair Oaks Lodge, and it corresponds to the river in Meredith's beautiful description of the rising harvest moon at Beckley Court.

³⁷Ibid., p. 136.

It is well known that the characteristics of Sir Franks and Lady Jocelyn and Rose were drawn from the author's friends, Sir Alexander and Lady Duff Gordon and their daughter Janet. Particularly successful was Meredith in delineating the rich personality of Lady Duff Gordon. She was a very remarkable woman and of a distinguished type of beauty. In advance of her time, she possessed a singular masculinity of intellect, was a famous traveller, and a writer of ability and charm, and smoked cigars both indoors and out. She died in 1869 at the early age of forty-eight. It attaches worthily to her name that she was one of the first to perceive of Meredith's powers in his early days as a writer. He received many kindnesses from her, and she was one of the few who understood with sympathy and tact his shy, sensitive nature. He was not ungrateful. "O, what a gallant soul she is, and how very much I love her!" he said in 1861; and he paid a fine tribute to her in the after years in the introduction he wrote for Lady Duff Gordon's Letters from Egypt. How well his estimate blends with the picture of Lady Jocelyn and recalls her sane, serene attitude to life.³⁸

The amusing Miss Current, in Evan Harrington, was drawn from Miss Louisa Courtney, an old friend of Lady Duff Gordon. Pat, the Irish retriever pup, had his

³⁸Ibid., p. 141

original in Peter, the property of Miss Janet Duff Gordon, at whose special request the dog was introduced into the story. Peter, after being broken in, was given to Arthur, Meredith's son. Miss Duff Gordon seemed quite to have entered into the spirit of her progressive immortalization as Rose Jocelyn, for she relates that she would often interrupt Meredith's reading of his latest installment of "her" story with the remark: "No, I should never have said it like that." And as she expressed it: "I 'corrected' myself in Evan Harrington." But Meredith thought otherwise, for he held the model to be the finer part.³⁹

Certainly the history of this novel is a curious one, for here was the author drawing from the life and characteristics of friends with their willing consent, though at the same time those friends were quite unaware that other characters in the book were drawn from the author's own relatives, long dead or lost sight of, and that the story was the unveiling of part of his own inner sensitiveness

This inner sensitiveness amounted to the fact that Meredith was driven to escape the stigma of the Portsmouth tailoring establishment from which the Meredith lives sprang; therefore, we would be safe in saying that George Meredith himself was both a snob and a sentimentalist, and at the same time a social critic. He believed that

³⁹Ibid.

social regeneration and social progress lie within each individual; that a society is the sum of the men and women comprising it. Born an outsider to the upper social classes of Victorian England, he made an effort to reflect the manners of English ladies and gentlemen of his age in his writing. He was successful at this effort because as an outsider he could perceive distinctions and subtle gradations and behavior patterns which the possessors of land and wealth and titles simply took for granted.

I have accused Meredith of being a snob, but he was not, in the cheap sense, a social snob; rather, he valued certain traits and qualities in the English Country Establishment (the half-million favored people who were members of landed gentry and agricultural upper-class or upper-middle-class families, and who lived on comfortable country estates in nineteenth-century England with incomes derived from inheritances, from agriculture, from rents-- indeed, from anything other than manufacturing or trade) so highly that he attributed to some, but by no means all of this group the very highest qualities of human perfection. The aristocracy came to stand for the best in all men, the highest development of the race. This attitude was the basic one surrounding the novel, and it heightened the reality of the norm by pointing to the necessity for a true depiction of reality.

CHAPTER III
COMEDY AS A SOCIAL WEAPON AS EMPLOYED IN
EVAN HARRINGTON

In Meredith's view, what is needed to arrive at a true depiction of reality is philosophy. Philosophy would teach the sentimentalist respect for nature's fleshly processes, and it would bring animation and form into the desert tracts of the realist. A philosophical fiction, in short, would perform the valuable service of helping to civilize mankind. This demand for philosophy in fiction corresponds to his theory of art as expressed in the Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit: the Comic Spirit he considered to be a form of perception, a free and disinterested play of the mind. Being social in character, it enables its possessor to measure himself against the social norm. Its foundation is in common sense rather than in pure intellectuality. Being the product of a balanced set of forces, it acts upon the individual as a balancing agent; and balanced individuals make a balanced society.

Lady Jocelyn, Mrs. Mel, Evan, and Rose all represent

the norm of this comedy. Meaning the pattern or standard for a group, the norm may be either the conventional behavior of society or an ideal behavior, usually a combination of good sense, good heart, and good manners; and it may be expressed by one or more of the characters or only implied in the story. As the theory of comedy characteristically presents the deviations from a norm, Meredith presents these deviations, the greater or lesser departures from the generally accepted or ideal, in most of the other characters, notably the Countess de Saldar, Jack Raikes, and Ferdinand Laxley. The "great Mel" seemingly symbolized society itself, being at once the norm and a deviation from it. Meredith put his theory of comedy into practice and used this comedy as a social weapon, a weapon which has no desire to wound. The only lash it wields is the lash that enables its victim to apply to himself. It does not spring from any desire to correct mankind per se, but it is essentially corrective in its action as a social agent.

A look at the action of Evan Harrington in relation to Meredith's theory of comedy reveals the following:

Melchisedek Harrington, though a tailor, had some most un-tailorly traits: He was buried in the uniform of a lieutenant of the militia dragoons--military service as an officer has always been one mark of the English gentleman. He was never known to have sent a bill--liberality in money matters is a second important trait of the English gentleman. Now Melchisedek's daughters had, by marriage, all

risen in the social scale. But in their hidden pasts the shadow of the shears--a trade peculiarly despised in Victorian England--was something to be concealed. The efforts of the brilliant Countess de Saldar to disguise her social origin becomes a study in high comedy. Meredith constantly plays with the idea that it is conduct and manner, rather than birth or superficial appearance, which certifies to the true English gentleman. All through the novel, Evan, the tailor's son, is contrasted favorably with Lord Laxley, his competitor for the hand of Rose Jocelyn. Toward the beginning of the novel, Evan quarrels with the snobbish and empty-headed Lord Laxley at an inn, and there is almost a duel. But Evan does not try to conceal the fact that his father was a tailor, and Lord Laxley contemptuously refuses to duel with him. Part of the code of the gentleman specified that duels could take place only between social equals; a gentleman would demean himself by dueling with a tradesman. Ideally, this meant that a gentleman had to stand ready to account for his words to a social equal, but a member of the "lower classes" was exempt from such a duty. The point is that Evan conducted himself so well that the company believed that he was in fact a gentleman:

"Sit down, and don't dare to spoil the fun any more. You a tailor! Who'll believe it! You're a nobleman in disguise."

At the end of the novel Rose Jocelyn, who has been engaged finally to marry Lord Laxley, wishes to be released

in order to marry Evan. The ramifications which lead to the admission on the part of Rose's aristocratic family that Evan might be a fit mate for Rose, after all, are not particularly important here. But the final judgment on Lord Laxley, the born aristocrat, is significant:

The behavior of Lord Laxley in refusing to surrender a young lady who declared that her heart was with another exceeds all I could have supposed. One of the noble peers among his ancestors must have been a pig!

In the last analysis it is Evan who proves by his conduct that he is the better gentleman. Meredith examined the concept of gentility from every conceivable angle, and arrived at the conclusion he undoubtedly wished: that it is possible for one who has not been born an English gentleman to become one, and conversely, that it is possible for one who has been born a Duke to behave in a swinish manner. This conclusion shines through all the pages of Evan Harrington. It is what Meredith, who strove all his life to be considered a gentleman, wished to believe; and it colored every page of his fiction.

What there was between Janet Duff Gordon and George Meredith was the basis of the sentimentality of Evan Harrington. He was divided from Janet by "thorny hedges too high to overleap and which pricked him when he pushed through them, leaving his mind's clothing finely tattered."⁴⁰

⁴⁰Sencourt, p. 111.

In developing the love story of Evan and Rose, and particularly in narrating the poignant interview on a beautiful spring night when Evan nobly denounced the girl, Meredith was externalizing his own secret wishes and regrets. Evan, though deeply in love with Rose when the novel begins, tries manfully to mask his passion. Having agreed to take over the debts of his deceased father, he considers it dishonorable even to visit Beckley, where Rose, ignorant of his background and situation, might respond to his love. Meredith depicts Evan as gladly willing to die for the girl but too honorable to plan, calculate, and maneuver himself into her proximity. Instead, he remains passive, even protesting, while his sister Louisa, the Countess, does the digging and sapping, and finally clears the way. Evan, innocent of any deception or even any knowledge of the Countess' expectation, finds the Jocelyns, who believe him to be of aristocratic origin, insisting that he be their guest at Beckley Court.⁴¹

Once inside Beckley Court, however he got there, Evan finds that Rose loves him; but the upper-class world, suspecting his origin, fights with every cruel and underhanded means available to push him back to the tailor's shop. It was essential to Meredith's conception of Evan's character that Evan show himself of unassailable integrity.

⁴¹Ellis, p. 141.

throughout the savage but comic fight that follows. Just as he could take no initiative to get to Beckley, so he has to remain passive in the war that is declared against the Harringtons. Giving offense to no one, challenging no one, ever ready to withdraw should Rose wish it, eager to comply with the desires of Rose's parents, Evan can flash out only when insulted, and then only as honor requires.⁴²

. But honor is poor armament in a battle as bitter as the one that swirls around him, and if he is not to be crushed, someone has to take the initiative in his behalf. Evan remains true to the character we glimpse in the early "incidents," while Louisa takes up the cudgels for him. Like her aristocratic enemies, she will use any weapon at hand to assault when necessary. Being the snobbish daughter of a tailor, she is even worse than her enemy. Evan remains free to spurn his sister when he discovers how low her tactics have been, and Meredith, meanwhile, has been free to cause Louisa to bring out the low behavior, which he can then pillory with grim satisfaction.⁴³

A chief function of the Comic Muse being to unmask affection and pretension, the Countess ought to have been the prime victim in Evan Harrington; but Meredith evidently admired her aplomb too much to give more than rare

⁴²Mary Sturge Gretton, The Writings and Life of George Meredith (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 65.

⁴³Kelvin, p. 20.



By permission of Messrs. Reed,
London, England. (See p. 100.)

EVAN AND ROSE ON BOARD THE "GEM"
 O, how your body, my young man, is made for me! With
 all that strength and beauty about the shoulders, my little
 one, you are just what I need. But what about that hat? For a
 woman, it is very unbecoming. Why, you might as well
 wear a sack! I must see you in my own dress. You shall
 have access to my wardrobe, my dear, and I shall select
 what suits you best.

—From *Harriette*. Chapter IV.

FIGURE 3



By permission of Messrs. Reed,
London, England. (See p. 100.)

EVAN AND ROSE IN THE CONSERVATORY
 O, how your body, my young man, is made for me! With
 all that strength and beauty about the shoulders, my little
 one, you are just what I need. But what about that hat? For a
 woman, it is very unbecoming. Why, you might as well
 wear a sack! I must see you in my own dress. You shall
 have access to my wardrobe, my dear, and I shall select
 what suits you best.

—From *Harriette*. Chapter IV.

FIGURE 4

and furtive glimpses of her faults. Her very success wins our approval; and the reader feels almost guilty of treason as he breaks into irresistible laughter when the father whom she has denied is mercilessly served up to her at the dinner in Beckley Court, or when the awful catastrophe of her mother's unexpected appearance at Lady Jocelyn's picnic ruins her plans.⁴⁴ She must be admired also for her innate inability to admit defeat: in unbending dignity she withdraws from a well-fought, if unsuccessful, battle. Her final letter from Rome shows her occupying a new eminence, for failure teaches Louisa nothing except to change her tactics. She writes:

"You think that you have quite conquered the dreadfulness of our origin. I smile at you! I know it to be impossible for the protestant heresy to offer a shade of consolation. Earthly born, it rather encourages earthly distinctions. It is the sweet Sovereign Pontiff alone who gathers all in his arms, not excepting tailors."⁴⁵

With the possible exception of Lady Jocelyn, the one person free from the taint of sentimentality in the story of Evan Harrington is his mother, Henrietta Maria Harrington. Whenever she sees it she corrects sentimentality with her strong mind and common sense. At Mel's death Meredith finds comedy in her scorn for tear-shedding women. When

⁴⁴Elmer James Bailey, The Novels of George Meredith: A Study (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), p. 70.

⁴⁵Evan Harrington.

Evan returns from his father's grave, she gives her cheek for his kiss, "for she never performed the operation; but kept her mouth, as she remarked, for food and speech, and not for slobbering mummeries." She could have been gentler and more affectionate with him had Meredith not been concentrating so hard on the correction of sentimentality.

Considering them to be their father's children, Mrs. Harrington expects nothing from her daughters in the way of common sense and greatness of soul. Her hope is centered in Evan, but she realizes that he needs help; therefore, she appears more rigid and less kind than she really is because she is determined that he shall not be ruined by what she terms "a parcel of fools." She puts in a very dignified appearance at the picnic held at Beckley Court, not ignorant of but heedless of all impropriety and all pain to be given. It is her intent to disgrace and humiliate in order to save her son from the hypocrisy and deceit, the sentimentality, that has ruined his father.⁴⁶ Upon being invited to have a seat she answers:

"My lady, I have come for my son. I hear that he has been playing the lord in your house, my lady. I humbly thank your ladyship for your kindness to him, but he is nothing more than a tailor's son, and is bound to a tailor himself that his father may be called an honest man. I am come to take him away."⁴⁷

⁴⁶Bailey, p. 68.

⁴⁷Evan Harrington.



*(Illustration of Moses, Broadway,
Agnew & Co.)*

*(From the drawing by Charles Keast
in "Once a Week.")*

THE COUNTESS DE SALDAN.

When was fashionable English language were a sign of breeding; and she always had
 when that she looked more interesting at dinner after reclining on a couch the whole of
 the afternoon.

—*see Harrington, Chapter XIX.*

FIGURE 5

This little speech embodies the fundamental truth in Meredith's philosophy of life. Through Mrs. Mel he depicts the perfect sincerity before which, in the long run, artificiality and sham must always go down.

This most individual thought of Meredith's is further enhanced by the Countess, Jack Raikes, the great Mel, and Tom Cogglesby. Together they form the special feature of the story by throwing the naturalness of Rose and Evan into salience. The Comic Spirit lies in wait for imposters like them throughout the story, and through this Comic Spirit Meredith expresses his faith in earth's training of those who are teachable--those who are fools for a season only, as opposed to the tragedy of those who are hopelessly entrapped by sentimentality.

Evan's season finds him love-sick and engrossed in his own sorrows. He rails at the heavens, accusing them of conspiring to disgrace him, of not fashioning him for tailoring but yet impelling him to work at it. The heavens listen patiently but are not disordered by his frenzy. It is only when he casts off the scales of hope and fancy, and surrenders his claim on mad chance, that he sees some plan is working out. He learns to base his efforts and ambitions on the realities of his character and his circumstance in the future. He realizes that before he can begin to make something of himself and his life he has to recognize the unlimited possibilities of self-deception

and unreality. His honesty and manliness can no longer be questioned, for his aspirations are rooted in fact, the primary fact being the limitations of his own character.⁴⁸

Rose Jocelyn passes through a struggle that is not less significant than Evan's. She has to reconcile herself to Evan's calling. She occasionally feels repugnance to becoming a tailor's wife, but her native good sense and strength of character help her to prove herself worthy of the man who loves her.

In the light of Meredith's theory of comedy and action of Evan Harrington it should be noted that though Meredith restricts the term comedy to the witty and sophisticated form of humor: the subtle, the delicate, the refined, the extravagant, and the grotesque. The reader may be tempted to believe, temporarily, that Meredith breaks through the bonds of legitimate comedy and degenerates into farce. But then it becomes obvious how careful he has been about the urgency of true proportion; and that despite his fun, he teaches a serious lesson of the hollow foolishness which lies in attempting to appear what one is not. This true proportion, this serious lesson, as found in Evan Harrington is the embodiment, not an adumbration, of the Comic Spirit:

"...whenever men wax out of proportion, overblown, affected; pretentious, bombastical, hypocritical, pedantic, fantastically delicate, whenever it sees them self-deceived or hood-

⁴⁸Gretton, p. 149.

winked, given to run riot in idolatries, drifting into vanities, congregating in absurdities, planning short-sightedly, plotting dementedly; whenever they are at variance with their professions, and violate the unwritten but perceptible laws binding them in consideration one to another; whenever they offend sound reason, fair justice; are false in humility or mined with conceit, individually, or in bulk; the Spirit overhead will look humanely malign, and cast an oblique light on them, followed by volleys of silvery laughter. That is the Comic Spirit."⁴⁹

⁴⁹Essay on Comedy.

CHAPTER IV
STRUCTURAL PARTS OF EVAN HARRINGTON THAT CONTRIBUTE
TO THE THEME

George Meredith wrote Evan Harrington with an eye to correcting sentimentality by holding up the foible of snobbery to ridicule. In the light of his theory of comedy, this particular novel is a success as a corrective. The theme of the novel is a young man's testing. In the light of unity, it is also successful as a novel; for the point of view, characterization, style, setting and atmosphere, the plot and plot structure all fuse to give insights into the inner idea.

To begin with, his method is frankly artificial. Meredith takes nature in the drawing-room to be the proper material of comedy, and he cares little for particulars, either places or people. As he states in the opening paragraph of The Egoist. "Credulity is not wooed through the impressionable senses. 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." Accordingly we are not to expect him to devote much attention to the problem of providing his characters with a normal round of daily activity. Moreover, as he does not limit himself to dramatic presentment, his characters are not free from the sense of being interfered with.

Meredith develops his characters by openly revolting against the realistic school of his day which held that the object of art was to reproduce life with scrupulous minuteness. Instead of seeking to present a fully developed human society and taking pains to make his characters talk with absolute realism, he seemingly, concentrates attention upon typical characters, caring little whether his men and women talk naturally so long as they embody the essential, spiritual truth of humanity. The dialogue is more highly compressed, more heavily loaded with meaning, than it could be in actual life. This pursuit of the essential, together with that aspect of his style which makes him appear to play around his story, actually reveals strategy in the writing of Evan Harrington and the depiction of its characters: after pages of skirmishing, Meredith at last brings his characters to battle in just that relation in which every force is available. Thus, it can be said that in his revolt against the realistic school, Meredith is more successful than the realists themselves at their own endeavor: he gives a heightened sense of reality. He does not reproduce life; he does not decorate it (although

he does idealize it), but he exemplifies it in types and situations of unusual meaning and power.

Instead of presenting his tale in plain, clear narrative, he prefers to give it to us in half-lights, as it is seen from different points of view. On the surface it would appear that the novel is written from an omniscient point of view, but throughout the story we are led skillfully into the thoughts and feelings of Evan, Rose, the Countess, Mrs. Mel, and Lady Jocelyn. By this means, the point of view is intricately related to characterization.

The problem of the hero Evan is one of integrity. He is in love with the aristocratic Rose Jocelyn; and, being in love with her, has to decide whether to pass himself off as a gentleman, as his sister the Countess de Saldar intrigues that he shall, or become a tailor to pay off the "great Mel's" debts, as his mother urges him. It has already been mentioned that Evan himself is not much more than a chopping block for Meredith's strokes of wit and generalizations on life and conduct. What saves the novel is the character of Evan's sister, the Countess, a great figure on whom Meredith, moved to delight by contemplation of her, has launched his inventive genius. Whereas Meredith went to great lengths to depict Evan as ideal, he also went to great lengths to depict the Countess as the epitome of snobbery. The force which motivates and

shapes the actions and personality of the Countess is that she has thoroughly deceived herself into taking outward shows for inner realities. The comic element consists in the constant danger which she, as a pretender to social position, finds herself in: the danger of exposure. The conflict arises in the fact that Evan is not always free from snobbery but struggles manfully to free himself from all traces of it; while at the same time, his sister, the Countess, is struggling to avert the danger of exposure in her own "social position" under the guise of upholding the honor of her brother and sisters. The ultimate futility of sham and pretense is voiced by the humorous Tom Cogglesby when he said to Evan's mother:

"I'm off to Beckley on a marriage business. I'm the son of a cobbler, so I go in a donkey-cart. No damned pretenses for me. I'm going to marry off a young tailor to a gal he's been playing the lord to. If she cares for him, she'll take him: if not, they're all the luckier, both of 'em."

Upon careless reading, one is tempted to believe that a cast of one hundred-and-twenty characters is somewhat unwieldy to carry so small a burden as proving the integrity of a man on the one hand, and ridiculing snobbery on the other. Reassessment, however, will reveal that none of the secondary characters is deprived of all autonomous existence and reduced to mere excrescences. Each is endowed with attributes that make him easily distinguishable: his physical aspect, gestures, actions, sensations, and

everyday emotions which contribute to giving him an appearance of life and present a convenient hold on the reader.

For the most part, the grand people at Beckley Court appear as unreal, but this, too, is a surface appearance. This fact, together with the multitude of characters, the idealization of the hero, and the exaggeration of the Countess, serves as its own raison d' être: the very unreality heightens reality and fuses the characterization into the idea of conduct and manner, rather than birth or superficial appearance, certifying to the true English gentleman.

The characterization fuses so well into the idea that it looms as character in bulk, as interpretive of life.⁵⁰ Few, if any, of the personages appear as fellow-creatures--each seems to be a medium of the philosophy that sentimentality needs to be held up so that we can recognize it as one of our foibles and laugh our way into correcting it.

Meredith has been accused of being so intent upon fusing character into the idea that he sacrifices logical action which comes out of character.⁵¹ This may be true, reluctantly admitted, to some small degree with the Countess de Saldar. Before the story is half over, we

⁵⁰ J.A. Hammerton, George Meredith, His Life and Art in Anecdote and Criticism (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1911), p. 158.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 205.



Representation of Messrs. Bradbury,
Agents of Co.

(From the drawing by Charles Stone
in "Once a Week")

TOM COGGOLAND'S ARRIVAL AT BECKLEY COURT.

He looks out, in which old Tom Coggoland sat alone, busily in figure, bristled in face,
his shrewd gray eyes twinkling under the bush of his eyelashes.
—*Edna Hamilton, Chapter XXVIII.*

FIGURE 6

already are aware that she is a scheming, insincere woman, affecting the airs of foreign nobility, even to her accent in speaking. But the recitals of her wiles are given at too great length, and after a while the frequent illustration of her character becomes dead weight. When finally the bad tendencies in her are pushed to an extreme in her sudden amorous advances toward her sister's husband, Andrew, it is done so abruptly that it appears precipitate and makes an impression of purely superfluous coarseness.⁵²

Obeying his impulse to amplify his characters' attributes until they become absolute types, Meredith also pushes Mrs. Mel to an extreme. She is the embodiment of harsh duty and fatefulness, but she is almost repulsive in her hard constancy to her humble position as the widow of a defunct tailor. By the same token of obeying impulses, Meredith seems to have fallen short in his portrayal of Jack Raikes. We learn early that he is a foil for Evan; but if we do not constantly remind ourselves that his role is to heighten the impression given by Evan's conduct by contrast, we find ourselves hard-put to justify his presence in the story. Meredith, in attempting to portray him, is ready enough with words to put into his mouth; but "the mimetic or impersonating faculty does not answer at his call, and Mr. Raikes is all shell and no meat."⁵³

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

All these aspects, on the surface, appear to be actual defects in characterization, but the fact is this: the more defective the characters are, or seem to be, the more the reality of the norm is heightened; and, as the heightening of reality fuses the structure into the idea, the end justifies the means.

It would seem that Evan Harrington and other works would have long since brought recognition to George Meredith, but this is not the case. All of the reasons advanced for the delay in Meredith's recognition point either glowingly or disparagingly to the wilfullness, novelty, and obscurity of his style. This style is reputed to be as far removed as it can be from our present idea of what constitutes good style: "at its worst it is Teutonic and vulgar, and at its best, except when it fuses into poetry, it is too brilliant, fatiguing because of excess of metaphor and epigram; it dazzles, and because it dazzles, tires the mind."⁵⁴

It has also been suggested that in the Idea of Comedy Meredith restates the classical conception of comedy, and reading it, we naturally expect him to show in his fiction the grasp of the social scene that characterizes Jonson and Congreve. "We do not find it at all. In the essay he talks much of society, but there is no very convincing

⁵⁴Allen, p. 276.

society in his books, and often, if we are looking for a representation of society and of typical behavior, there is something that looks like willful freakishness."⁵⁵

Further survey of existing criticism reveals Meredith's style as "brilliant almost beyond example in his contemporaries, but at times willfully obscure in almost equal degree: the page perpetually breaks in star-sparkles; it flashes with all sorts of pyrotechnic displays, it is volcanic with eruptive radiance. Sometimes it is almost mischievously coruscating, as though a boy exploded crackers under you for the mere pleasure of seeing you jump. But one never knows how soon or how suddenly the fire may go out, and you may find yourself plunged into the darkest by-ways of obscurity."⁵⁶ "He is so infinitely vivacious, versatile, and witty, so fertile in jest and epigram, so agile in the leaps and glances of his thought, so wayward and surprising, so conspicuously acute and clever, that less nimble minds pant breathless behind him, and even the nimblest have a difficulty in keeping pace with him. Sometimes the fire we have followed with panting eagerness suddenly dances a will-o'-the-wisp fantasy of mirth and leaves us knee-deep in the bog. When once we become used to his method, no writer can afford so much

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Dawson. p. 192.

intellectual exhilaration; but it is little wonder, when we consider it, that the regular novel-reader is bewildered by so uncommon a guide and prefers someone much duller and safer. Intellectual gymnastics, however brilliant, are not what the patient and somewhat dull creature, 'the general reader,' looks for in a novel."⁵⁷

None of this foregoing criticism is apparent, to this writer, in Evan Harrington. Instead is found splendor, subtlety only to a small degree, and felicity of diction combined with the most penetrating and suggestive thought. Witness this rendition of Evan's thoughts on the morning following the night when, by the stream running through Beckley Court, he told her that he must leave:

A delicious morning had followed the lovely night. The stream flowed under Evan's eyes, like something in a lower sphere, now. His passion took him up, as if a genie had lifted him into mid-air, and showed him the world on the palm of a hand; and yet, as he dressed by the window, little chinks in the garden wall, and nectarines under their shiny leaves, and the white walks of the garden, were stamped on his hot brain accurately and lastingly. Ruth upon the lips of Rose: that voice of living constancy made music to him everywhere. 'Thy God shall be my God.' He had heard it all through the night. He had not yet broken the tender charm sufficiently to think that he must tell her of the sacrifice she would have to make. When partly he did, the first excuse he clutched at was that he had not even kissed her on the forehead. Surely he had been splendidly chivalrous? Just as surely he would have

⁵⁷Donald Fanger, "George Meredith as Novelist," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XVI (1963), 318-320.

brought on himself the scorn of the chivalrous or of the commonly balanced if he had been otherwise. The grandeur of this or of any of his proceedings, then, was forfeited, as it must needs be when we are in a false position: we can have no glory though martyred. The youth felt it, even to the seeing of why it was; and he resolved, in justice to the dear girl, that he would break loose from his fetters, as we call our weakness. Behold, Rose met him descending the stairs, and, taking his hand, sang, unabashed, by the tell-tale colour coming over her face, a stave of a little Portuguese air that they had both been fond of in Portugal; and he, listening to it, and looking in her eyes, saw that his feelings in the old time had been hers. Instantly the old time gave him its breath, the present drew back.

Quite in another spirit, nothing could be better than the portrait of old Tom Cogglesby, and the account of a meeting between him and his brother Andrew at the Aurora tavern-- a delicious humor pervades the whole episode. Likewise, the hat of Jack Raikes alone--in the scene of the cricket supper at the Green Dragon--is provocative of infinite mirth:

"I mourn my hat. He is old - I mourn him yet living. The presence of crape on him signifies he shall ne'er have a gloss again. The fact is my hat is a burden in the staring crowd. A hat like this should counsel solitude."

Such felicity of diction and suggestive thought as evidenced in the first passage, and such mirth as is apparent in the second, substantiate the fact that the style of George Meredith--as far as Evan Harrington is concerned--fuses successfully with the idea that sentimentality is in need of correction--especially when it manifests itself in the

form of sham and pretense--and that comedy is an appropriate and effective corrective.

Plot and plot structure and setting and atmosphere contribute greatly to the theme of Evan Harrington. It is true that Meredith has been accused of being abrupt in structure, shifting the scene suddenly, dropping the thread of his story and picking it up again where he wills, in such manner as to render it difficult for any but a practiced reader to follow him; but although the plot of Evan Harrington is occasionally handicapped by complications difficult to follow, the reader, practiced or not, will discover that this novel is smoothly maneuvered to reach its climax. The action all takes place in an appropriate setting and atmosphere for the theme, and the story provides a sense of totality: all events and details contribute to the single theme--that by using reality as a watermark, a common tradesman can vindicate himself in the presence of the upper classes.

In general design, Evan Harrington bears a closer resemblance to comedy of the stage than to the less closely knit comedy of the novel. This is true because of the way in which the exposition of character overshadows action and setting. But in dealing with a deformity of character, a woman caught in a trap of her own making, and a man's struggle to avoid such a trap, it follows general comic tradition.

The early chapters serve to acquaint the reader quickly with the circumstances of the hero: when Melchisedek Harrington died, his neighbors spoke fondly of him and wondered what his son, who was in Portugal would do. When Mrs. Harrington told Evan about old Mel's debts, the son consented to go to London and learn the tailor's trade; not even the Countess' entreaties and assurances that Rose loved him could dissuade him from his course. Setting out for London on foot, he met Jack Raikes, an old school friend. They went to the Green Dragon Inn, where they joined a group of men at dinner. Old Tom Cogglesby, brother of Andrew, the brewer, presided. Among those present were Harry Jocelyn, Rose's brother, and Ferdinand Laxley, his friend. Evan and Jack got into a drunken brawl involving much name-calling and many threats. The gentlemen present scoffed at Evan's choice of trade. Laxley challenged Evan to a duel; but on learning that Evan was the son of a tailor, he haughtily declined to fight a common tradesman. The day after the tavern brawl, while watching a cricket match on the green, Evan met Rose Jocelyn and her party, which included the Countess de Saldar. He was prevailed upon to visit the Jocelyns at Beckley Court. As he rode along beside Rose, one of the men with whom he had quarrelled the night before pointed him out as a tailor. At Beckley Court the Countess was able to persuade Harry Jocelyn that Evan was not the tailor but that Jack Raikes



By permission of Messrs. Bradbury,
Lyon & Co.]

[From the drawing by Charles Heath
in "Once a Week"]

EVAN'S ENCOUNTER WITH DANLOP AND HENRY.

Presently his horse's ears twitched, and the animal gave a low neigh. Evan's eyes fastened on the length of gravel leading to the house. There was no sign, no light. Out from the smooth grass of the lane a couple of horsemen issued, and came straight to the gates.

—*Mark Harrington, Chapter XXV.*

FIGURE 7

was. Still, Laxley demanded that Evan deny his trade and fight the duel as a gentleman or else acknowledge it. Laxley was one of Rose's suitors. Resenting Evan, he continually challenged him to admit that he was not a real gentleman. Since claiming that he was a gentleman would mean a duel with Laxley, Evan resolved to leave Beckley Court. The Countess, fearing to see all her plans ruined, prevailed upon Evan to seek the advice of his relatives. Harriet, Caroline, and Andrew were also visiting at Beckley Court; and Evan's predicament concerned them all.

Having up to this point presented his material in summary form, Meredith now adopts a more elaborate method, for his novel is to be primarily the story of Evan's vindicating himself in the eyes of the upper classes. The social involvements at Beckley Court grow more tense-- the arrival of Mrs. Harrington complicates the situation and works ultimately to the advantage of Evan. After Evan went to Mr. Goren's shop to follow his father's trade, some unfortunate situations occurred: Andrew's brewery went bankrupt and he lost all his property; the three sisters, who had been living in the Cogglesby house, were forced to go to their mother in Lymport; Juliana, an invalid girl in love with Evan and who had inherited Beckley Court upon the death of her grandmother, wrote a will leaving her estate to Evan. Upon her death, however, Evan rejected the bequest and returned Beckley Court to

Lady Jocelyn. Meanwhile, Rose, engaged to Laxley, felt herself bound by promise to Evan and sent for him to release her before she could marry his rival. Evan did so with no show of self-sacrifice.

Everyone had become indebted to Evan for his generosity; he himself had simply tried to make everyone happy. As befits comic justice, he is assigned the function of chastising any who have been snobbish, sentimental if you will, toward him; but he rises manfully to the occasion and finds his own mark. No longer compelled to pretend anything about himself, he stops wavering between sentimentality and a true depiction of reality and finally takes a firm stand. When he declared his love again, Rose accepted him. Old Tom Cogglesby, delighted, offered to give Evan an income. The sisters went back to their former ways of life, and Mrs. Harrington became Tom Cogglesby's housekeeper.

Not only does the action contribute to the theme on the strength of the plot alone, but there is a unifying interrelationship among the other parts of the novel. Virtually all of the incidents spring out of character; and, having occurred, they alter that character. People and events are closely connected, and Meredith achieves this by contriving the events artificially instead of having them occur logically and naturally. Moreover, by probing the thoughts and feelings of more than one character, he relates the point of view to characterization and thereby

adds another link to the chain of interrelationships that mirror the theme and give significant clues to it.

The success of Evan Harrington as a novel rests more on the unity of ideas than unity by way of form. George Meredith once said: "Capacity for thinking should precede the art of writing. It should. I do not say it does. Capacity for assimilating the public taste and reproducing it is the commonest."⁵⁸ But he himself lacked this common capacity; as a matter of fact, he has been condemned as "an artist, but no novelist."⁵⁹

This charge cannot be substantiated by reading Evan Harrington, not even in the face of the narrowest convention. "It is a narrow convention, indeed, that insists that a novel must be a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. The most flexible of all literary forms, as we are pleased to regard the novel, is to become a rigid mould for the man who makes use of it! And the journeyman hack who conforms to its conventions, and brightens his tale with never one little flash of intellect or observation, is the genuine novelist! So would hidebound criticism have it."⁶⁰ Nonetheless, it is so that popularity may be achieved that

⁵⁸Joseph C. Landis, "George Meredith's Comedy," Boston University Studies in English, II (1956), 18.

⁵⁹Hammerton, p. 157.

⁶⁰Ibid.

the man of genius who either disdains to conform or cannot conform to the convention, must discover some other way of fascinating the audience he addresses. As Meredith's substitute for story is the minute analysis of character, long sustained and remorselessly inquisitive, a large part of the audience has been lost while his characters have played to the few spectators who can understand and appreciate life as portrayed by types in contrived settings. Being inspired by the Comic Muse, Meredith has to present his reading of life not in actual characters, deftly exaggerated, but in types. That is the inescapable method of comedy, and Meredith is nothing else if he is not a writer of comedy. It is this writer's contention that Evan Harrington is nothing if not the finest example of his comedy.

There is no denying the fact that Meredith never masters the art of telling a story in a natural and forceful style, which a novelist of far inferior powers could do to perfection. This matter of a well-knit narrative surely touches the question of art, leaving the great writer who has been unable to master it so much less the artist. In the case of Meredith, however, his other qualities are so great that the discount is the less. It is the less because there is a certain kind of unity in all of his novels, which Mr. W. C. Brownell, the talented American

critic in his Victorian Prose Masters has pointed out defined in this passage:

Each book is the elaboration of an idea, the working out of some theme taken on its intellectual side. Sometimes this is very specific, as in 'Diana' or 'Feverel', but it is always perfectly defined. The book is a series of deductions from it. Its essential unity, therefore--spite of excrescent detail--is agreeably unmistakable. But it is hardly necessary to point out that it is not the unity of a sympathetic image of life immediately beholden in its entirety. It is a mathematical, that is to say, an artificial unity.⁶¹

While that is not the unity that makes for popular favor, it is at least a characteristic of Meredith's fiction which must be recognized in endeavoring to get at the novelist's own point of view, the mark he aims at. Such is the case with Evan Harrington: the theme of it is that a common tradesman can vindicate himself in the presence of the upper classes by proving that conduct and manner, rather than birth or superficial appearance, certify to the true English gentleman. This theme is worked out on its intellectual side, showing snobbery to be a manifestation of sentimentality which comedy can correct. All parts of the novel coalesce--by way of minute analysis of character, varied point of view, felicity of diction and suggestive thought, and totality of action with complimentary setting and atmosphere--into a satisfactory fusion

⁶¹Ibid., p. 167.

of form and content. Indeed, Meredith was successful with Evan Harrington in using comedy as a corrective to sentimentality and in shaping his idea by his technique.

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

- Allen, Walter. The English Novel, A Short Critical History. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1954.
- Bailey, Elmer James. The Novels of George Meredith, A Study. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907.
- Bartlett, Phylliss. George Meredith. London: Longman's, Green for the British Council, 1963. "Writers and Their Work, No. 161."
- Beech, John Warren. The Comic Spirit in George Meredith. London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1911.
- _____. Comedy. Doubleday Anchor Books, Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1956.
- Cross, Wilbur. The Development of the English Novel. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899.
- Dawson, W. J. The Makers of English Fiction. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1905.
- Ellis, S. M. George Meredith, His Life and Friends in Relation to His Work. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1920.
- Enck, John J.; Forter, Elizabeth T.; and Whitley, Alvin, eds. The Comic in Theory and Practice. Appleton-Century-Crofts. New York: Meredith Publishing Company, 1960.
- Fanger, Donald. "George Meredith as Novelist." Nineteenth Century Fiction, XVI (1963), 317-328.
- Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism. New York: Antheneum, 1968.
- Gretton, Mary Sturge. The Writings and Life of George Meredith. London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1926.

- Hamm, Victor M. The Pattern of Criticism. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1960.
- Hammerton, J. A. George Meredith, His Life and Work in Anecdote and Criticism. Edinburg: John Grant, 1911.
- Kelvin, Norman. A Troubled Eden, Nature and Society in the Works of George Meredith. Stanford University Press, 1961.
- Kessler, Jascha. "Meredith's Spiritual Laughter." Western Humanities Review, X (1955), 65-74.
- Landis, Joseph C. "George Meredith's Comedy." Boston University Studies in English, II (1956), 17-35.
- Le Gallienne, Richard. George Meredith, Some Characteristics. London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1893.
- Meredith, George. Evan Harrington. London: Constable and Company, 1910.
- _____. Essay on Comedy and the Use of the Comic Spirit.
- Meredith, William Maxse. The Letters of George Meredith. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912.
- Robinson, E. A. "Meredith's Literary Theory and Science: Realism vs. the Comic Spirit." Publications of the Modern Language Association, LIII (1938), 857-868.
- Ross, Janet. The Fourth Generation. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912.
- Russell, Frances T. "Laurels for George Meredith." South Atlantic Quarterly, XXVII (1927), 367-375.
- Sassoon, Siegfried. Meredith. New York: The Viking Press, 1948.
- Scholes, Robert, ed. Approaches to the Novel, Materials for a Poetics. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1966.
- Sencourt, Robert Esmonde. The Life of George Meredith. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929.
- Stevenson, Lionel. The Ordeal of George Meredith. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953.

Wright, Walter F. Art and Substance in George Meredith.
Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953.

Zipf, G. K. "New Facts in the Early Life of George Meredith."
Harvard Studies and Notes in Philosophy and Literature,
XX (1938), 131-145.

THE AUTHOR

Born in St. Petersburg, Florida, Joyce Stanley Scott grew up in Portsmouth, Virginia, and attended the public schools there. Upon graduation from I. C. Norcom High School, she studied at Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia, and at State A. & M. College in Orangeburg, South Carolina, where her main interest was literature. She interrupted her studies with an enlistment in the U. S. Air Force, and her discharge was followed by marriage and the advent of four daughters and one son. She re-entered college at Virginia Union in the spring of 1963 and was awarded the Bachelor of Arts degree in English-Education in June, 1964. Since that time she has taught English at Maggie Walker High School in Richmond, a job to which she looks forward happily to returning after a year of stimulating study at the University of Richmond.