Comic Elements and Their Effect on Meaning in George Meredith, Ford Madox Ford, and D. H. Lawrence

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COMIC ELEMENTS AND THEIR EFFECT ON MEANING IN GEORGE
MEREDITH, FORD MADOX FORD, AND D. H. LAWRENCE

VOLUME I

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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VITA . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 439
This dissertation re-examines George Meredith’s *The Egoist*, *The Ordeal Of Richard Feverel*, and *The Tragic Comedians*, Ford Madox Ford’s *The Good Soldier*, and D. H. Lawrence’s *Sons And Lovers* and *Women In Love*. Meredith, Ford, and Lawrence all use various elements of comedy and Meredith and Ford also use elements of tragedy and tragicomedy to create specific effects. Up until now these authors have been to some degree misunderstood or misinterpreted as a result of an apparent inability on the part of critics to recognize the role comic elements should play in the interpretation of their works. I consider Meredith’s intrusive narrators in light of their comic effects, and also explain Meredith’s combining comic and tragic elements to depict life as a continuous struggle between an individual’s intellect and his emotions. Interpreting *The Egoist* as essentially comedy with some mixed moments and *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians* as tragicomedies reveals that Meredith mixes comic and tragic effects chiefly to investigate the link between motivation and provocation and to reveal the degree if any to which individuals know themselves. Ford also fuses the comic with the tragic to represent the human condition as a precarious balance between potential and limitation; Ford dramatizes that balance in his central character’s struggle to face the truth that shatters his illusions. Ford uses a mixed genre to make his points because the
complexity of tragicomedy blurs the distinctions between right and wrong by creating an ambiguous context in which the reader must make judgments about moral action. My approach to Lawrence's novels provides new interpretations that counter his apparent anti-feminism: Lawrence utilizes his narrators sometimes to cast doubt upon the utterances of some of his principal male characters, such as Paul Morel and Birkin, and sometimes to make their utterances ironic or to ridicule them. The broader implications of my reading of Lawrence's novels in relation to the comic effects he creates focus on his treatment of relationships between men and women and allow for an accurate perspective on what he is saying about the ways men and women relate to each other.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation, which is interpretative, is to re-examine *The Egoist*, *The Ordeal Of Richard Feverel*, and *The Tragic Comedians* by George Meredith, *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford, and *Sons And Lovers* and *Women in Love* by D. H. Lawrence. The reason for studying these novels is that Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford all use various elements of comedy and Meredith and Ford also use elements of tragedy and tragicomedy to create specific effects. Up until now these authors have been to some degree misunderstood or misinterpreted as a result of an apparent inability on the part of critics to recognize the role comic elements should play in the interpretation of their works. The negative critical assessments of Lawrence's portrayal of women in *Sons And Lovers* and *Women in Love* do not recognize that Lawrence uses comic elements to undermine apparent anti-feminism. Although critics have mostly interpreted *The Egoist* as comedy, they have not seen that Meredith combines comic effects with serious non-comic effects to complicate the reader's response; neither have critics seen that Meredith's intrusive narrators in *The Egoist*, as in *The Tragic Comedians* and *The Ordeal Of Richard Feverel*, create comic effects. In these latter two novels critics have not seen that in the interaction of comic and tragic effects Meredith creates a special effect, a mixed response. And critics have been mostly divided about whether Ford's *The Good Soldier* is comedy or
tragedy; for the most part they have not seen that Ford usually contrasts his method of narration with the material being narrated, so that, like Meredith, he creates a special effect, a mixed response to the novel. Another reason for misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Lawrence, of Meredith, and of Ford is that the focus has been on particular aspects of the novels and in some cases primarily on the authors themselves, rather than on the works in their entirety. Studying only specific parts of these novels and/or focusing primarily on the authors rather than on their fiction, has led many critics to conclude that Lawrence is anti-feminist, that Meredith is in certain respects an artistic "failure," and that Ford is writing either comedy or tragedy, but not a mixed work that combines comedy and tragedy.

Ironically, a great part of the difficulty in interpreting these novels arises from the elusive terms themselves, comedy, tragedy, and tragicomedy, that are used to describe them, and which, presumably are meant to facilitate a greater understanding of the works. These terms are problematic in that they have been variously defined throughout history according to particular dicta and standards of the age, and they are still being redefined today. Another matter for consideration in labeling these novels as comedy, tragedy, or tragicomedy is that dramatic theory is being applied to a non-dramatic medium. A more useful approach to understanding these six novels than assigning them to prescribed categories to determine meaning is that of Alastair Fowler; his approach to genre study focuses on what he terms "family" resemblances among works, rather than on absolute definitions of genres. Fowler argues that "genres at all levels are positively resistant to definition\(^1\) and that
"Genres appear to be much more like families than classes" (41). In explaining his theory, Fowler explains, "In literature, the basis of resemblance lies in literary tradition: a sequence of influence and imitation and inherited codes connecting works in the genre. As kinship makes a family, so literary relations of this sort form a genre . . . . naturally, the genetic make-up alters with slow time, so that we may find the genre's various historical states to be very different from one another. Both historically and within a single period, the family grouping allows for wide variation in the type" (42-43). The advantage of using Fowler's theory, which "allows for wide variation in type," is that it frees the reader from concerns about elements that may or may not fit within a particular genre; that is, the reader is concerned with the kinds of effects the author creates, rather than with the compatibility or incompatibility of the specific elements that create that response, or with the classification under which the work can or should be considered.

My analyses of Lawrence's Sons And Lovers and Women in Love, of Meredith's The Egoist, The Tragic Comedians, and Richard Feverel, and of Ford's The Good Soldier show that common among all these works are the comic elements their authors use to create special effects. My approach to these novels provides new interpretations that counter Lawrence's apparent anti-feminism. I consider Meredith's intrusive narrators in light of their comic effects, and also consider Meredith's experimentation with the combination of comic and tragic elements in the novel to depict life as a continuous struggle between an individual's intellect and his emotions. And, finally, I consider Ford as purposefully creating a work in which the comic is fused with the tragic to represent the human condition as a precarious balance
between potential and limitation; Ford dramatizes that balance in his central character's struggle to face the truth that shatters his illusions. While Lawrence's comic vision in *Sons And Lovers* and in *Women in Love* shares the optimism of Meredith's comic vision in *The Egoist*, Meredith's mixed visions in *Richard Feverel* and in *The Tragic Comedians* and Ford's mixed vision in *The Good Soldier* emphasize an individual's inherent limitation as an integral part of human nature. These mixed novels of Meredith and of Ford show that though people delude themselves to the contrary, an individual's will is not sufficient to overcome his frailties or the obstacles that life presents.

Up until now critics have not detected that Lawrence creates comic effects to undermine the anti-feminist positions of his male protagonists in *Sons And Lovers* and in *Women in Love*. In both novels Lawrence shows Paul Morel, Birkin, and Gerald as comically limited in their narrow-minded thinking about women. Lawrence reveals the characters of these males by creating incongruous effects, whereby he juxtaposes a statement made by one of these male protagonists that the character himself considers profound with a trivial and unexpected statement made or action performed by that individual; Lawrence uses that technique to guide the reader to conclude that as the ideas and/or actions paired are not logical, neither is the meaning that results from that pairing logical. Lawrence also uses what Bakhtin terms "polyphonic" or background voices to point out the limitations of these characters. The arrogant and self-assured anti-feminism of Paul Morel, of Birkin, and of Gerald is continually undermined as they are shown to be self-deluded and the objects of ironic observation. Lawrence's portraits of Paul Morel in *Songs And*
Lovers and of Birkin and of Gerald in Women in Love reveal them as narrow-minded and illogical in their thinking, in that they base their anti-feminist judgments about women on stereotypes rather than on reality. Lawrence also causes the reader to see himself to various degrees reflected in these characters, whose generalizations about women represent much of early twentieth-century society's thinking about women.

Critics have not considered that Lawrence purposefully undermines the anti-feminism of Paul Morel, Gerald, and Birkin with the pro-feminism of Miriam, Clara, Gudrun, and Ursula, Lawrence's female protagonists. These women, who represent the voice of reason and who speak common sense, are in contrast to Lawrence's males, who do neither thing. In Sons And Lovers the author also guides the reader to side with Clara's mother, a minor character, whose down-to-earth response to Paul's anti-feminism the reader applauds. Also, Lawrence has his narrators tell the reader when Paul, Gerald, or Birkin is wrong, and, at times, as well, Lawrence has his narrator poke fun at them. Lawrence makes it clear to the reader that to various degrees Paul, Gerald, and Birkin are self-deceived in their assessments about women; they all believe what they want to believe because it is convenient for them to believe a particular thing. While critics largely base Lawrence's supposed anti-feminist beliefs on his personal life, it is clear from his treatment of these male characters that whatever Lawrence himself may or may not have believed about women, neither Paul, nor Birkin, nor Gerald, is to be regarded as a credible spokesman for him.

Critics occasionally make a brief comparison between Lawrence's and Meredith's views on the conflict between the needs of the
individual as a product of nature and the demands placed upon him by society. But just as they have not considered the role of comic elements in Lawrence, they have only considered the role of comic elements in Meredith almost exclusively in light of his Essay On Comedy. Critics have not considered Meredith's narrators except mostly to complain about their interruption of narrative flow; no one has considered that Meredith uses his narrators as a comic device, which by way of analogy, explanation, or metaphor, serves either to reinforce an impression of a character's limitations, or to refocus the reader's attention onto an idea that helps to shape the comic vision of The Egoist and the mixed visions of Richard Feverel and of The Tragic Comedians; and critics have not considered that we really do not know if Meredith writes himself into his novels in his use of narrators. Although Meredith creates mostly comic effects in The Egoist, he expands his comic vision in the novel to include some non-comic effects that represent man as a mixed being, capable of noble behavior, as well as of ignoble behavior. Willoughby, the protagonist, allows the dark side of his nature to silence the voice within himself that continually questions his ultimately self-defeating behavior. Meredith is saying that sometimes the dark side of an individual's nature, what in his novels he often calls an individual's "animal nature," can lead him knowingly to exacerbate his own predicament. Only at the very end of The Egoist does Willoughby begin to understand what the reader and some of the other main characters in the novel already understand, that he is so impelled by egoism, that is, by nearly insurmountable pride, to a preoccupation with appearances that he becomes obsessed with cultivating a good opinion of himself in others. But these non-comic
elements in the novel are diluted in that the novel has a comic ending: conflicts are finally resolved, good triumphs over evil, and those in need of a lesson learn one and change or attempt to change their ways.

In *The Tragic Comedians* and in *Richard Feverel* Meredith further experiments with combining disharmonious elements to depict the human predicament as an individual's attempt to control the uncontrollable forces of life. The novel's comic elements result in effects that reveal the characters' limitations and thus diminish their stature in the eyes of the reader, in the eyes of some of the other characters, and often in their own eyes, as well. Meredith shows that the misplaced self-confidence human beings have in their ability to control life's events results in their over-reaching themselves; his novels present the consequences of such behavior. In Meredith, comic elements like an individual's misplaced confidence in his own ability to control events, are combined with non-comic, usually tragic elements like an individual's waste of potential, which results when the individual is no longer in harmony with himself, and, therefore, is no longer in harmony with nature. For Meredith, the results of one's loss of harmony with nature are death and mental and physical inertia. While *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians* end in death, death-like states, despair, and life-long regrets, elements that often close works of tragedy, Meredith depicts the protagonists and also the other main characters in these novels as comically limited. In combining these disharmonious elements, Meredith creates mixed effects that represent the mystery of what it means to be a human being. What Meredith has his narrator state at the close of *The Tragic Comedians* of Alvan, the male protagonist, indicates that
he purposefully combines the comic and the tragic to create special effects; the narrator states "The characters of the hosts of men are of the simple order of the comic; not many are of a stature and a complexity calling for the junction of the two Muses to name them." 2

While many critics do consider the comic effects of Ford's *The Good Soldier*, they have not considered that, like Meredith, who combines opposing elements, Ford purposefully and painstakingly combines the comic with the tragic to create a work that blends opposites in a way that denies either a comic or a tragic response to Dowell, and to some of the other main characters. Most critics seem determined to separate the comic elements in the novel from its tragic elements to arrive at meaning, rather than to study the effects achieved from that very combination of comic and of tragic elements. The difficulty in interpreting Ford also results from the fact that he uses a first person narrator who is himself the main character of his own story. In using such a protagonist narrator, Ford creates a special situation which eliminates any semblance of the author's presence. John Dowell, the protagonist narrator, claims to be telling us a story of his best friend, whom he calls a "good soldier," though Dowell, himself, can also be seen as a "good soldier." Ford's complex rendering of Dowell is meant to show that judgments of him that are not sensitive to Dowell will not work. Such judgments of Dowell will not work because he is ill-equipped to handle many situations in life that would seem obvious to the reader; Dowell's understanding of life, that is, his relationship to reality, is different from that of the reader. Like Meredith, Ford takes what are usually considered tragic elements, such as suicide, the loss of one's mental faculties, madness, and isolation, and trivializes them
by presenting them comically; that is, Ford's method is that he
distracts the reader's sympathetic response to an event by eliciting
his comic response to the method of presenting that event. Ford also
takes pains to represent Dowell as trusting, faithful, loyal, kind,
considerate, sincere, and honest, qualities that indicate a virtuous
and noble character; thus, Ford complicates one's response to Dowell.

But Ford reveals Dowell's comic limitation while revealing his
innocence, trustful nature, and loyalty. Dowell is comic in his
inability accurately to assess certain situations in life, such as
the state of his marriage to Florence and his close friendship with
the Ashburnhams, especially with Edward. Dowell is unable to see
that both these relationships are really opposite of what they appear
to be because he never considers the possibility that appearances may
be insubstantial. Ford sees an individual's confrontation with
truth as the quintessential dilemma of the human condition, and, like
Lawrence and Meredith, Ford shows that an individual's success in
discovering and in understanding truth greatly depends upon the
degree to which he knows himself. Ford causes Dowell and the other
main characters eventually to confront the truth; none of Ford's
characters search for the truth, but to different degrees all of them
find it. For Ford, one's interactions with other people are a
critical aspect of the human condition that vitally affect one's
understanding of reality.

Dowell's inability to see the truth of his situation is
complicated by the fact that he is at the mercy of other people who
conspire to deceive him; and Dowell is deceived by every main
character in the novel. Like Meredith and Lawrence, Ford sees
deception, whether the individual is deceived by others, or he is
self-deceived, as the essence of the comic. Ford is very focused on the point at which deception is self-deception. Ford shows that his character, Dowell, does not know himself, partly because he really does not want to know himself; whenever Dowell looks very deeply into himself, he does not like what he sees. Thus, because Dowell does not know himself he is unable to know other people well enough to question why the picture of reality to which he has become accustomed negates the innocuous appearance of the specific incidents that piece together that picture. For example, Dowell does not ever question that although Florence's constant excuse for her usual day-long absences from him is that she feels fatigued, the result of her "delicate" heart, she is never too fatigued to be in the company of others; neither does Dowell question why Ashburnham is always away at the same time as Florence.

Like Lawrence, who creates incongruous effects by guiding the reader to see the difference between what a character like Paul Morel believes and what the narrator, the reader, and, by inference, the author knows, Ford guides the reader to see the difference between what Dowell believes and what the reader, and by inference, the author, knows. Ford creates that incongruous effect to reveal further Dowell's comic limitation. Another technique Ford uses to reveal Dowell's comic limitation is that he contrasts Dowell's method of narration to the action he is narrating, as in Dowell's rendering of Maisie Maidan's dying from a heart attack; in describing Maisie's death, Dowell says that Maisie slumps into a suitcase that snaps shut so that her head and feet each stick out of opposite ends of the suitcase. Also, Ford uses stock comic situations to reveal limitation of character, such as the elopement of Dowell and
Florence, featuring Dowell waiting for two hours in the middle of the night for Florence to descend the rope ladder he has prepared for her, so they can sneak off and get married.

But even these examples that demonstrate how Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford create comic, tragic, and tragicomic effects require explanation because "comedy," "tragedy," and "tragicomedy" have been variously defined throughout history and are still being redefined today. Although there does exist a general understanding of comic, tragic, and tragicomic, as literary terms, and as applied to Lawrence, to Meredith, and to Ford, the changes in meaning of these terms throughout history call to mind Karl Guthke's statement on the subject. He states that "a cynic might point out that there are at least as many theories of comedy and of tragedy as there are critics," though he adds, "Still, some basic patterns do emerge."³ Indeed, at least since the time of Plato theorists have been defining and redefining comedy, tragedy, and tragicomedy, a process that continues today. That these terms are still being redefined today indicates that there is no ultimate and final definition of them. Rather, it seems that society, culture, context, and one's natural inclination all give shape to what particular people living at a particular time in history find comic, tragic, or, a mixture of the two, tragicomic; thus, it will be necessary to define comic, tragic, and tragicomic, as these terms are used in my dissertation.

While there are many different theories of comedy and many different kinds of comedy, some that focus on character, some on subject matter, some on structure, and some on style, the distinguishing feature of all comedy is that it reveals a character's limitation; sometimes that individual is somehow able to come to
terms with that limitation. The essence of any comic moment reveals the individual as flawed, though he considers himself to be something better than he is. If the individual does come to recognize his limitation he is able to attain self-knowledge and thus to attain spiritual growth. The individual is then able to control his limitation; to whatever degree he can control his limitation, he can control his capacity to be comic. For example, Meredith's Willoughby in *The Egoist* and Lawrence's Birkin in *Women in Love* are comic characters who are finally able to control their comic limitations and thus to attain spiritual growth. If, however, the individual is either unable or unwilling to recognize his limitation, then he does not grow spiritually, and thus does not control his limitation; he thus retains his full capacity to be comic, as Lawrence's Paul Morel and Meredith's Alvan, Clotilda, and Richard Feverel demonstrate. And though the final outcome for the protagonist may not be happy, he perseveres and thus looks to the future, as Paul Morel does.

While Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford use different patterns of comedy, all three authors create comic effects by revealing the limitation of their protagonists and of some of their other main characters by focusing on the deception of others and on the point at which deception is self-deception. These authors present the comic limitation of their protagonists in two different ways: the character becomes aware of his limitation and attains self-knowledge, and is thus redeemable, for example Lawrence's Birkin and Meredith's Willoughby; alternatively, the character remains as he is and either does not attain self-knowledge, as demonstrated by Lawrence's Paul Morel and Gerald, or attains some degree of self-knowledge, but, for various reasons, remains unchanged by it, as demonstrated by
Meredith's Alvan, Clotilda, and Richard Feverel, and Ford's Ashburnham and Dowell. The revelation of a character's limitation results in a loss of his stature in the eyes of the reader, in the eyes of some of the other characters, and often in the eyes of the character himself; if, however, that individual comes to self-knowledge as a result of his experience, then the reader feels a certain respect for that character in spite of his decrease in stature. Having a character achieve self-knowledge and acknowledge his limitations, as Meredith's Sir Willoughby and Lawrence's Birkin demonstrate, is one technique that these authors use to create empathy for particular characters. The comic perspectives of Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford show that their characters, regardless of potential and achievement, are universally limited in their ability to control the events that shape their lives, a situation upon which Meredith and Ford focus. While all three authors are interested in the ways their characters respond to certain situations, and in the reasons why they respond in a particular manner, Ford's particular concern is with those situations in life that test an individual's ability to interpret what he perceives as real. That is, Ford focuses on the degree to which Dowell is able to understand the relationship between what he perceives as true and the facts of the situation.

The comic visions of Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford represent their perspectives on man's limitation; throughout the ages man's comic limitation has been represented differently by different authors. Any given author's theory of human limitation results from his vision of the cosmos as he considers man's place in it. Medieval comedy, Renaissance comedy, eighteenth-century comedy, and some
nineteenth-century comedy presuppose a well-ordered universe overseen by a benign Presence. In all of these types of comedy, an author usually centers on character as the essence of the comic situation; the individual, whose flaws are emphasized in his words, thoughts, and deeds, is shown to be responsible for his own predicament. Such comedy, which is mainly didactic in purpose and usually moralistic in tone, shows the inherent failings in human nature, which, if left unchecked, inevitably lead to critical dilemmas that the individual is forced to confront, and that he is usually ill-equipped to handle. But much twentieth-century comedy, which presupposes a secular view of the universe, shifts its emphasis away from blaming man for his own failings and depicts him as a victim of circumstances with little or no control over his own destiny; theatre of the absurd and black comedy are examples of comedy that represent that world view. But whether or not an individual's outlook is spiritual or secular, a human being's limitation is the focus of the comic vision, as comedy is that which reveals the individual's limitation in a manner that emphasizes what he is not. 4

The comic perspective does not underscore the individual's potential, but his shortcomings; yet that perspective is optimistic in that the individual is finally reconciled to his frailty and perseveres in spite of it. In the comic vision, wherein an individual is represented as finite, limited, and vulnerable, authors represent various responses of that individual to the limitations imposed upon him by life and by his own make-up. An author's comic vision can reveal the futility the individual feels as he realizes that he is powerless to overcome life's unforeseen forces that shape his destiny; it can also reveal the anger an individual feels at his
powerlessness to become the master of his fate; an author's comic vision can reveal, as well, an individual's acceptance of his place in the universe and of the unpredictability of life. Cyrus Hoy explains that comedy exists because it "implies... an acceptance of life, which implies as well an acceptance of man. And to accept man, one must be prepared to forgive the weakness, the treachery, the downright depravity which, in spite of man's best intentions, are inherent in his behavior."5 Echoing Meredith, Hoy adds: "This is why comedy, again and again, emphasizes the need for man to undeceive himself about the limitations of humanity, to see life for what it is, and to make the best of it" (18). Hoy's comic vision is optimistic in that it accepts man for what he is and for all that he is not. The motivation for the comic behavior of particular characters in Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford is analyzable in terms of Hoy's theory; Hoy's optimistic vision of comedy is demonstrated in Lawrence's Women in Love and to a high degree in Sons And Lovers, in Meredith's The Egoist, and to some degree in Ford's The Good Soldier. An analysis of Lawrence's Sons And Lovers and Women in Love, of Meredith's The Egoist, The Tragic Comedians, and Richard Feverel, and of Ford's The Good Soldier shows that these three authors use comic elements, and Meredith and Ford use tragic and tragicomic elements, as well, to reveal how an individual's inherent frailty results in his unwittingly undermining himself in his efforts to achieve his own ends; that is, my interpretation shows how an individual's innate weakness, his human nature, causes him to behave in ways that most often bring about results opposite to those he plans to achieve. While Lawrence also uses some serious non-comic elements to represent potential that is not realized, the non-comic effects he creates
emphasize the individual's limitation, and thus heighten the comic effect; Lawrence does not combine comic effects with non-comic effects to elicit a mixed response. Meredith and Ford, however, do combine comic elements with tragic elements to reveal the individual as inherently flawed. Both these authors represent individuals whose flaws result in the predicaments they create for themselves, not all of which look hopefully to the future; that is, the hopefulness for future possibility that is an integral part of comedy, at least of traditional comedy, is not a part of the tragicomic visions that Meredith and Ford create. The predicaments in which Meredith's and Ford's protagonists find themselves are irresolvable; nothing in the future can alleviate their dilemma.
Part I

Comedy, Tragedy, & Tragicomedy in the Novel

Comedy, tragedy, and tragicomedy are terms that describe different kinds of drama; yet these terms are applied to works in other genres that exhibit certain characteristics particular to comedy, to tragedy, and to tragicomedy. That works other than dramatic works are considered to be comedy, tragedy, and tragicomedy, indicates that there is an essence of the comic, of the tragic, and of the tragicomic, that transcends form. Meredith implies that the essence of comedy is independent of its form when he states that "The life of the comedy is in the idea"; one can conclude, as well, the "life" of tragedy, as of tragicomedy, is "in the idea." In the novel the essence of these three distinctive visions is manifested in the tone, style, character, and structure of the work, as well as in the world view it presents. Though the essence of comedy, of tragedy, and of tragicomedy is independent of the medium of presentation, methods of creating comic, tragic, and tragicomic effects vary from genre to genre; methods of creating the comic, the tragic, and the tragicomic follow specific traditions and conventions. In the novel an author can create special effects through the use of a narrator, a device that is probably the most singular characteristic of the genre. A novelist can use his narrator to manipulate the reader's response by creating comic, tragic, and tragicomic effects.
A novelist can have his narrator depict a comic vision, which reveals an individual's limitations and represents the character as either coming to terms with his limitation or as not coming to terms with his limitation; though the final outcome for the protagonist may not be happy, he perseveres and thus looks to the future. A novelist can use different kinds of narrators, such as a third person omniscient, third person limited, or first person, to represent the comic vision. By controlling the manner in which his narrator tells the story, the tone in which he tells it, and his point of view, a novelist can manipulate his reader's response. A narrator can reinforce what a character says, or he can discount it; he can, as well, cast doubt upon what a character says, render it ironic, or ridicule it; he can reveal that a character is more or less than what he appears to be; and he can tell the reader if a character is right-minded or self-deluded. Narrators can turn to the reader to have a chat with him, as the narrators of Thackeray, of Meredith, and of Hawthorne demonstrate. Narrators can even play games with the reader, as the narrator of *Tristram Shandy* demonstrates.

Lawrence uses third person omniscient narrators to create comic effects in *Sons And Lovers* and in *Women in Love*. Lawrence has his narrators sometimes cast doubt upon the utterances of Paul Morel, of Birkin, and of Gerald, and he sometimes has his narrators make their utterances ironic; sometimes, as well, Lawrence has his narrators ridicule these males. Like Lawrence, Meredith uses a third person omniscient narrator often to point out a character's comic limitation. In *The Egoist*, for example, Meredith has his narrator inform the reader of Willoughby: "He was of a morality to reprobate the erring dame while he enjoyed the incidents." Meredith also has
his narrators sometimes poke fun at his protagonists, whether gently or critically; in Richard Feverel, for example, Meredith uses his narrator to describe Richard in detailed metaphorical terms of a fish eluding capture, to represent Richard's natural proclivities, ending with, "In other words, Richard showed symptoms of a disposition to take refuge in lies." The comic effect of the narrator's method of describing Richard results from his purposefully avoiding any vocabulary that would immediately make obvious Richard's propensity to lie; and having thus obfuscated his point, the narrator surprises the reader in stating in the plainest possible language the very thing that he has avoided plainly saying, that Richard lies. Meredith accomplishes two things here. First, he causes the reader to question why the narrator did not speak plainly in the first place, but created an fairly elaborate metaphor to make his point, thus drawing the reader's attention to the narrator's method of narration. The reader is made aware of the fact that there can be a discrepancy between the way a thing is described and the actual thing being described, and is thus led to ponder the narrator's eccentricity. The reader is led to consider Meredith's reason for such a narrative method. Also, in telling us that Richard lies, the narrator is revealing Richard's limitation; Richard's limitation can be viewed as a capacity to lie.

Like comedy, tragedy depicts a particular world view; the essence of the tragic vision represents disruption in an individual's life of such magnitude that he or she is unable to resume living as he or she had been living previous to that disruption. Thus, tragedy depicts a vision of life opposite to that of comedy in that it underscores discontinuity. A novelist can create tragic effects by
having his narrator elicit sympathy for a character. Meredith, for example, creates much of his tragic effect through his narrator. Meredith causes the reader to feel pity for Richard Feverel and for Alvan, and also to feel fearful for their outcome by having his narrators allude to the sense of impending doom and disaster that awaits them; the narrator points out, as well, that they deserve a fate better than the one that awaits them. The reader's sympathetic response in part results from the fact that although neither Richard nor Alvan considers the possible consequences of his actions, the reader is made to consider them. Ford, as well, uses his narrator to elicit the reader's pity for his central character, and also to make the reader fearful about Dowell's fate. Ford creates sympathy for Dowell by presenting him as the protagonist and also as the narrator, whose conclusions about those closest to him are mostly detrimental to himself, in that they give the benefit of the doubt to those about whom neither the other main characters nor the reader has any doubt. In revealing Dowell's childlike naiveté and his unquestioning trust in everyone, particularly in those who do not deserve it, Ford portrays Dowell as almost not able to look after himself; in presenting Dowell in that way, Ford fosters in the reader a feeling of protectiveness toward Dowell and causes him to feel a sense of outrage toward those who count on Dowell's goodness to take full advantage of him.

The role of the narrator in creating tragicomic effects in the novel is key, as is his role in creating comic and tragic effects, in that he controls the tone. A narrator can greatly help to depict the tragicomic vision, the essence of which reveals a complex world view that embraces opposites: such a vision recognizes the fact of man's
limitation, though he has potential and aspires to transcend that limitation. The reader's mixed response results from the fact that the choices an individual makes ultimately do not allow him to realize his potential and thus he reluctantly, though despairingly, comes to conclude that he is powerless to effect change in his fate. In causing the reader simultaneously to respond to a character's comic limitation, as well as to his tragic waste of potential, an author creates tension. That tension results in a feeling that is neither fully responsive to the tragic effects of the work nor fully responsive to the comic effects of the work; rather, the reader responds to the comic elements and to the tragic elements of the work simultaneously. In narrative tragicomedy the narrator is of critical significance because he can speak directly to the reader, and can thus manipulate his response to action performed and to dialogue uttered by a particular character. In discussing the tragicomic in narrative, Guthke explains the importance of the narrator in creating a mixed response. He states of narrative fiction that "the realization of the tragicomic is primarily a matter of the attitude and perspective of the narrator" (76-77) and that "it is easy to see that such a narrator . . . will have no difficulty in predisposing the reader towards a tragicomic vision of the narrated subject matter, if the author so desires" (77). Guthke is saying that an author conveys all information to the reader through a consciousness whom he manipulates to speak in a particular manner to create a particular effect.

Guthke's observation is important to our understanding of the special effects that Meredith, Ford, and Lawrence create, as it points to the author behind the narrator; thus, if the reader is
confronted with an apparent incompatibility between a specific narrated action and the way the narrator relates that action, as in Ford's *The Good Soldier*, it is appropriate for the reader to question the purpose of the author's methods of presentation. The reader is only diligent in considering what effect the author is trying to create in choosing such a method for conveying information to the reader. In *The Good Soldier* Ford creates a narrator who elicits a mixed response from the reader. Ford creates tension in the reader, whose laughter at Dowell, the protagonist narrator, Ford makes uncomfortable. The reason the reader's laughter at Dowell is uncomfortable is that while Ford reveals Dowell's comic limitation, which is mainly his extreme gullibility and his inability to see what is obvious to all of the other main characters and to the reader, Ford also presents Dowell in a way that elicits the reader's admiration for his noble character traits and his compassion for Dowell; Dowell is duped because of his trusting nature, his loyalty, and his goodness, which are the very character traits the reader admires. Unlike Meredith, who uses omniscient narrators to make comments that are obviously true or wise, or which have hidden meaning that the reader later discovers, Ford does not use such a narrator, but uses a first person narrator.

A critical difference between an omniscient narrator and a first person narrator is that the omniscient narrator, who knows what is true and who is outside the events he is narrating, has knowledge upon which the reader is meant to rely, as the information he conveys to the reader is objective; like Meredith, Lawrence uses omniscient narrators to guide the reader's response. A first person narrator, however, filters through his own consciousness everything he tells
the reader, which means that the information he conveys to the reader is subjective. Ford allows every word Dowell says to be filtered through his own consciousness; thus, Dowell's inaccurate assessments of reality, as well as his perfectly accurate assessments of reality, are all mixed together in a hodgepodge and presented to the reader for distillation. By eliminating his own presence, Ford makes it the reader's job to determine what must be true, what must be false, what it is not possible simply to judge as either true or false.

Meredith, as well, uses his narrators in Richard Feverel and in The Tragic Comedians to create tension, and thus a mixed response in the reader, the result of combining comic and tragic effects. Unlike Ford, who has Dowell do all the telling of all the action, including his own, forcing the reader completely to determine the facts for himself, Meredith uses different narrative methods to create his mixed effects. In Richard Feverel, for example, Meredith creates tension by means of his narrator; the narrator comically relates Sir Austin's reaction to Richard's resolve to tell Lucy of his unfaithfulness during the year of his absence. The narrator thus describes Sir Austin's response to Richard's determination to be truthful with Lucy: "Sir Austin detained him, expostulated, contradicted himself, confounded his principles, made nonsense of all his theories. He could not induce his son to waiver in his resolve" (461). In relating Sir Austin's response to Richard in such a manner, which fully highlights Sir Austin's comic limitation, the narrator surprises the reader in revealing the man of science to behave in a manner completely unscientific. The reader's response is complicated by the fact that Sir Austin's abandoning his system also emphasizes the futility, the waste, and the madness of his scheme to
perfect human nature. That is, the reader not only comically responds to the egoist in Sir Austin, now fully exposed, but also to the detrimental effects of his egoism upon Richard; the narrator has all along intimated to the reader the dangers of Sir Austin's system for Richard, and the reader is now become fearful that disaster will befall Richard. That Richard will not waver in his resolve to tell Lucy the truth at whatever cost to himself, that Sir Austin can no longer convince even himself of the merits of his system, and that Sir Austin makes himself foolish and invalidates his own theories and methods, cause tension and result in a mixed response.

Oftentimes Meredith uses his narrator to provide an opposite point of view from the one at which the reader naturally arrives, as a result of his direct observation of the actions and of the dialogue of particular characters. For example, in *The Tragic Comedians* Meredith utilizes his narrator to distract the reader from Alvan's death and from Clotilda's grief over it; he states of Clotilda: "She could not blame herself, for the intensity of her suffering testified to the bitter realness of her love of the dead man. Her craven's instinct to make a sacrifice of others flew with claws of hatred at her parents. These she offered up, and the spirit presiding in her appears to have accepted them as proper substitutes for her conscience" (154). Although the narrator makes the reader understand that the grief itself that Clotilda feels is real, the reader interprets the narrator's description of Clotilda's grief as comic because his experience with the narrator tells him that the narrator is mocking her; the reader understands that the narrator is mocking what he has previously described as Clotilda's selfish and petty
character traits, and the reader does agree with the narrator's assessment of Clotilda.

Although self-deception may not necessarily lead to a comic outcome, Castelvetro's argument, that deception is "always comic," seems particularly appropriate in relation to self-deception because there is something patently absurd about an individual who is complicit with his own deception; the individual who is to whatever degree himself to blame for his own predicament does not readily elicit sympathy. Oftentimes, in fact, self-deception results in behavior that is self-serving and, thereby, elicits ridicule when it results in the individual's being puffed up with himself and thus behaving in accordance with his thinking, or in his reconstructing reality to suit himself. Clotilda's self-deception, for example, allows her to evade responsibility for her actions by reconstructing events in her favor; thus, she can defend her actions by blaming others. But the comic can exist without laughter, as for example, Clotilda's limitation, which is expressed here in her capacity for self-deception, does not initially elicit the reader's laughter, but his criticism. By means of his narrator, Meredith guides the reader to feel that because Clotilda was unwilling to do what was within her ability to do and what she should have done, in speaking the truth about her real feelings for Alvan and behaving accordingly, to some degree she merits her predicament.

The roles that novelists assign to their narrators in creating comic, tragic, and tragicomic effects can be significant, as Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford demonstrate. A novelist can use a narrator to whisper words of wisdom into the ear of the reader, as he can have him turn to the reader and make his points at length.
Although the narrative methods of Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford are very different, all three authors use their narrators to create special effects. Lawrence uses clear-thinking and usually tight-lipped narrators, who speak little, but who represent the voice of reason; thus, they create a balance to what his male protagonists are saying. Unlike Lawrence, Meredith uses highly vocal and what many critics consider verbose narrators to create comic, tragic, and tragicomic effects by providing the reader with sometimes a good deal of information about a character's real nature, or by providing the reader with clues about the destiny that awaits a character. Like Lawrence, Meredith has his narrators speak truthfully and wisely to give the reader an accurate perspective on reality that he would not get from his own observations of what appears to be true. Unlike Lawrence and Meredith, however, Ford uses a narrator who is the protagonist and who is not always clear-thinking or discerning, yet who is noble and likable, to create mostly mixed effects. Though Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford use different narrative methods to create special effects, all three authors guide the reader's response through their manipulation of another consciousness.
Theories of comedy from Plato to the present day reveal the changes in emphasis and in definition that comedy has undergone and continues to undergo; so much so that it is necessary to know the kind of comedy under discussion and the period in which it was written to have a general understanding of the meaning of the term comedy. Some of the key issues that have interested critics of comedy concern its purpose, the way it works, its subject matter, and the role of the audience. In Lawrence, in Meredith, and in Ford the comic points to exemplary behavior; their method is to illustrate behavior that is not exemplary, and thereby to point to behavior that is exemplary. Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford reveal the incongruities, that is, the inconsistencies in man's nature as they are expressed in his actions; they show, as well, that comedy works by creating a "mirror of nature" in which the reader should see himself, and which is held up for his edification. Lawrence uses comic elements in *Sons And Lovers* and in *Women in Love* to focus on Paul's, Birkin's, and Gerald's limitation; in *Sons And Lovers*, however, Lawrence also uses non-comic elements, which he manipulates to highlight Paul's comic limitation, and thus to intensify the reader's comic response to him. But Meredith and Ford use a mixture of comic and non-comic elements to create a "mirror of nature" to reveal what an individual is, and thus to represent the dilemmas of life that an individual must face.
Lawrence creates such a mirror to show that Birkin's ideas about women, which typify early twentieth-century society's thinking about women, are wrong. One of the problems upon which Meredith focuses in the "mirror of nature" he creates is that which results from society's emphasis on class distinction; Meredith shows the disastrous consequences that can result from an individual's attempts to surmount the barriers that a society's insistence on class distinction creates. And Ford creates a "mirror of nature" in showing how a society's preoccupation with appearances can be destructive, as appearances can effectively hide the truth.

The reader can infer from their works that Meredith, Ford, and Lawrence see that an end of comedy is to delight, in that they make their points through fiction, in which the reader is entertained by the adventures and escapades, as by the trials and tribulations of true-to-life characters with whom he can identify. Although I have not found any external evidence to show that Meredith Ford, and Lawrence intended to be didactic in these six novels, Lawrence and Ford have made comments about their desire to make particular points either in specific works or in general. But even without external evidence, the reader can infer an intention to instruct the reader from the situations that all three authors create in their novels. Lawrence and Ford do guide the reader to see the error and/or the immorality of particular characters, and Meredith, more so than Lawrence and Ford, does emphasize the error and/or the immorality of particular characters, usually by means of his narrators; oftentimes, Meredith's narrators give advice or repeat particular warnings and lessons to be learned from the actions of particular characters, usually for the edification of the reader. Yet, neither Lawrence,
nor Meredith, nor Ford allows the didactic aspects of his work to
overtake the mimetic aspects of it.

In creating specific effects to make their points about what it
means to be a human being, Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford use different
kinds of comedy to elicit various comic responses in revealing an
individual's limitation; an understanding of the comic effects these
authors create, and also of the relationship between laughter and
comedy are important to my analysis. In analyzing various kinds of
laughter, probably all readers would agree that amused laughter is
the traditional comic response to slapstick, as it is to witty lines
and puns; flying bedpans, such as those in Tom Jones, which usually
end up in the faces of individuals whose only crime is to walk
through the door at the wrong time are comic in obvious ways and
elicit laughter, as do the comic situations, puns, and plays on words
that Sterne orchestrates in Tristram Shandy; Shakespeare, as well, is
famous for his amusing wit and puns, as Alexander Pope is famous for
sharp wit. Laughter may also be the reader's response to an author's
portrayal of a character's being deceived by others. The degree, if
any, to which the reader laughs at a character's deception depends
upon the degree to which that individual's response is appropriate
for his situation. That is, although the individual believes his
knowledge of the facts of the situation is complete, his knowledge of
the facts is really incomplete; he is, then, operating under a
different set of standards from everyone else and, will, therefore
respond in a manner that is inappropriate for what the circumstance
warrants. The extent to which the reader laughs depends upon how
excessive the individual's response is in relation to the response
warranted by reality. The reader's laughter also depends upon
whether or not anyone is hurt. The Country Wife, for example, is a comic play about the deception of a husband by his wife and a friend that variously elicits critical and amused laughter. The situation Wycherley sets up is similar to the one Ford sets up in The Good Soldier, but the context is different; that is, the reader's laughter toward Pinchwife is derisive, while the reader's laughter toward Dowell is mixed with sympathy for him. The Country Wife elicits derisive laughter because the husband, Pinchwife, constantly states that being cuckolded is the worst possible thing that could happen to anyone, and that it could never happen to him because of his constant vigilance in overseeing that the male company his wife keeps is perfectly appropriate; however, he is gulled by his friend into believing that he is impotent, as a result of a silver cure administered for his venereal disease. The results are predictable; the husband encourages his wife to spend time with his "safe" friend, as all of the neighboring husbands encourage their wives to do, to the extent that the friend has a very busy time of it. Wycherley elicits laughter toward Pinchwife in that the reader does not like him and is glad to see him punished. But Ford, whose protagonist Dowell is equally deceived by Florence's "heart condition," is represented differently from the way Wycherley represents Pinchwife. Ford creates sympathy for Dowell, who is trusting, loyal, and sincere; the reader sympathizes with his plight and does not want to see him deceived.

Another kind of comedy creates distanced critical laughter toward a character, the result of the reader's feeling of superiority, as proposed by Thomas Hobbes; Hobbes is probably most famous for his phrase "sudden glory," his term for the feeling of
superiority that he claims an individual feels when he laughs. The reader laughs critically at Dickens' Pecksniff, for example, whose name indicates his type and who behaves accordingly; Pecksniff earns the reader's dislike in that his hypocrisy and self-deceit masquerade as piety, propriety, and decorum, and the reader is pleased to see him finally punished. An author can also critically distance the reader from a character without creating laughter, as for example, in The Good Soldier Ford distances the reader from Nancy's father, Colonel Rufford, a minor character whom Dowell represents as drinking heavily and as violent when he drinks.

But an author can create critical distance ultimately to elicit a comic response. An author can systematically create a critical distance from a particular character to create an atmosphere conducive to the reader's disapprobation of that character and ultimately elicit his scorn. If an author consistently reveals a character: as puffed-up with himself and with what he rightly or wrongly views as his achievements; as self-deluded to the extent that he reconstructs reality to suit his own purposes; as time and again making the same mistakes and, therefore, not learning from them; as consistently refusing to accept responsibility for his actions; as presumptuous, arrogant, self-deluded, and self-centered; as committed to satisfying his own self-interest to the detriment of others; as treacherous, or duplicitous, he guides the reader to feel frustration, disapprobation, or superiority toward that individual. An individual who is represented as being fairly intelligent and who cannot or, for whatever reason, will not see what is obvious to the reader and, in fact, may seem obvious to other characters in the novel, taxes the reader's credulity to the point that he is not
readily understanding, accepting, or tolerant of that individual's shortcomings. In representing an individual as perplexingly oblivious to what seems so apparent, an author facilitates the reader's feeling of superiority, a response that leads to ridicule; the reader comes to see that individual as foolish and does not feel any compunction about belittling him. Thus, an individual who continually engages in behavior that the reader understands as inappropriate and feels that the individual himself also understands or at least, should understand as inappropriate, as Paul Morel, Richard Feverel, and Clotilda should, and to various degrees and on various levels do understand as inappropriate, may well dispose the reader to consider him in effect a "stupid fool" and to respond with derisive laughter.

Also, whether or not a character is likable directly affects the reader's willingness to tolerate his shortcomings. Whether or not the reader likes a particular character usually results from the reader's approbation of or admiration for certain character traits that the individual possesses; conversely, the reader's dislike of a particular character usually results from the reader's disapprobation of or disgust by particular character traits that the individual possesses. It is difficult to dislike a character like Dowell, for example, because in spite of his blindness to what is so obvious to the reader and to the other characters in the novel, a trait that does inspire laughter, the reader admires Dowell's sense of duty and loyalty. Ford's complex method is to represent Dowell as making himself ridiculous precisely because he is following a noble intention; Ford, then, simultaneously creates critical detachment from Dowell, while creating concern for him. Lawrence, however, does
not create concern for Paul Morel: by consistently distancing the reader from Paul, Lawrence disposes the reader to find fault with him, to the extent that he finally belittles Paul, oftentimes with scornful laughter. The reader's constant criticism of Paul for initiating, sustaining, and perpetuating the same misguided, self-deluded, and egocentric notions and actions, finally results in the reader's belittling him. Meredith also finally elicits scornful laughter at Clotilda, whom the narrator constantly describes in terms of her cowardice, shallowness, and self-deceit, as he does at Richard Feverel, whose limitation Meredith represents mainly in terms of his self-deceit.

Another example of a character from whom an author can create a critical detachment ultimately to elicit derision or derisive laughter is George Eliot's Casaubon, the self-deceived scholar, whose affected airs about what he believes is the importance of his lifelong work, is not worth the merits of his project. Although early on in Middlemarch Eliot creates critical detachment rather than laughter at Casaubon, whose self-delusions about the importance of his scholarly endeavors are initially hurtful to no one but himself, she reveals him in a comic light on his and Dorothea's honeymoon; his nephew's art teacher persuades Casaubon to model for his drawing St Thomas Aquinas because of the supposedly uncanny resemblance Casaubon bears to him. Ladislaw, Casaubon's nephew, concocts this scheme to preoccupy his uncle so that he can talk to Dorothea. In underscoring Casaubon's vanity here, Eliot guides the reader, who is already critically detached from Casaubon, to mock him in his self-delusions about his own importance; in fact, in methodically distancing the reader from Casaubon, who is revealed as deluded about his own
importance and about what he considers the relative unimportance of others, particularly of Dorothea, Eliot precludes what could have been a sympathetic response toward him if she had represented him differently. Thus, though Eliot initially guides the reader to feel sorry for Casaubon because he wants recognition for what he misguidedly believes is a great work, she systematically distances the reader from him, causing the reader to become angry with Casaubon and to find it difficult to accept that he, who is the very one who should know what scholarly work is, cannot see that he has not been doing scholarly work, and primarily because his misguided and self-deluded rationalizations about his project result in his being selfish and cruel to Dorothea. The effect is that Eliot finally elicits the reader's scorn toward him; in fact, at the very least the reader is relieved that he dies.

Meredith, Ford, and Lawrence create various types of comic effects to produce different kinds of laughter to represent the complexity of the human predicament. In their perspectives, all three authors reveal the individual's frailty and vulnerability: in their comic perspectives Meredith, Ford, and Lawrence sometimes represent individuals as looking optimistically to the future, as Willoughby, Birkin, and to some degree Paul Morel do; sometimes all three authors create critical distance from their characters and thereby elicit the reader's criticism; and, sometimes all three authors systematically critically distance the reader from their characters finally to elicit ridicule. Meredith creates distanced critical laughter toward Sir Willoughby's egotistical behavior until the end of the novel when Meredith represents Willoughby as commencing to change his ways; Meredith also creates comic effects by
trivializing Clotilda's stature and by revealing her as self-deluded about her motivations. Ford creates comic and mixed effects to show that an individual must question appearances of truth, as Dowell's attempt to get at the truth and to understand it demonstrates. Ford variously creates amused, empathetic, and critical laughter, as well as he creates critical detachment from a particular character or characters to focus on the difference between appearance and reality, that is, on the relationship between the appearance of a thing and the way it actually is. Ford shows that absolute truth does exist, but that its appearance rarely coincides with its essence; the quest of the individual is to attempt to find truth. In Ford, whether or not an individual searches for the truth, everyone is forced to confront the truth; Dowell comes to search for the truth and does find it, and although none of the other main characters search for the truth, they find it, as well. Ford shows how individuals respond to the truth once they find it.

Lawrence consistently creates critical detachment from Paul Morel, as well as critical laughter at him, because of his self-delusions about male dominance and his beliefs that he understands women and the world, when he does not understand either women or the world; the laughter Lawrence creates toward Birkin is much more benign than the laughter he creates toward Paul Morel in that he presents Birkin as intelligent and sensitive, and also in that he desires an open mind. And though Birkin's self-delusions about male dominance do elicit the reader's criticism, like Paul Morel's self-delusions, Lawrence represents Birkin as likable; thus, the reader's laughter toward him is tempered with tolerance. Sometimes Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford represent their characters as feeling a sense of
futility about the future, as Meredith's Clotilda and Richard Feverel do, or as feeling a sense of powerlessness over all aspects of life, as Ford's Dowell does. For example, Meredith sometimes elicits a comic response in which there is no laughter, as in his description of Clotilda as grief-stricken, though culpable, after Alvan's death; that is, Meredith elicits a critical response to Clotilda. By means of his narrator, Meredith guides the reader to critical judgments of Clotilda in pointing out that she chose to indulge in petty and self-centered behavior; Meredith thus elicits a comic response to her in revealing her comic limitation, here expressed in a capacity to be self-serving, even in the midst of her grief. Ford also creates distanced critical laughter toward Florence, Leonora, and Ashburnham, as well as he creates the reader's mixed response to Dowell's sense of futility at the close of the novel.

Although it is not possible to ascertain exactly what theories of comedy influenced Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford,¹¹ the ideas of James Beattie and Ernst Cassirer are helpful to my discussion of comic effects in these three authors' novels, and the theories of Castelvetro and Cyrus Hoy are important to it; the relation among Beattie, Cassirer, Meredith, Castelvetro, and Hoy is that they all see comedy as representing a human being's predicament and also as eliciting laughter as a response to different kinds of comedy, to situations that are not necessarily amusing. Beattie, an eighteenth-century critic who wrote about the comic and laughter, and Cassirer, a nineteenth-century author and critic who wrote about comedy, as well, are important to my analysis of Meredith and of Ford; Beattie and Cassirer view laughter as embracing opposites, an idea that anticipates Meredith and Ford and thus the mixed effects they create
in their novels. Beattie explains: "Laughter very frequently arises from the view of dignity and meanness united in the same object; sometimes, no doubt, from the appearance of assumed inferiority, as well as of small faults and unimportant turpitudes . . . ."\(^{12}\) Beattie points out that "the cause of laughter is something compounded; or something that disposes the mind to form a comparison, by passing from one object or idea to another" (601). Beattie's theory of comedy as a union of opposite elements is key in Meredith's theory of comedy in relation to his discussion on humor, and, like Meredith's theory, has implications for tragicomedy, as it presupposes a mixed response. While Ford's novels, like Meredith's novels, present mixed visions, unlike Meredith, Ford has not written an ostensible theory of the mixed effects he creates in *The Good Soldier*.

Like Beattie, Cassirer views comedy as a mixed genre that unites the bitter with the sweet. Like Beattie's theory of comedy and Meredith's theories of comedy and humor, Cassirer's theory of comedy is important to my discussion of Meredith and Ford because Cassirer presupposes the combination of disharmonious elements that neoclassical tradition has disallowed, and he also presupposes a mixed response to that disharmonious combination of elements. Although theories of comedy vary, Cassirer's theory of comedy is a radical departure from convention and can be seen as a theory of tragicomedy; that is, Cassirer presupposes that bitterness or scorn is an integral part of the comic response. And since what is truly contemptible is not comic, Cassirer presumes the union of disharmonious elements as essentially comic. He explains, "The greatest comedians themselves can by no means give us an easy beauty.
Their work is often filled with great bitterness. In explaining his conception of the comic catharsis, Cassirer states of the fictive comic world, "We live in this restricted world, but we are no longer imprisoned by it. Such is the peculiar character of the comic catharsis. Things and events begin to lose their material weight; scorn is dissolved into laughter and laughter is liberation" (Critical Theory, 1002). Cassirer's conception of the "comic catharsis" apparently means that the individual's feelings of contempt or "bitterness" toward whatever stimulus elicits that response dissipate as he comes to terms with his situation; freed from those feelings, he can somehow transcend his situation.

Cassirer, like Beattie, anticipates Meredith's concept of humor, which is based on a mixed effect; Ford's mixed effects, as well, are based on an embrace of opposites as proposed by Beattie and Cassirer.

Castelvetro's theory of comedy is central to the reader's understanding of the comic effects that Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford create, and Cyrus Hoy's theory of comedy is important to the reader's understanding of the motivations of Lawrence's and Meredith's characters. Castelvetro, a sixteenth century Italian Renaissance author and critic, is important to my analysis because the kind of comedy that Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford create is analyzable in terms of Castelvetro's theory. Castelvetro's theory of comedy is based on deception; the basis of the comic in Ford, as well as in Lawrence and in Meredith, also centers around deception: the deception of others, and the point at which deception is self-deception. Lawrence creates male protagonists and other main characters who are self-deceived about their own stature, and who try to convince others that their way of thinking is right; Meredith
creates protagonists and main characters who initially spend so much time in attempting to deceive others that they finally reach a point when they do deceive themselves; and Ford creates a protagonist who finally reaches a point at which his deception by others becomes self-deception, and he creates other main characters who need to deceive themselves and others to live with the truth. Castelvetro's explanation that deception results from our "first parents" is an idea based on the Christian concept of Original Sin; Castelvetro's theory is developed in Cyrus Hoy, a twentieth-century author and critic, whose theory of comedy, like his theories of tragedy and of tragicomedy, is also based on the Christian concept of Original Sin. Hoy in effect develops Castelvetro's premise to show how an individual's behavior results from his fallen human nature.

Using Castelvetro's neoclassical comic theory to explain the comic effects that Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford create is justifiable because those situations and events that Castelvetro describes as comic are the same kinds of situations and events that Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford create in their novels. And if, as Meredith states in his Essay On Comedy, the comedy is "in the idea," then there is an essence of the comic that transcends form and time. If there is an immutable comic essence, then the argument can be made that the essence of the comic is the same in life as it is in art. For if the test to determine validity is whether or not a thing is true in terms of what the reader understands to be true, and we need not search very long to see that those situations that create comic effects in literature are the same as those situations that create comic effects in life, then Meredith's argument that the comedy is "in the idea" is valid. Analyzing nineteenth-century and twentieth-
century novels in terms of Castelvetro's theory of comedy, then, is valid as well. Castelvetro states that deception is the most common basis for comedy; he argues that "The greatest source of the comic is deception, either through folly, drunkenness, a dream, or delirium; or through ignorance of the arts, the sciences, and one's own powers; or through the novelty of the good being turned in a wrong direction or of the engineer hoist with his own petar; or through deceits fashioned by man or by fortune. If a person is deceived in any of these ways, yet within this limit, acts of his own free will under no other compulsion, then he is comic, for he is ridiculous." Deception of others is comic in that the individual deceived has a different understanding from everyone else of the way things are; the individual responds to a set of stimuli different from those perceived by everyone else. Thus, his response to what he has been led to believe is true will be inappropriate. Although it is difficult to view an individual's unknowing, inappropriate response as a failing, in that he simply does not know the facts of the situation, the reader has an expectation that somehow the individual should eventually come to know what everyone else knows and to find out that he has been deceived. The reader has that expectation because it is only reasonable to conclude that at some point there must be some clue or clues that would cause a fairly intelligent individual to question appearances. An individual like Dowell, for example, who though initially deceived through the conspiracy of others, remains deceived throughout the entire novel and is still deceived at the end of the novel; Dowell is finally comic in his inability to see what is obvious to everyone else and what should eventually become obvious to him, as well.
Hoy is like Castelvetro in that he bases his theory of comedy, like his theories of tragedy and tragicomedy, on the belief in Original Sin as the cause of fallen human nature; like Castelvetro, Hoy sees man's fallen nature as the cause of the comic, as well as of his tragic and tragicomic behavior. Although Hoy's theory of comedy is based on exactly the same premise as Castelvetro's, Hoy does not mention Castelvetro. Hoy's theory is important to the reader's understanding of the effects that Meredith, Ford, and Lawrence achieve because he explicates and elaborates upon the premise set forth by Castelvetro, whose theory is demonstrated in these three authors' novels. While Hoy does not mention Meredith, Ford, or Lawrence, their main characters are analyzable in the terms set forth in his discussion of comedy, as he addresses the limitations played out in all of the main characters in these authors. The comic limitations that these authors represent in their characters are inherent; their failings can be explained in terms of Christian theology's concept of Original Sin and fallen human nature. Hoy argues from a Christian perspective about man's dual nature, both sides of which are constantly at war; and like others before him, he states that "incongruity is of the essence of comedy" as "The discrepancy between the noble intention and the ignoble deed points directly to the most glaring incongruity in the human condition: that which exists between man as he is, and man as he might be, or as he thinks he might be" (5). Although the Christian view does not prevail in Meredith or Lawrence in any ostensible way, since such a view is not discussed as the cause of an individual's behavior, the actions of Lawrence's and Meredith's characters can be analyzed in the Christian terms proposed by Hoy. And while Ford, like Meredith
and Lawrence, does not ostensibly attribute motivation for an individual's behavior to his fallen human nature, the reader concludes that Ford had at least an interest in Christianity because he does devote a lot of discussion to Ashburnham's Anglicanism and Leonora's Roman Catholicism. The reader can discern that Ashburnham and Leonora behave as they do because they cannot control their inherent weaknesses; for example, Ashburnham's lust causes him to deceive his wife and his best friend, though he does not want to deceive them. Finally, in fact, Ashburnham's feelings for Nancy drive him to suicide rather than to a relationship with Nancy that he feels would compromise her. And Leonora, as well, who has patiently endured all of Edward's infidelities, is finally unable to overcome her evil impulse to pressure Nancy into sleeping with Edward; Leonora comes to delude herself that Nancy is at fault because Edward loves her, and thus eventually convinces Nancy, as well, that she is at fault.

Although Hoy applies his theory to literary characters, his use of "man" appears to presuppose the reader's acceptance that a literary character is meant to represent a human being, and therefore, is revealed as possessing human limitation that reveals his comic capacity, and also human potential that reveals his tragic capacity. Also, that Hoy's theories of drama are generally based on Christian doctrine, and are specifically substantiated by the Pauline epistles, would indicate his presupposition of the reader's acceptance that the traits of man and of literary characters are the same. Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford create characters who are defeated or who are shown to be wrong because of behavior that results from their own innate depravity; though these characters
attempt to overcome their innate frailty, it eventually overcomes them. Hoy's argument that an individual's frailty necessarily results in behavior that falls short of some standard of behavior, and thus reveals the gap between what that individual actually does and what he might have done, is helpful in interpreting the behavior of the central characters in Lawrence, and is especially helpful in interpreting the behavior of the central characters in Meredith and Ford.

The novels of Lawrence present a comic vision, in which the author creates effects that point always to his characters' limitations, rather than a mixed vision, such as the novels of Meredith and Ford present; Meredith and Ford point to their characters' potential, as well as to their limitation. For example, although there is an indication of potential in *Sons And Lovers*' Paul Morel, who never develops his strong potential as an artist, Lawrence emphasizes the comic capacity of Paul, rather than his tragic loss of potential by focusing on Paul's thinking and on his interactions with others; specifically, Lawrence focuses on the ways Paul is able to deceive himself about what women want and about the way they think. Lawrence reveals Paul as selfish and as self-deceived. But Lawrence does not focus on the potential of Birkin and Gerald in *Women in Love*; Lawrence emphasizes the comic capacities of Birkin and Gerald. He reveals them as complacent, arrogant, and self-deceived in thinking that they are knowledgeable about life, about women's place in society, and about what women want from life; while Lawrence does not focus on their potential to become something more than what they are, he does have Birkin come to change his thinking about women because of Ursula's influence upon him.
In his own theory of comedy, which discusses the didactic effect of laughter, Meredith suggests comedy as a cleanser for civilization. He maintains: "The life of the comedy is in the idea...you must love pure comedy warmly to be attracted to the idea. And to love comedy you must know the real world, and know men and women well enough not to expect too much of them, though you may still hope for good" (46). For Meredith, Comedy is the "foundation of sound sense" (28) and "The Comic, which is the perceptive, is the governing spirit, awakening and giving aim to these powers of laughter, but it is not to be confounded with them" (80). Meredith's argument that comedy is a cleanser for civilization is demonstrated in his novels, which point to commendable behavior by presenting negative or foolish behavior. Meredith's novels also demonstrate the negative character traits and behaviors that he argues will benefit from exposure to the comic muse. Meredith explains that exposure to the Comic Spirit is necessary whenever men "wax out of proportion, overblown, affected, pretentious, bombastical, hypocritical, pedantic, fantastically delicate" and also whenever they are "self-deceived or hoodwinked, given to run riot in idolatries, drifting into vanities, congregating in absurdities, planning shortsightedly, plotting dementedly," as whenever men "are at variance with their professions, and violate the unwritten but perceptible laws binding them in consideration one to another" and "whenever they offend sound reason, fair justice; are false in humility or mined with conceit, individually, or in the bulk"; Meredith states that whenever men behave as such "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" (142).
Meredith's position is that comedy's laughter is benign, though it is a corrective, in that Meredith claims that "the laughter directed by the Comic Spirit is a harmless wine, conducing to sobriety in the degree that it enlivens" (48). It has become a critical commonplace, however, that comedy distances the reader from the comic character, and thus creates a critical distance that precludes empathy, as Henri Bergson and most other twentieth century critics emphasize. Bergson and his school see comedy as based on contempt or superiority, a theory generally attributed to Thomas Hobbes. Explaining the comic, Bergson states: "We laugh every time a person gives us the impression of being a thing." Specifically, Bergson cites as the four key ingredients in the comic character: "rigidity" (66), "absentmindedness" (66), "automaticity" (76), and "Unsociability" (154). Bergson later claims: "Laughter is, above all, a corrective. Being intended to humiliate, it must make a painful impression on the person against whom it is directed" (187). Respected current views that coincide with Bergson's view on the malicious effects of comedy are those of David L. Hirst and Harry Levin. Acknowledging the difficulty in formulating a theory of comedy, "as the contrasted work of Aristotle, Bergson and Meredith reveals," Hirst maintains that comedy results in our laughing at the shortcomings of another. While it is true that some kinds of comedy are based on the reader's sense of superiority, as Hobbes first suggested, it is not a rule that always holds true in comedy; it seems highly doubtful even to consider it a generality. Hirst generalizes that "comedy appeals to our intellect, we observe critically and laugh at the victim" (ix). Comedy thus defined distances the reader from the comic character and does not allow for
any emotional involvement with him; that kind of comedy causes the reader disdainfully to respond to the shortcomings of the character, and to feel that he would never have allowed himself to be in such a predicament. That kind of comedy, then, does foster the reader's feeling of superiority. Harry Levin also supports such a view and argues that "comedy appeals to our self-interest," as it seeks to circumvent what he calls "life's failures" with "shrewd nonchalance." Levin points out that: "The very simplest plot for a comedy would be a joke" (35).

I would suggest, however, as Guthke suggests, that critical observation, which usually implies a distancing from the character as Bergson, Hirst, and Levin maintain, does not always hold true in comedy; one can feel empathy for a comic character as for a tragic character. Guthke states: "Particularly disturbing in its popularity is the time-honored idea that comedy appeals to the intellect while tragedy engages the feelings" (46). Whether comedy distances the reader from a particular character because he feels superior toward him, or empathetically draws the reader toward that character because he identifies with him, depends upon the way that the author presents that character and upon the way that the author presents his limitation. Like Meredith, Hoy bears out the point that although comedy is "hardheartedly realistic about the nature of man," it "can also be compassionate in its forgiveness and its acceptance of human failings, because it recognizes the existence of these." Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford use different kinds of comedy to create various effects; sometimes the reader is empathetically engaged with a particular character, and sometimes he is critically distanced from that particular character or from another character. For example, in
Sons And Lovers Lawrence distances the reader from Paul Morel; Paul sees himself as insightful, while the reader sees him as myopic in the arrogant, illogical, and oftentimes wrong conclusions he reaches. Lawrence distances the reader from Paul because of his smug self-satisfaction, as Lawrence distances the reader from Gerald in Women in Love; Gerald's outrageous proposal that women be broken like horses is offensive. But Lawrence deals compassionately with the comic limitation of Birkin, the male protagonist in Women in Love, in that Lawrence presents him as likable in his sensitivity, in his intelligence, and in his appreciation of intelligent women. Thus, when in conversing with Ursula, Birkin reveals himself to be not quite as enlightened as he believes himself to be about the role of women in society and about male-female relationships, the reader is not disgusted with Birkin, as he is with Gerald; nor is the reader much annoyed with Birkin as he is with Paul Morel.

Meredith, as well, reveals that comedy can create empathy or can be distancing, as Mrs. Berry and Adrian, respectively, demonstrate in Richard Feverel. Meredith causes the reader to regard Mrs. Berry, a stock comic character, kindly. Mrs. Berry is amusing in her appearance, bustling manner, and lack of refinement, in her folksy colorful speech, overly dramatic gestures, and take charge attitude, and in her general disregard for social decorum. But Meredith expects the reader to appreciate that she has a generous and loving nature and that she possesses innate common sense; that she is insightful about people and about relationships because she understands human nature and because she knows the difference between right and wrong, and always tries to do what she believes to be right. The reason Mrs. Berry is likable, and that the reader is not
distanced from her in spite of her comic limitation, is that the qualities she possesses have been recognized by the world, at large, as being commendable. To respond only critically to her comic limitation would be to go against what is probably a universal belief that the qualities she possesses make her good; certainly, in creating Mrs. Berry, Meredith, like everyone else, must have been aware of these standards of behavior that the world applauds and intended that the reader regard her positively. For in fiction, as in life, the context of an individual's behavior is of critical importance in determining the meaning of his actions; Meredith always reveals that Mrs. Berry's behavior is motivated by a desire to help others, usually Lucy.

Adrian, however, like Lawrence's Gerald, is an example of a comic character whose limitation does elicit the negative response that Hobbes, Bergson, Hirst, and Levin maintain comic characters elicit. Just as the world, at large, recognizes certain qualities as commendable, it recognizes, as well, certain other qualities as detestable; and, Meredith, like everyone else, must have been aware of these standards of behavior. Meredith creates Adrian so that the reader finds him completely self-absorbed and unfeeling for anything or anyone except for his own interests, as his actions are only self-serving, and as right and wrong are relative terms for him. Adrian is smug, arrogant, and self-satisfied in his masterful manipulation of Sir Austin; Adrian manages his own clandestine affairs so that he always appears to be beyond reproach, and he masterfully capitalizes on every opportunity to make himself appear better than he really is. Adrian's actions and character traits distance him from the reader,
who does respond critically to his comic capacity, which manifests itself in his sanctimonious behavior.

Like Lawrence and Meredith, Ford bears out the distinction between comic characters whose limitations create empathy in the reader and comic characters whose limitations distance the reader from them. As the reader is not distanced from Birkin and from Mrs. Berry, the reader is not distanced from Dowell, who believes Florence’s lies because he trusts her; neither is the reader distanced from Dowell when he defends Edward’s libertinism as sentimentalism out of friendship, and because he wishes to believe the best of Edward. Ford guides the reader to admire Dowell’s noble character traits, which, ironically, impede his arriving at truth. In fact, Ford makes it nearly impossible to dislike Dowell, who, in retrospection, claims he feels animosity toward Florence and Ashburnham, but apparently feels guilty about these feelings and qualifies them to the point that he ends up defending their behavior. Dowell’s interactions with Florence and Edward are always kind, considerate, and amicable. The reader feels that Florence and Edward do not deserve Dowell’s consideration, as they rely upon Dowell’s trust and friendship in order to deceive him. Ford also creates frustration in the reader who must contend with Dowell’s comic inability to grasp the obvious and to face the obvious; the reader’s frustration with Dowell to some degree mimics Dowell’s frustration and only partly successful efforts to comprehend what has happened to him and why. The reader’s experiencing some degree of Dowell’s frustration is another technique Ford uses to create empathy with him. But, Ford sometimes critically distances the reader from Ashburnham and sometimes elicits the reader’s critical laughter
toward him, though Dowell always defends his behavior; Ford also
frequently elicits the reader's distanced critical laughter toward
Florence and Leonora.

Meredith emphasizes what he requires from his audience: a
"moderate degree" (76) of intellectual activity on its part. But
that condition can probably be taken for granted in all but the most
pedantic of works, and the arguments can be made that there cannot be
a comedy without an audience and that literature always depends upon
the active enjoyment of the audience. What is special about
Meredith's view of the audience is that at times he does expect his
readers to follow him when he provides no apparent clues about his
method and the reason for it; that is, Meredith implies that the
reader must sometimes expect to work out on his own something in the
text that is not readily explained, to fit together various pieces of
a work that do not seem to fit together. Meredith expects his
readers to be able to detect subtleties in the text, such as his
combining disharmonious elements to create specific effects, for
example. Meredith has been mistakenly criticized for failing to
sustain one particular momentum in his works when he is actually
manipulating the reader to respond to his mixed effects in The
Egoist, The Tragic Comedians, and Richard Feverel; Meredith creates
most of these effects by means of his narrators, through whom he
orchestrates situations and events in a particular manner. Another
way that Meredith expects his audience to follow him is in his use of
narrative voice; Meredith has been almost universally, though
mistakenly, criticized for a faulty use of narrative voice. Critics
have not understood that by means of his narrator Meredith creates
comic effects. Meredith creates most of his narrative intrusions,
which are mainly comic, in terms of his verbal style, variously employing parody, litotes, innuendo, oxymoron, circumlocution, simile, metaphor, and personification to make his points; thus, these intrusions he creates are enjoyable, rather than boring or pedantic. It would appear that many of the criticisms leveled at Meredith, like the objection to his highly intrusive narrators, probably result from an unwillingness to engage with Meredith on his own terms.

What Meredith says about the role of the audience can also be applied to Lawrence and Ford. Like Meredith, Lawrence expects his reader to detect the comic subtleties that provide a correction to what his male protagonists frequently, though misguidedly, proclaim. Lawrence's subtleties have been lost on those critics who focus their interpretations only or mainly on what Lawrence's protagonists say and do. Ford, as well, is very interested in his audience's response, and presents his story in such a way that the reader must question the meaning of Dowell's method of narration, which is in contrast to the actions and events he is narrating. Dowell's constant digressions from his narrative directly to address the "silent listener" ultimately guide the reader to question his approach to life and to attempt to understand Dowell's thinking. Ford expects his readers to detect that his mixing of comic effects with tragic effects creates a special effect, a mixed response, that precludes simple judgments and easy conclusions; if the reader does not detect that the comic effects Ford creates are combined with other non-comic elements to achieve an opposite effect, as well, the interpretation of the novel suffers from incompleteness.
Part III

Tragedy

In discussing the elusive nature of tragedy, Arthur Miller points out: "There are whole libraries of books dealing with the nature of tragedy. That the subject is capable of interesting so many writers over the centuries is part proof that the idea of tragedy is constantly changing, and more, that it will never be finally defined." Like comedy, tragedy eludes final definition. Tragedy is also like comedy in that it reveals an individual's limitation and resolves conflict, but tragedy is different from comedy in the ways in which it handles an individual's limitation and the resolution of conflict. Further, tragedy is different from comedy in that comedy presents an optimistic vision of a human being in that he accepts his limitation and makes the best of life; that one can accept his own limitations and those that life presents to him indicates a hopefulness, as comedy emphasizes the future. That is, comedy implies an ability to come to terms with one's self and with life, and thus points to possibility in looking to the future. But, unlike comedy, tragedy does not hopefully look to future possibility; rather, tragedy depicts disruption in an individual's life of such magnitude that he or she is unable to resume living as he or she had been living previous to that disruption precisely because what has been lost was so precious and cannot be replaced. Thus, tragedy depicts a vision of life opposite from that of comedy, as it underscores discontinuity. Because the individual has no
second chance to resume living the life that either brought him fulfillment, or that he aspired toward because he believed it would bring him fulfillment, tragedy represents lost potential that cannot be fulfilled. Tragedy, then, creates sympathy for an individual, who, because of forces internal and/or external, experiences a disruption in his life of such magnitude that he is impelled to accept a relationship with reality that causes him great suffering.

While my research has not revealed a great deal of specific information on Meredith's and on Ford's background reading in tragic theory, although Lawrence had read the German tragic theorists, the reader can determine those situations Meredith and Ford see as tragic by the sympathetic effects they create. While there are differences in the tragic visions of Meredith and Ford, the essence of the tragic in both authors is similar in that it presents seemingly unnecessary, though apparently unpreventable destruction. Meredith and Ford present the unfulfilled potential of what their central characters could have had, could have done, or could have been. Ford, however, is unlike Meredith in the emphasis he places upon the role of external forces such as events, and particularly, on the behavior of other people in determining an individual's fate; Meredith places the fault for an individual's downfall on his own internal forces that determine his character and that conceivably, are within his control. While Meredith creates characters who have one or more character failings that bring about their defeat, Ford creates characters who are unable to see and/or to face the truth. The key issues for both authors in creating sympathy center around the character of the hero, the cause(s) of his downfall, and the significance of his downfall; and while Meredith emphasizes the lessons to be learned from the
behavior of his protagonists, whom he holds largely responsible for their own fate, Ford sees the role of other people as a real complication in the fate of the individual, and makes judgment of a character like Dowell difficult.

Lawrence is different from Meredith and Ford in that he does not create sympathetic effects for his male protagonists or for his other male main characters; while Meredith and Ford create tragic effects to elicit the reader's sympathy for a character, as well as a variety of comic effects to elicit a variety of comic responses, such as the reader's empathetic laughter, his distanced critical laughter, his scorn, or his sense of futility that he feels in response to a character's inability to help himself, Lawrence does not create sympathy for Paul Morel, for Birkin, or for Gerald. Lawrence's method is to create sympathy for his female protagonists and for some of his other main female characters, who are affected by the thinking and behavior of his male characters; Lawrence creates sympathy for the females whom Lawrence's males attempt in various ways to dominate or toward whom they reveal their selfishness and lack of consideration. But Lawrence is like Meredith in terms of sometimes eliciting a character's laughter as a response to things that are not comic; sometimes Lawrence's characters laugh to express anger, hurt feelings, or a sense of futility. Lawrence's method is to highlight the comic limitation of his male protagonists and some of his other male main characters by showing that their behavior results from their insensitivity, their arrogance, and their self-deceit. Although the result of their actions sometimes does have a negative impact on themselves, they stubbornly persist in their actions and/or in their ways of thinking. Lawrence guides the reader to a comic
response to these male characters, who initiate, sustain, and perpetuate behavior that has a negative impact upon others and occasionally upon themselves. For example, in *Sons And Lovers* Lawrence creates sympathy for Miriam, who is subject to Paul's selfish and unfeeling behavior, the result of his arrogant assumptions about what Miriam and what all women want. Though the narrator tells the reader that Paul considers himself the injured party, the reader does not believe it because Paul initiates all the action: he tells Miriam that he cannot see her anymore, and then he changes his mind and blames her for his frustration with her. In creating sympathy for Miriam as a result of Paul's behavior, Lawrence highlights Paul's comic limitation, here expressed in his comic capacity for self-serving behavior that allows him to blame others for his own failings and inadequacies.

Unlike the comic vision that Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford share, which focuses on deceit of others and on the point at which deception is self-deception, the tragic visions of Meredith and Ford are more different than they are alike. Although Meredith and Ford see seemingly unnecessary, though apparently unpreventable, destruction as central to tragedy, each author presents that vision in a different way; thus, there is no single theory of tragedy that can be applied to both authors. Sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century tragic theory, typified in the ideas of Sir Philip Sidney and George Chapman, and also the ideas of eighteenth-century Adam Smith are important to the reader's understanding of tragic effects in Meredith; Aristotle's theory of tragedy is key to our understanding of tragic effects in Meredith. Arthur Schopenhauer's theory of tragedy is important to the reader's understanding of tragic effects
in Ford, and aspects of Arthur Miller's theory of tragedy are helpful to his understanding. Cyrus Hoy's theory of tragedy, like his theories of comedy and tragicomedy, is important to the reader's understanding of the characters in both authors because Hoy's theory of tragedy explains why their characters are motivated to behave in ways that bring about their defeat.

What sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century theorists such as Sir Philip Sidney and George Chapman respectively state of tragedy, that it works as a deterrent from vice to promote virtue, is demonstrated by the protagonists in Richard Feverel. While Meredith is not so much a moralist that he sacrifices the mimetic aspects of his work to its didactic aspects to become pedantic, he does emphasize the immorality of Richard's actions, often for the betterment of the reader. The theory of tragedy "as a deterrent from vice to promote virtue" can be applied to Richard Feverel's affair with Bella. Richard's presumed control of his relationship with Bella, the prostitute with whom he has more than a year long affair, abandoning his wife and newborn son, is repugnant to the reader; and Meredith creates these circumstances so that the reader will find them repugnant. Despite the number of times Richard says that Lucy is the only woman in the world for him, Richard commits adultery not once, but for more than one year. In Richard's action, Meredith reveals how little people know themselves and their own weaknesses, as he shows how easily, though unwittingly, an individual can find himself inextricably and, to a degree, unwillingly, caught in the grip of vice once he allows himself contact with it. Although Meredith does place major responsibility for Richard's actions upon Richard, he also guides the reader to feel that Sir Austin and his
system of education for Richard are to some degree responsible for Richard's predicament. In *The Tragic Comedians* Alvan demonstrates, as well, how an individual's weakness can get the better of him and claim him, despite his desire to be free of its grip. In giving in to his anger, Alvan does what he assures Clotilda he will never again do, fight in a duel. Meredith shows how little Alvan knows himself and his own weaknesses. Like Richard's affair with Bella, Alvan's challenging Clotilda's father to a duel is repugnant to the reader; and, again, Meredith presents the scene so that the reader does find it repugnant. In having Alvan behave as he does, Meredith shows how easily a person can misjudge as strength what is really a weakness in his character. Meredith shows that although Alvan believes he has mastered his anger, he is finally mastered by his anger.

Adam Smith, eighteenth-century author of *The Theory Of Moral Sentiments*, sees self-deceit as the cause of most human failings; he argues "This self-deceit, this fatal weakness of mankind, is the source of half the disorders of human life. If we saw ourselves in the light in which others see us, or in which they would see us if they knew all, a reformation would generally be unavoidable. We could not otherwise endure the sight." 23 Although he is not talking specifically about tragedy, Smith considers self-deceit to be the underlying cause of human weakness. Meredith, like Castelvetro, states that self-deceit forms the basis of the comic character; in practice, however, the protagonists and main characters of Meredith's mixed novels, such as *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians*, and to some degree *The Egoist*, reveal that self-deceit can point as well to tragic limitation as it can point to comic limitation.
The tragic effects Meredith creates for his protagonists and other main characters are analyzable in Aristotelian terms: Meredith creates characters who occupy very high stations, are of good fortune, are basically good, but have a particular character "flaw," or make a particular "error," both of which terms are translations of Aristotle's term "hamartia," that finally brings about their defeat. Aristotle states of the tragic hero's character: "This is the sort of man who is not pre-eminently virtuous and just, and yet it is through no badness or villainy of his own that he falls into the misfortune, but rather through some flaw in him, he being one of those who are in high station and good fortune . . . ." Meredith inspires the reader to feel pity for his protagonists and also makes the reader fearful for their outcomes. They also inhabit a world in which there is cosmic order. Although some of Meredith's critics claim that he discusses Providence finally to reject it, the novels show that there is an ambivalence, and, at times, almost an acceptance of Providence in Meredith. At the end of Richard Feverel, in fact, when disaster has just begun to strike, Meredith makes Richard's Aunt Doria finally condemn Sir Austin's System, proclaiming, "We have all been fighting against God . . . " (423). Although J. B. Priestley, who is considered Meredith's official biographer, claimed that Meredith was a "Pagan," a position that various critics after him have reaffirmed, Meredith's novels reveal that he did subscribe to a belief in a natural harmony that when disrupted always results in disaster; in fact, it seems to me that the numerous biblical allusions and Christian references that Meredith makes in The Egoist, Richard Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians, indicate that he had a fascination with Christianity. Meredith also has his heroes talk
about what it means to be noble, and about what actions demonstrate that ideal. Like Meredith, Ford creates protagonists and main characters who are of the upper class and who are of good fortune. Also, like Meredith, Ford is interested in Providence.

In creating tragic effects, Meredith focuses on the make-up of the hero, as do most kinds of tragedy; Meredith follows Aristotle's description of the tragic character and also Aristotle's method for creating sympathy for his characters. Meredith creates sympathy for Richard by presenting him as basically good and noble: Meredith reveals Richard's sensitivity, his desire to be noble and heroic, and his potential for greatness. Richard spends much time thinking about what it means to be heroic, particularly in the chivalric sense, and imagines what heroic deeds will win him glory and honor, as in the days of old. In The Tragic Comedians, as well, Meredith creates protagonists toward whom the reader is sympathetic. Meredith's male protagonist, Alvan, is an aspiring, politically well-respected politician, and Clotilda is well-read, free-spirited, outspoken about her ideas, and she pursues her own interests. Both characters are represented as suited to each other in that each is depicted as strong, intelligent, goal-oriented, and as having the potential to achieve greatness in terms of personal accomplishments. Alvan and Clotilda, like Richard Feverel, are shown to be well above average characters, in their ambition to do things they consider important to the world, and in their desire for recognition for doing those things.

Another way in which Meredith's heroes follow Aristotle's description of tragic protagonists is that they commit an "error" or have a character "flaw" or flaws that bring about their downfall: the
three chief character flaws in Meredith are anger, pride, and attempting to play Providence. Richard, the protagonist of Richard Feverel, is subject to fits of rage and is excessively proud; it is not Richard, however, but his father, Sir Austin, who plays Providence in the novel. But in spite of the sympathy that Meredith creates for Richard because he is the victim of his father's machinations, Meredith causes the downfall of Richard mainly to result from his own limitations, specifically, from his anger toward his father, from his lack of forethought, and from his excessive pride. Richard's lack of forethought on almost all those occasions when clear thinking is especially called for, allows free reign to his natural proclivity for exaggerated anger. In revealing that Richard's demise, that of his cousin Clare, and that of his wife, Lucy, result from his own emotional and unthinking actions, Meredith represents the consequences that result when human beings are out of balance with nature; that is, for Meredith disaster always results when an individual allows a particular part of his own nature, like what Meredith calls an individual's "animal side," to dominate other aspects of his nature, like his reason.

Meredith is very focused on the natural harmony he believes exists in the universe; that is, Meredith emphasizes the importance of an individual's maintaining harmony or balance within nature. Meredith focuses on the importance of the individual's understanding his relation to the universe and also on the individual's maintaining a balance within his own human nature. That understanding necessitates the individual's accepting the fact that he is powerless to control certain forces in life, like love, for example. Priestly describes Meredith's concept of man's relationship with nature: "if
we try to cut the cord that binds us, if we are too impatient or cowardly or purely self-seeking, then we do not serve her purposes and she punishes us" (80). In Meredith those characters who do not maintain that balance between reason and emotion end up defeated, as Richard demonstrates. Richard's death also pointedly reveals that in spite of an individual's potential, and even in spite of his doing what he believes will make things right, no human being can fully know or fully control the consequences of his actions. Yet Meredith creates sympathy for Richard largely because his anger toward his father's plots and schemes against him is fully justified.

In *The Tragic Comedians* Alvan's flaw, like Richard's, is that he is subject to fits of rage, and like Richard's father, Alvan attempts to play Providence; like Richard, as well, who initiates a duel that brings about his ruin, Alvan's final action is to initiate a duel, which finally causes his death. But though he is supremely self-confident about his ability to control people and events, Alvan only succeeds in demonstrating that he cannot control himself, much less people or events. In the end, Alvan dies in a highly ironic manner. And Clotilda, who at least knows herself better than Alvan knows himself, acknowledges that her weakness, in the words of the narrator is "at all costs to bargain for an escape from pain" (112). Like Richard Feverel, Clotilda does not die, but lives a miserable life full of regret. In the downfall of Richard, of Alvan, and of Clotilda, Meredith makes clear to the reader where these protagonists go wrong. Meredith reveals different kinds of human frailty, which, to various degrees are universal to human nature, and causes the reader to consider the kind of egoism that allows an individual to persist in his thinking that if he just keeps at it long enough, he
will eventually be able to control those things completely beyond his control. Meredith also guides the reader to see that Alvan and Clotilda, like Richard Feverel, are out of harmony with nature. Again, as with Richard, the imbalance is in their animal nature: their emotions, which often result from their determination to gratify their desires, rule them. That imbalance prevents their powers of reason from exercising the restraint necessary to prevent the disasters that befall them.

Meredith focuses, as well, on the significance of the downfall of the hero, an important issue in Aristotelian tragedy; specifically, Meredith guides the reader to question the context of an individual's actions that result in his downfall. In considering the meaningfulness of the downfall of Meredith's characters, or of any character, the reader must consider whether or not his demise could have been prevented; yet, tragedy underscores the fact that everyone has a particular weakness that could, under certain conditions, destroy him. In the downfall of Oedipus, for example, we learn that particular character traits, like anger, can trigger behavior that results in an unforseeable and unimaginable chain of events that brings about an individual's defeat. Oedipus' downfall directly results from his own internal forces that impel him to behave in ways that cause the initial disaster; that is, Oedipus' unknowingly killing his father brings about the final disaster in his life, his unknowingly marrying his mother and having children with her. The knowledge of his incestuous marriage causes Oedipus to put out his eyes and Jocasta to kill herself. While Oedipus is complicated by the large role that fate plays in it, specifically, in the incredible events of Oedipus' unknowingly killing his father and
unknowingly marrying his mother, Oedipus would not have killed anyone if he had controlled his anger; and if he had not killed the man who turns out to be his father, it would not have been possible for him to marry Jocasta, his mother. As a result of this one unthinking emotional response, Oedipus ruins his own life and the life of others. Although we are made to see that one reason Oedipus falls is because of his determination to seek the truth, we are also made to see that another reason he falls is because of his anger. That is, while Sophocles guides the reader to see that Oedipus seeks the truth about his parentage, the discovery about which could and does result in his destruction, he also guides the reader to criticize Oedipus for striking and actually killing an old man; although Oedipus is unaware that the old man he hits and kills is his own father, Sophocles takes care to elicit the reader's criticism toward Oedipus for striking an old man. In guiding the reader to determine that the events that lead to Oedipus' fall result directly from his anger, Sophocles elicits criticism toward him. Meredith's Alvan and Richard are like Oedipus in that they fall because of their anger, which they manifest, as well, in unthinking and emotional responses that bring about their downfall. Richard is noble in that, like Oedipus, he does determine to face the truth and thus follows a course of action that could and does lead to his own ruin. Alvan, who is determined to defend his honor and his reputation at all costs, is like Richard in that he follows what he believes is the proper course of action; he dies in following that course. The downfall of Oedipus, as well as of Richard and Alvan, causes the reader to criticize their violent behavior and to various degrees to blame them for ruining things for themselves and for others.
The deaths of characters like Antigone and Clarissa, however, the respective heroines of the play Antigone and of the novel Clarissa, are highly meaningful in that they teach us how to live; their deaths are the result of their remaining faithful to their moral codes and thus represent courageous and noble behavior. Richardson and Sophocles do not represent a "flaw" in their heroines' characters, but an "error" that leads to their defeat. Richardson's presentation of Clarissa's "error" in judgment in allowing Lovelace to persuade her that her family has turned against her, and Sophocles' presentation of Antigone's behavior, which does not constitute an "error," do not elicit the reader's criticism of their actions; Clarissa's "error" is very minor, in that she is forced to react to a situation that Lovelace orchestrates to deceive her, and Antigone only behaves in accordance with her beliefs. Antigone's and Clarissa's courage and nobility elicit the reader's admiration: Richardson represents Clarissa's "error" in a way that does not elicit the reader's criticism, and Sophocles represents Antigone's behavior as noble. The heroines of both authors are opposed to Sophocles' representation of Oedipus, who elicits the reader's criticism for killing an old man and also to Meredith's representation of Richard Feverel and Alvan, who, like Oedipus, elicit the reader's criticism and who finally fall because of their anger.

The deaths and downfall of Meredith's central characters, however, are not fully the result of conscience or of noble behavior, as are the deaths and downfall of Clarissa and Antigone, and of most heroes of Greek tragedy. Like the downfall of Othello, for example, the defeat of Meredith's characters is the result of human limitation
allowed to play itself out without restraint. That the downfall of such characters results from what is seemingly preventable, but for each of these characters is apparently unpreventable, emphasizes the needlessness of their deaths. Meredith points to the fact that there is no need for Richard Feverel to die. Even after all Richard has done, he is handed a second chance for happiness; yet, ironically, Richard will accept on no terms but his own the two things he wants most in the world: Lucy's forgiveness and his father's love. Neither is there any need for Alvan's death or for Clotilda's demise. Clotilda's wretchedness is meaningless because it results from her desire to be comfortable, and not from her convictions or from her sense of honor. Meredith shows that all of the decisions Clotilda makes that are contrary to her true feelings, and that are based on her desire to pursue and to maintain her own comfort, result in anything but comfort for her. In Clotilda's demise, Meredith is saying that being comfortable in life is not a question of being taken care of, as Clotilda thinks it is; it is a question of being comfortable with one's self. Meredith is saying that there are no substitutes for doing what an individual knows is right. Clotilda can never be comfortable with herself because she makes decisions based on a false sense of security; thus, her demise points to human weakness and represents a lesson in how not to live.

Ford is different from Meredith in his tragic vision; the kinds of characters for which Ford creates sympathy are different from the kinds of characters for which Meredith creates sympathy. But Ford is like Meredith in his tragic vision in that he creates protagonists who are of high station; like Meredith, as well, Ford is interested in Providence. In fact, in The Good Soldier Ford devotes so much
discussion to Providence and to other aspects of Christianity, that
Mark Schorer demands to know, "What again, is the meaning of the
narrator's nearly phobic concern with Catholicism, or of the way in
which his slurs of Leonora are justified by her attachment to that
persuasion?" Ultimately, however, a main difference between Ford
and Meredith is that there is no cosmic order in Ford's fictive
world. Arthur Schopenhauer's definition of tragedy is helpful in
analyzing Ford's representation of Dowell's dilemma; Schopenhauer
defines tragedy as "The unspeakable pain, the wail of humanity, the
triumph of evil, the scornful mastery of chance, and the
irretrievable fall of the just and the innocent," an explanation
that applies to Dowell's own conception of his predicament in life.
But Dowell is less mastered by chance, than he is mastered by his own
limitations. Schopenhauer claims that "The representation of a great
misfortune is alone essential to tragedy" (328) and that "What gives
to all our tragedy, in whatever form it may appear, the peculiar
tendency towards the sublime is the awakening of the knowledge that
the world, life, can afford us no true pleasure, and consequently is
not worthy of our attachment. In this consists the tragic spirit: it
therefore leads to resignation" (213). Schopenhauer's theory of
tragedy is demonstrated in Ford, as all of the characters for whom
Ford creates sympathy experience a great misfortune; a spirit of
"resignation" resulting from "the knowledge that the world . . . life
can afford us no true pleasure . . . " characterizes Dowell's
attitude toward his own fate, as he ends up living with Nancy, the
girl who is mad, and who does not know who he is. Dowell himself
tells us that in effect he resigns from the world and that life
affords him no "true pleasure"; he states, "No one visits me, for I
visit no one. No one is interested in me, for I have no interests" (275).

Arthur Miller's theory of tragedy, like Schopenhauer's theory of tragedy, represents a radical departure from tradition; parts of Miller's definition of tragedy and his model of the tragic hero are helpful in analyzing Ford's characters. Interestingly, Miller's theory of tragedy was published the same year as Ford's novel. For Miller: "Tragedy arises when we are in the presence of a man who has missed accomplishing his joy. . . . In a word, tragedy is the most accurately balanced portrayal of the human being in his struggle for happiness. That is why we revere our tragedies in the highest, because they most truly portray us" (11). Miller's discussion of tragedy applies particularly to Ford, who represents all of his main characters as having "missed accomplishing" their "joy." Miller defines tragedy, stating: "You are witnessing a tragedy when the characters before you are wholly and intensely realized, to the degree that your belief in their reality is all but complete" (11); Miller adds, "The story in which they are involved is such as to force their complete personalities to be brought to bear upon the problem, to the degree that you are able to understand not only why they are ending in sadness, but how they might have avoided their end. The demeanor, so to speak, of the story is most serious--so serious that you have been brought to the state of outright fear for the people involved, as though for yourself" (11). Miller's use of "sad" to describe tragedy is a radical departure from Aristotelian tragedy, as well, in that "sad" would be insufficient adequately to express the magnitude of the suffering of the hero of Greek tragedy. "Sad" can be interpreted to mean a temporary condition that an
individual will thus eventually work out of; although "sadness" often carries with it a suggestion of forbearance, it is not associated with deep and lasting grief, while tragedy is. But Ford is analyzable in terms of Miller's theory of tragedy, which does associate "sad" with tragic, as Dowell tell the reader in the first sentence of the novel, "THIS IS THE SADDEST STORY I have ever heard" (1).

Ford is also like Miller in terms of his manipulating events to cause the reader constantly to question why Dowell and Ashburnham could not have avoided their ends. Another important way in which Miller departs from Aristotle is that he does not consider it necessary for the tragic hero to possess any particular character traits considered to be noble, such as having the courage of his convictions, or sacrificing his life for someone or for something that he believes is worth the cost, to elicit the reader's sympathy; a critical factor that determines tragic stature for Miller is the "intensity" with which an individual desires something. Miller states: "It matters not at all whether a modern play concerns itself with a grocer or a president if the intensity of the hero's commitment to his course is less than the maximum possible," and, "It matters not at all whether the hero falls from a great height or a small one, whether highly conscious or only dimly aware of what is happening, whether his pride brings the fall or an unseen pattern written behind clouds; if the intensity, the human passion to surpass his given bounds, the fanatic insistence upon his self-conceived role--if these are not present there can only be an outline of tragedy but no living thing."28 Ford also creates sympathetic effects in the manner proposed by Miller by guiding the reader
constantly to question why Dowell and Ashburnham could not have avoided their ends. That is, in assessing Dowell's final predicament, the reader constantly comes back to wondering why Dowell could not see what is so blatantly obvious to the reader, that Florence's actions almost never exactly coincide with the appearance she creates; the reader similarly questions why Ashburnham could not have found some other way to deal with his feelings for Nancy.

In spite of Dowell's frequent exclamations that no one could have done anything different from what he did, Ford guides the reader to conclude that everyone could have done something different from what he did do. Ford reveals Dowell's inadequacy in his inability to make connections between and among events that are obvious to the reader and to the other main characters in the novel, and Ford also reveals it in Dowell's constant state of ignorance of matters about which he should not always be ignorant. Dowell's predicament results from errors in judgment. Although Dowell is not able to interpret reality as he should be able to interpret it, Ford also reveals Dowell as good, which makes it nearly impossible to feel that he deserves his fate. The emphasis Ford places on external forces, particularly on other people and on events in determining an individual's fate, diminishes Dowell's responsibility for his predicament and elicits the reader's sympathy for him. Though Ford leaves Dowell isolated and alone, bewildered about his own fate and about the fate of others, Ford shows Dowell's thinking as flawed in his inability to determine any course of action other than the one that brings about the disaster; Dowell's situation speaks to the enigmatic aspect of all tragedy, a point about tragedy that Hoy makes. That is, from what Ford presents to us of Dowell's actions
and of the conclusions Dowell reaches, we can see that it is precisely those very actions in which Dowell engages and those very conclusions he reaches, that bring about his disaster. Yet, ironically, and paradoxically, Dowell cannot determine any other course of action than the ruinous course he pursues.

Like Meredith, Ford also focuses on the significance of the downfall of the hero and also of one of his other main characters, Ashburnham. Ford shows the downfall of Ashburnham to be without meaning. In spite of Dowell's telling the reader that Ashburnham could not have done things any differently, and in spite of Dowell's also telling him that Edward's sense of honor drove him to suicide, rather than to the alternative of having a relationship with Nancy, whom he regarded as a daughter, there is no lesson that we learn from his death. We do learn, of course, how unhappy Edward really was in his predicament, but the suicide seems cowardly. In the downfall of Dowell, Ford presents an individual who, partly due to the fault of others and partly through his own fault, is unable to extricate himself from what he comes to acknowledge is a futile situation. His defeat is a stasis, in that he does not progress spiritually, does not come to self-knowledge through his lived experience; in fact, Dowell does not do anything but exist from day to day. While the reader is critical of Dowell's inability ever to figure things out, he is also sympathetic to Dowell because he is a good person who does not deserve his fate.

Cyrus Hoy's Christian perspective on tragedy is important to our understanding of Ford and Meredith because it adequately explains the behavior of their protagonists and of some of their main characters. Accounting for what he calls the "mystery" (187) of
tragedy, Hoy bases his theories of tragedy, as well as his theory of comedy and tragicomedy, on what Saint Paul said in his epistle to the Romans "'For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do'" (187). Hoy argues that tragedy shows that behavior that conflicts with an individual's ideals, or with his intention to do what he believes to be right, is often part of the human condition. Explaining such paradoxical behavior Hoy states that "the sense of mystery that accompanies all great tragedy . . . inheres in the fact that tragic protagonists are driven to do what all the canons of morality, and of rationality, cry out against doing." (187).

Such paradoxical behavior, demonstrated in the actions of the characters who are impelled to perform actions that they know are wrong, is in evidence in Richard Feverel, The Tragic Comedians, The Good Soldier, and to various degrees in The Egoist. Sir Austin and Richard in Richard Feverel, Alvan and Clotilda in The Tragic Comedians, Willoughby in The Egoist and all of the main characters in The Good Soldier are variously driven by egoism, pride, anger, vanity, revenge, lust, or greed to behave in ways that they know or that they come to know to be wrong. Selfishness, the essence of all these character traits, is readily explainable in terms of its being part of human nature. But a character's persevering on a course for disaster, even when he senses, and, at times, does know that he is on such a course, is not readily explainable. These characters simply cannot resist the forces that impel them, even though many of them, particularly, Richard, Alvan, and Ashburnham, sense that persisting in their behavior will lead to their own destruction.
Meredith and Ford incorporate serious or tragic elements into the visions of *The Egoist*, *Richard Feverel*, *The Tragic Comedians*, and *The Good Soldier* to show that even the greatest potential for achievement that an individual possesses may not necessarily fulfill itself because of the limitation that coexists alongside his potential. Meredith and Ford use elements of tragedy to elicit the reader's sympathy for a character who experiences something of such magnitude that it is impossible by any means for him to change or to reverse those circumstances that result from that experience decidedly because what has been lost is invaluable and irreplaceable. Meredith and Ford also use serious elements, which are like tragic elements, as they elicit the reader's anxiety and concern for a character, but are different from tragic elements, since they do allow for some kind of satisfactory resolution, and thus do not fulfill their tragic potential. That is, serious elements eventually allow for an acceptable solution to the individual's predicament, since his situation is ameliorated or even resolved; tragic elements, however, do not allow for any means that could ameliorate, much less resolve, the individual's situation. In *The Egoist* Meredith combines comic elements with other serious non-comic elements; unlike *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians*, and unlike *The Good Soldier*, all of which contain elements of tragedy, *The Egoist* contains elements that are serious, but not tragic, as the novel has a comic ending. At the end of *The Egoist* conflicts are happily resolved, and Willoughby, who has been more like a villain than like a hero, commences his reformation, as he confronts the truth and learns the appropriate lessons from it; Clara, the female protagonist, and Laetitia, another main character, also confront the truth and learn the appropriate
lessons from it. Serious elements that expand Meredith's comic vision in *The Egoist* center around the treacherous aspects of Willoughby's character that reveal themselves whenever his will is thwarted: whenever the slightest hint of his not appearing in control presents itself, Willoughby becomes to various degrees dangerous to those most intimately connected with him. Thus, the reader responds with sympathy to Clara and to Laetitia, both of whom are subject to Willoughby's manipulation and cruelty.

In *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians*, however, conflicts are not happily resolved; few come to self-knowledge, and few feel any remorse for ignoble, if not, at times, immoral behavior. Meredith creates tragic effects in these novels by pointing to needless waste in the sense of an individual's unfulfilled potential. Meredith shows how people set themselves up for disaster when their behavior is motivated by the negative side of their nature. For example, in *Richard Feverel* the only results of Sir Austin's self-serving attempt to raise a perfect son are death and devastation, as Richard reveals his inability to cope with life, and behaves in ways that indirectly lead to the death of his cousin, Clare, and that directly lead to the death of his wife, Lucy, and to his own downfall. In *The Tragic Comedians*, as well, Alvan and Clotilda set in motion forces that bring about death and devastation. The disaster in the novel results from Alvan's lack of self-knowledge, from his arrogant and misguided belief in his ability to control people and events, from Clotilda's inability accurately to interpret situations and appropriately to respond to them, and from the fact that she lacks the courage of her convictions.
Like Meredith, Ford creates tragic effects to expand the comic perspective on his protagonist and to create sympathy for him. In *The Good Soldier*, Ford is particularly interested in an individual's search for truth; Ford uses elements of tragedy, such as the exploitation of goodness, to depict Dowell's inability to find the truth, and suicide to depict Ashburnham's inability to cope with the truth once he does find it. Having revealed Dowell's comic limitation, Ford further reveals Dowell as good, trusting, trustworthy, loyal, faithful, patient, and charitable, and thus, guides the reader to admire him. Dowell's difficulty in discovering truth and his indecisiveness about the appearance of things recalls Hamlet's search for truth and his indecisiveness about the appearance of things. But unlike Hamlet, who is given the facts by the ghost of his father, Dowell must discern the facts for himself. Dowell's inability to discover the truth is especially complicated by the great trust he places in those he must mistrust in order to get at the truth, and also by the strong bond of friendship he feels toward them.

Another technique Meredith and Ford use to create sympathy for particular characters is that they guide the reader to respond to the sense of impending doom that surrounds their protagonists. Whether or not that concern and anxiety the reader feels for a character's well being is what Aristotle meant by the "fear" that he says tragedy excites, that feeling of concern for a character affects one's sympathetic response toward him. Meredith, especially, guides the reader to experience a sense of urgency about the impending doom of Clara in *The Egoist*, of Richard and of Lucy in *Richard Feverel*, and of Alvan in *The Tragic Comedians*. While Ford also creates an
atmosphere that guides the reader to sense impending disaster for Dowell, he uses a method different from Meredith's to create that effect. Unlike Meredith, who writes another voice into his novel further to guide the reader, Ford creates that effect through Dowell, the main character and the narrator.

Thus, the reader's feelings of anxiety for Dowell result from what Dowell does and does not tell the reader. The reader feels troubled precisely because Dowell himself is not troubled by incidents and by comments that seem highly questionable, and that should trouble him, as for example, when Dowell waits for over two hours in the middle of the night for Florence to descend the rope ladder so that they can elope. The reader's feelings of what amount to protectiveness toward Dowell, who seems unable to protect himself, also create sympathy for him. That sense of impending doom the reader experiences for the protagonists and for some of the other main characters in Meredith and Ford creates tension. In revealing the inherent frailty of human nature and, consequently, an individual's potential for disaster, Meredith and Ford guide the reader sympathetically to respond to that tragic sense of seemingly avoidable, yet paradoxically unavoidable disaster Hoy discusses.
Part IV

Tragicomedy

Probably the most common method for interpreting a literary work is first to determine what genre it belongs to and then to attempt to work out the ways in which, when applicable, character, plot, theme, structure, and world view fit together to create meaning. Neoclassical rules for determining genre do not consider the mixing of disharmonious elements; yet, a realistic rendition of certain situations in life that an individual confronts and his response to those situations require a mixture of elements that are not harmonious. Shakespeare, for example, understood that premise and often does combine comic and tragic elements that neoclassical tradition has kept apart to create a mixed effect; today, as well, many authors create works of mixed genres. But, as I mentioned in a previous section on comedy, to discuss comedy and tragedy is difficult because absolutely to define comedy and tragedy is probably not possible; the numerous definitions of comedy and tragedy point that out. Still, it is appropriate to use the terms comic, tragic, and tragicomic in relation to Lawrence's *Sons And Lovers* and *Women in Love*, Meredith's *The Egoist*, *The Tragic Comedians*, and Richard Feverel, and Ford's *The Good Soldier*, whose authors do create specific effects that must be discussed in these terms; thus, in this Introduction I define what I mean by comic, tragic, and tragicomic and also how I am using these terms in my dissertation. Karl Guthke points out the difficulty in grasping these terms in observing that
"the comic and the tragic are largely a matter of the educational, 
cultural, historical, or philosophical point of view of the 
theatergoer, who threatens the scholar bent on neat classifications 
with the infinite relativity of terms" (67).

Comedy and tragedy, however, are not the only kinds of works 
that defy "neat classifications"; certain works in which their authors create special effects by combining opposing elements that tradition has kept apart also defy "neat classifications." In The Tragicomic Novel Randall Craig points out that the disharmonious elements neoclassical tradition has kept apart are inherent in life, and make the truest "mirror of nature"; Craig states, "In the face of prescriptive neoclassical literary theory, novelists subordinate principles of decorum to the demands of representation." Craig is saying that in spite of a literary tradition based on formulaic standards for creating specific kinds of works, novelists have paid less attention to these theories than they have to the call for accurate illustration. But not only novelists break the rules in response to the "demands of representation," authors throughout history have felt the need to break the rules to answer these "demands." For example, in discussing drama, seventeenth-century dramatist and critic Pierre Corneille states of the ancients and of the rules for drama: "I love to follow the rules, but far from being their slave, I enlarge them or narrow them down according to the demands of my subject . . . ." 

Throughout the ages authors have considered the effect of combining disharmonious elements, like comedy and tragedy, within a single work, and they have conceived the effects of mixing comic and
tragic elements within a single work. George Gascoigne, a sixteenth century critic and author who wrote a play called The Glasse of Governement, subtitles it "A tragicall Comedie"; Gascoigne states his reason for the subtitle, "A tragicall Comedie so entitled, bycause therein are handled aswells the rewardes for Vertues, as also the punishment for Vices." Although virtue and vice are respectively rewarded and punished, the outcome of Gascoigne's play is tragic, as he explains of two brothers "one is apprehended and executed for a robbery (even in sight of his brother) . . . that other whipped and banished . . . for fornication not withstanding the earnest sute of his brother for his pardon" (5).

Sir Philip Sidney, however, objects to mixing comic and tragic elements within the same work. Those who agree with Sidney often quote his famous objection to matching "horne Pipes and Funeralls." For Sidney, who views tragicomedy as an alternation of the comic and the tragic, rather than a combination of the comic and the tragic, the combining of such disharmonious elements is inappropriate.

But probably the earliest most comprehensive treatment of tragicomedy is that of Giambattista Guarini. Guarini, a late sixteenth century author and critic of the Italian Renaissance, is probably most well known for his tragicomic drama, Il Pastor Fido, and for his defense of tragicomedy. In discussing what tragicomedy takes from tragedy and what it takes from comedy to create a mixed effect, Guarini explains: "He who composes tragicomedy takes from tragedy its great persons but not its great actions, its verisimilar plot but not its true one, its movement of the feelings but not its disturbance of them, its pleasure but not its sadness, its danger but not its death; from comedy it takes laughter that is not excessive,
modest amusement, feigned difficulty, happy reversal, and above all
the comic order . . . ."33 Guarini defines tragicomedy as "the
mingling of tragic and comic pleasure, which does not allow hearers
to fall into excessive tragic melancholy or comic relaxation" (512);
he states that the resulting composition "does not inflict on us
atrocious events and horrible and inhuman sights, such as blood and
deaths, and which on the other hand, does not cause us to be so
relaxed in laughter that we sin against the modesty and decorum of a
well-bred man" (512). Guarini's observation that tragicomedy does
not allow the audience to experience either a completely tragic
response or a completely comic response is central to our
understanding of the methods Meredith and Ford use to create their
mixed response.

Samuel Johnson also endorses tragicomedy and argues that the
effects it creates are natural, if not traditional. Johnson is like
Corneille in his thinking about the need sometimes to break the rules
in response to "nature." In his "Preface To Shakespeare" Johnson
says of tragicomedy: "Shakespeare has united the powers of exciting
laughter and sorrow not only in one mind but in one composition . . .
That this is a practice contrary to the rules of criticism will be
readily allowed; but there is always an appeal open from criticism to
nature."34 Although Johnson does not see tragicomedy as a mixture of
comic elements and tragic elements as Guarini does, but as an
alternation of the comic and the tragic, he does acknowledge that
life is not usually either comic or tragic, a point apparently lost
on those critics of Meredith and especially of Ford, who separate the
novel's comic elements from its tragic elements to arrive at meaning.
Some ideas that are important to our understanding of the mixed effects Meredith and Ford create are those of Henrik Ibsen and Karl Guthke, as well as those of Meredith, whose theory of comedy, specifically in relation to his conception of humor, embraces a combination of disharmonious elements, and thus has implications for tragicomedy; Luigi Pirandello’s theory of humour is central to the reader’s understanding of the mechanics of the tragicomic effects both authors create, and Cyrus Hoy’s theory of tragicomedy is important to the reader’s understanding of the motivations of individuals toward whom both authors create laughter and sympathy. Ibsen, who focuses on the essence of tragicomedy, discusses the "contradiction" that characterize a human being's predicament; the world views that Meredith and Ford present in creating their special effects to elicit a mixed response are analyzable in terms of the "contradiction" that Ibsen sees as characterizing an individual's predicament. Ibsen states that his later writings "center" around "the contradiction between ability and desire, between will and possibility, the intermingled tragedy and comedy in humanity and in the individual"; Ibsen sees the potential for comedy and for tragedy in both contradictions. The ways in which Meredith and Ford represent oppositions to create a complex response are analyzable in terms of Ibsen's description of these contradictions an individual encounters.

While Ibsen focuses on the essence of tragicomedy, Guthke focuses on the mechanics of the tragicomic response. Guthke explains: "All of us will have experienced the involuntary freezing of a smile when stark reality suddenly breaks through the veneer of comic harmlessness. And yet, this is not always and not necessarily
a matter of either --or... " (57). In further explanation, Guthke points out that "on the one hand, the tragic implication adds poignancy to the comic in giving it more depth or more obstacles to 'overcome' by laughter (57)," but, "On the other hand, the undeniably comic constellation gives acumen to the bitterness of tragedy. And both kinds of interaction happen at once, depend on each other, and progressively and mutually increase each other" (58). Guthke emphasizes that "the reciprocity of the interaction of the tragic and the comic is essential" (58). A key point to understanding the complexity of the mixed response that Meredith and Ford create is in Guthke's observation that in their interaction comic and tragic elements "progressively and mutually increase each other." The mixed response, that is, the tragicomic effects Meredith and Ford create are analyzable in terms of Guthke's conception of tragicomedy. In further explaining the tragicomic response, Guthke states: "Only when both directions in the heightening of effect are integrated can we speak of the complex and yet simple phenomenon of the tragicomic" (59).

Meredith is like Ibsen and Guthke, as well as like Beattie and Cassirer; although Meredith discusses various kinds of laughter as comic responses, his practices have implications for tragicomedy in their embrace of opposites. Ibsen, who mixes tragic and comic elements, proposes that tragicomedy is a distinct genre; Meredith's conception of humour, an aspect of the comic which he briefly discusses in his Essay On Comedy, and his practice in The Egoist, The Tragic Comedians, and Richard Feverel is not different from Ibsen's conception of tragicomedy. Meredith's discussion of humour presupposes a mixed response, as demonstrated in the effects he
creates in *The Egoist*, *The Tragic Comedians*, and *Richard Feverel*. Using Don Quixote to explain the reader's humorous response, Meredith states, "Heart and mind laugh at Don Quixote, and still you brood on him. The juxtaposition of the knight and squire is a comic conception, the opposition of their natures most humorous" (83). Meredith conceives "the loftiest moods of humor" as "fusing the Tragic sentiment with the Comic narrative" (43-44); thus, Meredith's conception of comedy is really a conception of the tragicomic, which fuses together those two opposite responses. All of Meredith's novels, however, are not tragicomic; *The Egoist*, for example, ends happily as the protagonist, who is also the villain in the piece, begins a reformation, the ramifications of which are that things turn out to everyone's satisfaction.

The mechanics of the tragicomic responses that Meredith, as well as Ford, create are analyzable in terms of Pirandello's theory of humor; Pirandello explains what triggers the mixed response and how it works. Pirandello's theory of humor, which is based on the opposition between an individual's initial perception and the feeling that arises after reflection upon that perception, explains the mechanics of the complex response that Meredith and Ford elicit in their combination of comic and tragic elements. For Pirandello, the comic results when an individual has a "perception of the opposite,"36 that is, a perception that something is the opposite of what he would normally expect it to be. Pirandello explains that if an individual reflects beyond his initial perception, a feeling arises that is the opposite of that perception; while the individual still retains the original perception, he simultaneously experiences its opposite feeling. Pirandello calls the individual's mixed
response to his original perception and to his reflective thinking, the "feeling of the opposite," his explanation of humor. Pirandello's example clearly elucidates the point: "I see an old lady whose hair is dyed and completely smeared with some kind of horrible ointment; she is all made up in a clumsy and awkward fashion and is all dolled-up like a young girl. I begin to laugh" (113).

Pirandello explains that he begins to laugh because he perceives that "she is the opposite of what a respectable old lady should be" (113). He points out that he "could stop here at this initial and superficial comic reaction" (113). But he explains that if he reflects beyond this perception that "perhaps this old lady finds no pleasure in dressing up like an exotic parrot, and that perhaps she is distressed by it and does it only because she pitifully deludes herself into believing that, by making herself up like that and by concealing her wrinkles and gray hair, she may be able to keep the love of her much younger husband" (113), then his laughter is blocked. Pirandello argues that although he still retains his perception that she is ludicrous, he simultaneously feels pity for her; that newfound feeling that also retains the individual's initial response to his perception, Pirandello calls the "feeling of the opposite."

Pirandello's explanation of humor can be applied to Meredith and to Ford, who manipulate their narrators, characters, and events, so that the reader perceives, assimilates, and responds to opposing stimuli. Pirandello's theory cannot be applied to Lawrence, who does not combine comic and tragic elements to create a mixed response. Lawrence creates sympathy mostly for his female protagonists and for some of his other main female characters, who are subject to
particular behavior of his male characters or who are influenced by their thinking; Lawrence comically represents the thinking and actions of these male characters. For example, Lawrence creates sympathy for Miriam and for Ursula because they are subject to the self-deceived notions of Paul and Birkin; in creating sympathy for these female characters, Lawrence further heightens the comic limitation of his male characters; thus, there is not a mixed response to one individual. That is, Lawrence nearly always guides the reader to sympathize with the women in his novels and to criticize the men in them. Pirandello’s example of humor shows that the individual reflects upon his perception and imagines circumstances that simultaneously result in a response opposite from that of his initial perception. While Pirandello’s example points to the reader, who reflects upon his perception and then creates imaginary circumstances that simultaneously result in a response opposite from his perception, Meredith and Ford themselves manipulate situations and events to guide the reader to a mixed response. Both authors do combine comic effects with serious effects as in *The Egoist*, or with tragic effects as in *Richard Feverel*, *The Tragic Comedians*, and *The Good Soldier*, and thus oblige the reader simultaneously to respond to opposing stimuli. Application of Pirandello’s theory to a commonly cited example of comedy in Ford’s *The Good Soldier* illustrates how Ford creates a mixed response. The comic situation features Dowell’s sitting downstairs wearing a wrist cord that is supposedly also attached to Florence’s wrist, so that in the event her room is burglarized, she can merely give the cord a tug and Dowell can run to the rescue; all the while, of course, Florence is deceiving him in her bedroom. The scene is obviously comic,
risibly so. But in the midst of the reader's comic perception of Dowell, he must consider the fact that Dowell really believes Florence's lies about her severe heart condition that could claim her life if she exerts herself at all, that Dowell's every waking moment is spent in thinking of ways to keep Florence from getting upset about anything, and that Dowell really does trust Florence. It never crosses Dowell's mind not to believe and not to trust Florence. Dowell's trust in Florence and her callous treatment of him impede the reader's full comic response to his behavior because the reader also feels sorry for Dowell, who is, in fact, acting nobly. Noble intentions and behavior do not elicit laughter; they elicit admiration. Although Dowell does make himself ridiculous to keep Florence happy, and thus elicits the reader's laughter, he simultaneously inspires the reader's sympathy for Dowell because he is doing what he really believes is helping to save Florence's life. The reader can recall Karl Guthke's observation that "All of us will have experienced the involuntary freezing of a smile when stark reality suddenly breaks through the veneer of comic harmlessness"; Guthke perfectly describes the reader's reaction to his reflection of the real circumstances of Dowell's apparently comic situation. The reader comes simultaneously to see and to respond to two opposing perspectives on Dowell, one of which is critical of him and elicits laughter at him, and the other of which is sympathetic toward Dowell, and elicits pity for him.

Like Pirandello's theory, which is important to the reader's understanding of the mechanics of his mixed response, Hoy's theory of tragicomedy is important to the reader's understanding of the mixed effects Meredith and Ford create in their novels because it accounts
for the motivations of their characters. For Hoy, the essence of
tragicomedy, as of comedy and of tragedy, is "the dual nature of man"
(18), an idea which pervades Meredith's Richard Feverel and The
Tragic Comedians, and, to some degree, Ford's The Good Soldier. Hoy
terms those plays tragicomedies "which probe so deeply into the
incongruities of human fate as to bring them close upon tragedy" (7).
From his Christian perspective, tragicomedies "make vivid the
contradictions that confront mankind on every level of experience,
which, he explains, "extend all the way from the mysterious clash of
the urge to live with the necessity to die, and the irreconcilable
claims of the spirit and the flesh, to the daily consciousness that
life as it is lived affords but a dim approximation to life as,
ideally conceived, it ought to be lived" (7).

While the reaction to the mixing of disharmonious elements
ranges from those who consider such a mixture artistically
inappropriate to those who consider such a mixture the truest "mirror
of nature," it is clear that throughout history certain authors have
intentionally combined disharmonious elements to create mixed effects
that cannot otherwise be created. It is also clear that in mixing
the comic with the tragic, an author can preclude the possibility of
the reader's arriving at definitive conclusions about particular
characters. For example, that so many critics consider Dowell tragic
and are sympathetically drawn to his goodness, while other critics
consider Dowell comic and are critically drawn to his limitations,
makes it apparent that Ford's whole pattern is purposefully complex,
since it will not allow the reader to make easy judgments about
Dowell's behavior and about the predicament in which he finds
himself; Ford must have known that simultaneously presenting opposite
perspectives on an individual would necessarily complicate the reader's response to him. The reader's inability to arrive at easy conclusions about Dowell parallels his inability to arrive at easy conclusions about life. Ford makes it impossible to conclude exactly where Dowell goes wrong; the reader cannot conclude that Dowell is wrong to trust too much anymore than he can conclude that he is wrong to think the best of Ashburnham, whom he believes is his best friend. Yet, Ford guides the reader to see that in spite of their benign appearance, Florence and Edward are the two people in all the world that Dowell cannot trust.

Meredith's pattern, however, is not as complex as Ford's, since Meredith does allow the reader to form judgments about his central characters. Unlike Ford, Meredith sees the limitation inherent in human nature as the chief cause of the individual's downfall, and thus places the major cause of an individual's downfall upon him. But though the reader can identify the specific ways in which Meredith's characters go wrong, they do not do everything wrong; nevertheless, disaster is the end that awaits all of them. But both authors make the complex yet obvious point that life is not always easy or simple. The central premise upon which Meredith and Ford build their tragicomic visions is that the human predicament is the result of human nature, and though an individual can, to some degree, control his natural tendencies, he cannot change his nature or control other people. Meredith's Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians and Ford's The Good Soldier are works in which both authors combine comic elements with tragic elements to represent the complexity of the human predicament as the individual struggles to achieve happiness; both authors reveal that complexity by using comic
elements to point to an individual's weakness, his limitation, and tragic elements to point to the waste of the individual's potential. The tragicomic perspective combines a comic perspective, in which the individual is able to adapt to his own inherent potential and limitation, with a tragic perspective, in which the individual must contend with the potential and limitation that life imposes upon him, in spite of his desire to transcend his limitations.

One of the ways both authors create that kind of mixed effect is through the narrator, whose attitude determines the tone of the work. Using a persona to guide the reader's response, Meredith and Ford create special effects by causing the reader simultaneously to respond to contradictory impulses; the reader must respond to the individual's comic limitation and to his tragic waste of potential. The reader's response is neither fully responsive to the tragic effects of the work, nor fully responsive to the comic effects of the work, but is somewhere in between sympathy and laughter. The reader feels uncomfortable in the moment of laughter, whether it is benevolent laughter or critical laughter, because of the presence of tragic elements that prevent an unencumbered comic response, as the reader feels unable completely to render a sympathetic response at that moment because of the presence of comic elements that prevent an unencumbered tragic response. Like Ibsen, Meredith and Ford focus on the discrepancies, the oppositions, and the "contradictions," that manifest themselves "in humanity and in the individual," that only a union of disharmonious elements can depict.

Meredith and Ford create that kind of mixed response in the reader that Pirandello describes by limiting the degree of sympathy the reader feels, while simultaneously heightening his comic
response. A character's comic limitation can be seen as a capacity for negative behavior that results in that individual's engaging in particular actions that can have deleterious results. Meredith and Ford use two chief techniques to limit the reader's sympathy and to increase his comic response: they create characters whose limitations are demonstrated in their capacities for negative behavior, such as an inclination toward anger, jealousy, or lust; in addition, these characters do not attain self-knowledge and do not elicit admiration or respect because of their refusal or their inability to acknowledge their own limitations. The end result is that these characters are unable or unwilling to learn from their mistakes. In creating these severe character limitations, Meredith and Ford prevent their central characters from attaining the stature that would be required were the work to be considered a tragedy. While both authors create sympathy for what an individual could or should have had, done, or been, they also make the reader aware, whether critically aware or benevolently aware, of that individual's frailties that limit the degree to which he realizes his potential. Although an accurate assessment of a character's potential would necessarily include his incapacity, Meredith and Ford lead the reader to conclude that characters like Richard Feverel, Alvan, Ashburnham, and to a fair extent, Dowell, should have been able to control their limitation. Richard and Alvan are ultimately defeated because of anger and pride; Ashburnham is defeated because he is unable to control his lust and also his feelings for Nancy, and thus rationalizes his behavior to himself; and Dowell, though a complicated character to interpret, because of his goodness and because of the large role Ford assigns to other people in his deception, in part refuses and in part is unable to
question the appearance of things that do not seem quite right to him.

Meredith and Ford limit the reader's sympathy for their protagonists and other main characters by preventing them from achieving wisdom through suffering; while Meredith and Ford often allow their characters deeply to regret their actions, they do not achieve the degree of self-knowledge, if any, that would be required of a tragic hero. An individual's understanding of his error affects the degree to which the reader is sympathetic to him. For example, although Oedipus, Lear, and Othello are each to various degrees responsible for bringing about the disasters that befall them, they come to self-knowledge. They are repentant for their actions and they would change things if they could. The reader feels sympathy for another who, though he is responsible for his situation, is sorrowful and repents his actions; the reader feels pity for the despair and sense of hopelessness such characters display in their inability to make things right. In Richard Feverel and particularly in The Tragic Comedians Meredith focuses on the degree, if any, to which people really do know themselves; in both novels Meredith's characters are defeated in large part because of their lack of self-knowledge. In Richard Feverel Meredith shows that Richard's over-confidence in his ability to redeem Bella is misplaced, as he ends up himself in need of redemption; Richard finds himself in such a predicament because he does not know himself.

Meredith and Ford further heighten the comic limitation of their characters by showing them as consistently lacking forethought and as living for the moment, character traits that lead to disastrous consequences, as Richard, Alvan, and Ashburnham
demonstrate. Another technique both authors use to heighten the comic limitation of their characters is to have them show that they think they know what will make them happy and to have them zealously strive to achieve that end; what these characters reveal, however, is that they really do not know what will make them happy because they do not know themselves. In addition, Meredith and Ford heighten comic limitation with the standard technique of presenting characters who are puffed up with what they believe to be their own greatness, but which proves to be its opposite, as Alvan and Sir Austin demonstrate. In *The Tragic Comedians* Meredith explores whether or not a person in crisis responds in a given situation in the way he believes he would respond in that situation. Meredith shows that neither of the protagonists in the novel knows himself; and, thus, neither of them behaves as he believes he would behave in crisis.

The reader's mixed response to these characters results in his feeling bewildered and bemused by them. In *The Good Soldier*, as well, Ford creates such a mixed response to Ashburnham, a main character. While Ford creates sympathy for Ashburnham in depicting him as a pleasant and likable fellow, and in his wanting to do the right thing concerning Nancy, he also simultaneously heightens Ashburnham's comic limitation; Ashburnham's comic limitation manifests itself in his delusions that his affairs are somehow good and noble because of what he believes are the depths of his feelings for the women involved, and also in his notion that once he touches a woman, even to touch her hands, she has an "irrevocable claim--to be seduced" (208). Ford guides the reader to see that Edward's convincing himself that all women, except for his own wife, have "irrevocable claims" upon his sexuality, is only self-serving
nonsense and adultery. Ford reveals that Edward is completely focused on pursuing selfish interests, to the extent that he deceives himself that they are ennobling rather than debasing. In having Dowell narrate Edward's suicide as if it were just another ho hum task to be attended to in his daily routine, Ford further limits its tragic impact. Dowell elicits a mixed response through Ford's manipulation of narrative tone. Ford has Dowell narrate a suicide, an event usually presented to elicit sympathy from the reader, in a manner that distracts the reader from the event and refocuses his attention on the narrator's discussion of the suicide. In guiding the reader simultaneously to respond to the fact that Ashburnham has killed himself, as well as to Dowell's mundane and chatty method of narrating the suicide, Ford creates a mixed response; that is, Ford causes the reader to have a tragic response to Ashburnham because he feels driven to kill himself, and also to have a comic response to Dowell's method of narrating that suicide.

In Richard Feverel Meredith also intentionally creates a tragicomic response by having Richard leave his wife for over a year; the critics, however, do not see the separation as intended by Meredith to create a mixed response. They do not see that Meredith lessens the tragic impact of the situation by highlighting its comedy. Meredith's method is to guide the reader to respond comically to Richard's limitation, as Meredith creates a high degree of critical distance from him, that results in the reader's belittling him as foolish: the reader is critical of Richard and mocks him for his almost complete lack of self-knowledge, which allows him to delude himself about his qualification to bring about the reclamation of a prostitute, when for some time he is not even
aware that Bella is a prostitute. Meredith also intends the reader's critical response to Richard's comic capacity, which is highlighted in his lack of experience with the world, and with his apparently forgetting that his own virtue is not sterling, specifically, in relation to his propensity to lie. The critics consider this separation between Richard and Lucy to be a fault in his narrative technique. Lionel Stevenson's criticism of Meredith is typical; he states "Though he offers many reasons for it--Sir Austin's orders, Adrian's advice, Lucy's insistence, Richard's quixotic ideals, and the machinations of Lord Mountfalcon--nevertheless the reader not only questions the probability of it but also loses too much of his sympathy for Richard." The reader does lose a good deal of sympathy for Richard; but Meredith manipulates the situation so that the reader will lose a good deal of sympathy for him. Since all of the time Richard is away, he is having an affair with a prostitute, whom he had hoped to reclaim, the reader would have to assume that everyone except the author is aware of the magnitude of Richard's action; in other words, the situation Meredith sets up here, which is often considered the pivotal point in the text, must have been intentionally created. To charge Meredith with a fault here the reader must assume that Meredith alone is unaware of the disgusting nature of Richard's action, of its foolishness, and of how it will impact the reader's response to Richard, especially in light of the fact that Lucy has given birth to their son during Richard's absence, and that Richard throws away unopened all letters from his father that told of the existence of Richard's son. Rather, it seems that Meredith, who is greatly interested in what motivates people to behave as they do, purposefully allows Richard's natural tendencies
to play themselves out to reveal how his grotesque shortcomings manifest themselves in his capacities for arrogance and for self-deceit.

In revealing that Richard's actions are motivated by anger, jealousy, pride, and revenge, negative traits that all of us to various degrees possess, Meredith reveals motives that the reader can understand. But though the reader emotionally understands Richard's motives, intellectually, the reader repudiates his actions. The reader also waits in vain for Richard to "grow up," finally to show some signs of maturity, by demonstrating that he has responsibilities as a husband and as a father. But Meredith does not allow that to happen. Meredith creates comic effects by revealing Richard as self-deluded in his belief that he has a full understanding of life and is, therefore, fit to instruct others; all he reveals, however, is his hypocrisy. Richard shows that he knows almost nothing either of life or of his own inherent weaknesses. Meredith creates tragic effects, as well, by revealing Richard's comic limitation as a capacity for the impulsive behavior, and finally for the jealousy that causes him to behave in ways that bring about his own downfall, as well as those of the ones he holds dearest. Meredith creates a tragicomic effect by combining these comic and tragic elements to reveal how disaster can result when an individual allows what Meredith calls "the animal side" of his nature to control his behavior.

The Tragic Comedians represents another example of the way Meredith mixes comic and tragic effects to depict human beings as caught between limitation and potential, while struggling to achieve happiness. In their characters and in their actions Alvan and
Clotilda, the protagonists, reveal their tragic potential and their comic limitation. Like Richard Feverel, Alvan and Clotilda lack self-knowledge, are unable to face the truth, and Alvan is self-deluded about his ability to control events. Alvan demonstrates Ibsen's comic contradiction between will and possibility, as he is caught between his will to control events and the impossibility of his being able to do so. Alvan does not know himself, although he thinks he knows himself very well. While Clotilda does know of her inability to stand alone against her family and even acknowledges as much, she cannot face another aspect of her nature which brings about her undoing. Specifically, Clotilda is more interested in doing what makes her comfortable than in doing what she believes is right; selfishness, then, proves her greatest failing, and finally brings about her downfall. Ironically, for all of Clotilda's striving to do what she believes will make her comfortable, she ends up in misery. The end result of Alvan's egoism and Clotilda's selfishness is that he dies and she lives a life of misery and regret.

In creating the mixed vision of the novel, Meredith shows that sometimes what an individual thinks will bring him happiness and what he desperately tries to achieve to realize that end does not necessarily bring about happiness; oftentimes, ironically, an individual's attempt to achieve happiness achieves its opposite effect. In The Tragic Comedians, as in Richard Feverel and Ford's The Good Soldier, the tragic potential of the action is limited by the comic limitation of the characters; they evince their limitation in their responses to reality as they attempt to achieve what they think will bring them happiness. The degree of sympathy the reader feels toward Alvan is lessened by his comic response to his
limitation that expresses itself in behavior that is oftentimes motivated by less than noble impulses. In The Tragic Comedians Meredith also focuses on what really motivates people and on the degree to which people are honest with themselves about their real motivations, as the actions of Alvan and of Clotilda reveal. Meredith shows, as well, that at times people who have been badly or unfairly treated by others and who are deserving of sympathy, are driven to behave in ways that make them more reprehensible than those who behaved unjustly toward them, as Alvan, as well as Richard Feverel, demonstrates.

Unlike Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians, The Egoist is not tragicomic. The novel has a happy ending, as conflicts are either resolved or are presented in a manner to lead the reader to conclude that they will be resolved; such an ending usually closes works of comedy. The Egoist, however, does contain some disturbing elements. Meredith orchestrates situations and events to create tension between the reader's critically comic response to Willoughby's egoism, vanity, and self-delusion, and his sympathy for Willoughby's victims. If Willoughby's egoism, which manifests itself in a constant paranoia with the world's opinion of him, were only self-directed the reader would have a comic response to his limitation. But Willoughby's actions, the result of his comic limitation, also cause the reader to feel anxiety and sympathy for Clara and Laetitia, who become, though initially unaware, the victims of his machinations. But the disturbing moments in the novel are eliminated as conflicts are finally resolved; Meredith has his narrator conclude upon the note "All's Well That Ends Well."
While *The Egoist* is essentially a comedy with a few mixed moments, Ford's *The Good Soldier*, like Meredith's *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians*, depicts a mixed vision of life; in Ford, as in Meredith, comic elements are combined with tragic elements to create a mixed response in the reader. Ford creates sympathy for John Dowell, his protagonist, by revealing him as caught in Ibsen's gap between "ability and desire." Dowell is not fully tragic, primarily because he finally does not achieve self-knowledge or wisdom; nor is he fully comic, primarily because of his noble traits and his good intentions. Although Dowell seems to achieve self-knowledge at the end of the novel, and also during those moments when he speaks with retrospective wisdom, in the final analysis Dowell dismisses as erroneous what little knowledge of himself and the world that he does attain. As a result, Dowell does not correctly assess any situation, and he continually deludes himself with the same lies; the end result is a predictable repetition of his same errors.

The tragicomic visions of Meredith and Ford present the clash between the forces of life and the desire and will of the individual, who is inherently flawed, to act upon those forces to realize his full potential and to achieve happiness. Both authors show that to achieve happiness the individual must first recognize his own limitations and then face them if there is to be any chance for him to fulfill his potential. Dowell, for example, whose better nature rules him, is prevented from realizing his potential because he cannot really accept the fact that people, specifically his wife and his best friend, are not necessarily guided to do the right thing just because there is a right thing to do. Although it may appear to the individual that his success in realizing his plans is certain,
his own inherent failings, which he is unknowingly unable to control, work against him; thus, as life gets the upper hand, as it invariably must, the individual responds with greater intensity, misguidedly believing that a greater effort rather than a modified response, will bring about the desired results. In the mixed visions that Meredith and Ford create, the reader could term the uncontrollable forces in life that an individual must confront as the unstoppable force, and the unknowingly ill-prepared individual determined to surmount life's forces, as the immovable object, since he does not alter his mind-set from a particular course of action. But in life, as in physics, something must give way; Meredith and Ford show that it must always be the individual who gives way. Meredith and Ford present a mixed vision that reveals the fragility of the individual as he confronts the unknown in himself and in life.
Notes


4 Cyrus Hoy states that "comedy, tragedy, and tragicomedy are concerned with deviations from the ideal--any ideal." *The Hyacinth Room: An Investigation Into the Nature of Comedy, Tragedy, & Tragicomedy* (N. Y.: Knopf, 1964) 93-4.


9 In his essay, *The English Novel, From the Earliest Days to the Death of Joseph Conrad* (Philadelphia: Lippincott; 1929), 99, Ford states, "For myself, I am no moralist: I consider that if you do what you want you must take what you get for it and that if you deny yourself things you will be better off than if you don't." It may be that Ford limits the degree of sympathy the reader feels for Ashburnham's suicide, which he accomplishes by presenting the incident comically, precisely because Ashburnham has consistently chosen "to do what [he wants]," although Ford has Dowell offer many transparent reasons why Ashburnham is not to be held accountable for his actions. And Lawrence, in response to his friend George Neville, who suggested that he modify a bedroom scene in *The Rainbow*, said, "Don't you see that we must each of us be prepared to take the responsibility for our own actions? How can anyone complain so long as the narrator tells the truth? And suppose their puny feelings are hurt, or, what is probably nearer the mark, they get a pain in their
pride, what does it matter so their lesson is given to the world and
they shall have taught others to avoid the mistakes they made?" (George H. Neville, "Recollections of a 'Pagan'", D. H. Lawrence, Interviews and Recollections, ed. Norman Page, 2 Vols. [Totowa: Barnes & Noble, 1981] I: 42). If what Lawrence states of the narrator's role in *Women in Love* can be generally applied to his other works, it is apparent that in having his narrators in *Sons And Lovers* and in *Women in Love* criticize respectively Paul Morel's anti-feminism, as well as Birkin's and Gerald's anti-feminism, Lawrence intends that the reader see these males as wrong; it is apparent, as well, that the anti-feminist interpretations of *Sons And Lovers* and of *Women in Love* result from a lack of attention to what the narrator says about the principal male and female characters in these novels.

10 Hobbes argues, "Sudden Glory, is the passion which maketh
those grimaces called LAUGHTER; and is caused either by some sudden
act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some
deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly
applaud themselves. And it is incident most to them, that are
conscious of the fewest abilities in themselves; who are forced to
keep themselves in their own favour, by observing the imperfections
of other men. And therefore much laughter at the defects of others,
is a sign of pusillanimity" (*Leviathan* [New York: E. P. Dutton, 1950]
46).

11 I have not found much specific information on Lawrence's,
Meredith's, and Ford's background reading in comic theory. Up until
now Lawrence has not been acknowledged for his comic capacity; Norman
Douglas comments, "Nor had he a trace of humour" ("'An Inspired
Provincial,'", Interviews and Recollections, ed. Norman Page, 2 Vols.
Lawrence had a long-time relationship throughout his adolescence and
much of his adult life, and who was also the prototype for Miriam in
*Sons And Lovers*, discusses Lawrence's "Literary Formation," the title
of the fourth chapter in her book on Lawrence, D. H. Lawrence: A
Personal Record (R. T. [Jessie Chambers] 2nd. ed. [N. Y.: Barnes &
Noble, 1965); the comic authors and works that Chambers states
Lawrence read are Dickens (95), Swift (99), Meredith (110), Don
Quixote and Sterne's Sentimental Journey (122). In relation to
Meredith, Chambers states, "We read Meredith, in poetry as well as
prose--Love in the Valley had a special significance for him" (110).
Chambers does not name which of Meredith's works of "prose" that
Lawrence read, nor does she say whether or not Lawrence had read
Meredith's Essay On Comedy. Interestingly, Chambers claims that
Lawrence "was loud in his denunciation of Carlyle's affectation of a
German style, but he insisted on my reading the book" (101);
Meredith, who very much admired Carlyle, states his intention in a
personal letter to a friend, to parody Carlyle in *The Egoist*. See
note no. 28 in chapter 2 on Meredith. At the end of her chapter on
Lawrence's "Literary Formation," Chambers states, "This account of
Lawrence's reading makes no claim to be exhaustive. It is merely an
attempt to indicate the nature and scope of his reading as far as
possible in the order in which it occurred. He certainly read much
more than is indicated here; he seemed to read everything. His
vitality and interest were the same in the sphere of books as in other departments of life. He took in eagerly all that came to his hand, shaping it according to his need, and sharing his zest with characteristic generosity" (123).

It is common knowledge that Meredith was very fond of German writers, particularly of Goethe and Heine, a partiality usually attributed to his German education; Constantin Photiades' *George Meredith, His Life, Genius, & Teaching* tr. Arthur Price (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913) states of Meredith's background reading in comedy "Already captivated by the dramatists contemporary with Shakespeare, he did not neglect those authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who wished to inaugurate a school of English comedy: Ben Jonson, Dryden, Wycherley, Congreve and Sheridan . . ." 35). Photiades adds, "Whoever seeks to ascertain what authors have influenced Meredith, let him not linger with Fielding nor with Richardson. But before all, let him think of . . . that fantastic and eccentric Carlyle" (184). In considering the possible influence of Jonson, Dryden, Wycherley, Congreve, and Sheridan upon Meredith, the reader is aware that though Dryden held different views at different times in his career, at one time he was against mixing comic and tragic elements within a given work; it would seem, then, that he probably did not influence Meredith's mixed visions; Wycherley and Congreve, however, whose plays are often based upon deception, might well have influenced Meredith, who is particularly interested in deception of others and also the point at which deception is self-deception. And Carlyle is comic in his playfulness, but has no ostensible comic theory. In considering Ford's background reading in comic theory, the reader has Ford's own essay, *The English Novel, From the Earliest Days to the Death of Joseph Conrad* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1929), which mainly focuses on those novelists, many of whom wrote works of comedy, that he detested; he refers to the novelists "from Fielding to Meredith" (90) as "nuvelists" (90); he especially detested Fielding, Thackeray, and Meredith.


18 In discussing comedy, Hirst claims that "Theorists have not acknowledged, until quite lately, the extent to which the spectator shares in the spectacle . . .Reveling is both unrespectful and disrespectful by nature" (14); in light of the fact that Hirst devotes discussion to Meredith's essay on comedy, it is surprising that he does not mention that Meredith emphasizes the role of the audience in a comedy.


20 Although some twentieth century authors, such as Ionesco, and perhaps Beckett, view comedy as more pessimistic than tragedy, such a world view represents a radical departure from traditional concepts of comedy that recognize a cosmic order in the universe put into place by a higher being, and that presuppose man knows and understands his place in the universe; I use the term comedy in its traditional sense in that to different degrees Lawrence, Meredith, and Ford share that view.

21 None of these authors wrote his autobiography; I could find no specific information on Meredith's and Ford's background reading in tragic theory, though Lawrence was well read in German tragic theory. In The Consciousness of D. H. Lawrence: An Intellectual Biography (Kansas: UP, 1986) Daniel J. Schneider states that between 1905 and 1908 Lawrence was "strongly influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche" (47).

22 In his An Apology For Poetry, edited with an Introduction and notes by Forrest G. Robinson, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970) 45, sixteenth-century author Sir Philip Sidney is typical in stating of "the high and excellent tragedy" that it "openeth the greatest wounds and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue; that maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humors; that with stirring the affects of admiration and commiseration teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilden roofs are builded . . .". And George Chapman, seventeenth-century dramatist and critic, is typical of his time as well in stating of tragedy that "material instruction, elegant and sententious excitation to virtue, and deflection from her contrary" are "the soul, limbs, and limits of an authentical tragedy" (The Plays Of George Chapman, edited with introduction and notes, Thomas Marc Parrott, The Tragedies, Vol. I [New York: Russell & Russell, 1961] 77. Although "the sententious excitation to virtue" does not mean that all didactic works are tragedies, that is the prevailing view of the effect of tragedy among sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century theorists.


25 J. B. Priestly, *George Meredith* (London: Macmillan, 1926) 80. Priestley, considered Meredith's official biographer, argues that Meredith is not a pantheist, but "a pure pagan"; I will discuss his views in the Meredith Chapter.


Critics of George Meredith's novels are for the most part either his enthusiasts or his opponents; that is, Meredith's critics either applaud his novels or they find fault with them, particularly in relation to Meredith's narrative methods. In fact, many of Meredith's supporters find fault with his use of narrative voice; in effect they apologize for what they perceive as faulty narrative techniques within a particular novel while praising the work as a whole. Some critics complain, as well, that Meredith combines the disharmonious elements of comedy and of tragedy. And, like many of Lawrence's critics who turn to his biography to make claims against his work, some of Meredith's critics turn to his biography to make claims against his work. Interestingly, many of those critics who are receptive to Meredith's novels, as well as many of those who object to what they perceive as his faults, make their arguments based on Meredith's biography. The end result of that critical approach that seeks to explain the intrusive personae in Meredith's fiction in terms of his personal life is that oftentimes Meredith's novels, like Lawrence's novels, are misinterpreted and/or misunderstood.

It seems to me that critics have either failed to recognize or to consider that Meredith has specific purposes and intentions in
creating highly vocal, even verbose, narrators. Like some critics of Ford's *The Good Soldier*, many of Meredith's critics are impatient with his narrators who occasionally seem to ramble and to digress from their narratives. Meredith's reviews from his contemporaries, like his reviews from his present day critics, were mixed though they tended toward the extreme; that is, Meredith's critics for the most part either vilified him as in effect an obtrusive didactic nag or they extolled him for his originality and for his perspicacity concerning human nature. Like some of Lawrence's critics, some critics contemporary with Meredith found fault with his narrative style in general terms without citing particular works or specific examples to illustrate their points; that tactic renders their arguments as assertions and also makes it very difficult to respond. Margaret Oliphant, for example, argues in general terms against what she describes as Meredith's "weak, washy, everlasting flood of talk, which it is evident he supposes to be brilliant, and quaint, and full of expression, but which, in reality, is only cranky, obscure, and hieroglyphical . . ."¹ And one of the nineteenth-century's most famous and certainly most literary critics, Henry James, also despised Meredith's novels; like Oliphant, James criticized them in general terms, and considered Meredith a failure as a novelist because of what James considered a continuous flow of hopelessly obscure talk that he claimed ruined his novels. Edith Wharton discusses James' response to Meredith's novels; James states, "Words-words--poetic imagery, metaphors, epigrams, descriptive passages! How much did any of them weigh in the baggage of the authentic novelist?" and, "Meredith, he continued, was a sentimental rhetorician, whose natural indolence or congenital insufficiency, or
both, made him, in life as in his art, shirk every climax, dodge
around it, and veil its absence in a fog of eloquence. Of course, he
pursued, neither I nor any other reader could make out what
Meredith's tales were about; and not only what they were about, but
even in what country and what century they were situated, all these
prosaic details being hopelessly befogged by the famous poetic
imagery.  

Some critics, such as W. C. Brownell and Richard Burton, who
find fault with Meredith's narrative framework, apparently have a
preconceived idea about the "right" way of narrating a story;
although these critics never do say precisely what it is that
Meredith should do, but apparently does not do, they do say that in
effect his narrators talk too much and are too visible. W. C.
Brownell discusses Meredith's novels in general terms; he states
Meredith's "devotion to the tricksy spirit of Comedy led him early to
emulate her elusiveness; the interest in the game grew upon him, and
his latest books are marked by the very mania of indirection and
innuendo" and that "There is, as a matter of fact, throughout his
books a patter of banter that is disconcerting, disquieting, and
finally irritating. It is irony run to seed."  

Richard Burton also makes claims about Meredith's novels in general terms; he states "no
man has permitted himself greater freedom in stepping outside the
story in order to explain his meaning, comment upon character and
scene, rhapsodize upon Life, or directly harangue the reader . . . . It
brings us back to the feeling that he is a great man using the
fiction form for purposes broader than that of telling a story."  

Other critics share similar views about Meredith's novels.  
It would appear that many critics consider James' narrative framework as
the ideal and thereby evaluate Meredith's narrators in terms of James' narrators; in fact, in discussing what he perceives as Meredith's narrative faults in relation to James' narrative methods, one critic describes James as "perhaps our supreme master in the art of narration". The arguments that Meredith's narrative strategies fail seem to be based on the expectation that an author's narrator will seemingly disappear and thereby apparently allow the reader directly to observe his character's words, thoughts, and deeds; the method of narration proposed by James, what has come to be called "stream of consciousness," represents a narrator who in effect disappears and who thereby apparently allows the reader directly to observe a character's words, thoughts, and deeds without another intervening presence. But Meredith's intentions, purposes, and methods are not those of James; nor are they necessarily the intentions, purposes, and methods of any other author. It is not surprising, then, that Meredith does not fulfill the expectations of those critics who evaluate his novels in terms of expectations that are based on a particular method of narration that they have determined as most effective. In fact, in discussing James and his supporters, Wayne Booth points out that some critics' determination that James' narrative techniques are the standard by which to evaluate narrative intrusiveness is not valid; Booth states, "It is thus in the failure to think clearly about ends and means that the prophets of realism have most often tarnished their remarkable achievements. To have made naturalness of technique an end in itself was, perhaps, an impossible goal in the first place. Whatever verisimilitude a work may have always operates within a larger
artifice; each work that succeeds is natural—and artificial—in its own way. . . . the author's voice is never really silenced."

Many critics, like Priestley and James, among others, who consider Meredith's narrative techniques flawed perceive that the verbosity of his narrators holds up the narrative and thereby ruins the novel; while in theory it may be that the presence of a consciousness who interrupts the narrative flow is detrimental to the integrity of the work in that it ruins its realistic effect, in practice that is not the case. The problem with that theory in general terms and in reference to Meredith in particular is that it is not upheld by analysis; that is, a novel is not ruined because an author represents his narrator as momentarily taking the spotlight and thereby stopping the flow of action. The reason that a novel is not ruined by means of an interruption of narrative flow is that the quality of a novel is determined by its semblance to life; in traditional novels, like Meredith's *The Egoist*, *Richard Feverel*, and *The Tragic Comedians*, in which characters are represented in realistic terms, the author represents a particular aspect of life chiefly by means of his characters; the depth and dimension of a traditional novel's characters, then, are of chief importance in determining its effectiveness. It matters not how long it takes for the author to represent his characters, or for the reader to make his points; an author can create an interruption in the flow of his narrative with no detriment to the integrity of the work because the reader's mind and imagination allow him to place the characters and the plot of the story in a state of suspended animation whenever the story does not move forward. The characters and the plotline of the novel, therefore, remain in whatever state the reader has left them
at the time the narrative flow stops, until such time that the author
resumes his narrative, when the characters and the plotline will be
further developed.

In light of the fact that those critics who argue that
Meredith's intrusive narrators ruin his novels do not claim that
Meredith's characters do not engage the reader, it seems to me that
their arguments really amount to a personal dislike of Meredith's
style; it seems to me that some critics are disturbed by the form of
Meredith's novels rather than by their content, though they make
their claims against his novels in general and in global terms. The
intrusions that Meredith creates are not boring; they are usually
comically entertaining and to the point. Meredith's intrusions are
relevant as they are stylistically designed to create specific
effects. While Meredith's narrative techniques may not appeal to
some critics, that does not mean that Meredith's novels do not work;
that does not mean that Meredith's characters do not fully engage the
reader's feelings. The Egoist, Richard Feverel, and The Tragic
Comedians do fully engage the reader's feelings, and a few critics
contemporary with Meredith, like W. E. Henley and G. Bernard Shaw, as
well as a few twentieth-century critics of Meredith, like V. S.
Pritchett and Gillian Beer, have praised Meredith's narrative
strategies. W. E. Henley, critic and journal editor of The
Athenaeum, praises The Egoist in terms of Meredith's ability to
combine the comic and the tragic; he states, "One of the very few
moderns who have the double gift of tragedy and comedy, he is one of
the wittiest men of his generation and an original humourist to boot.
. . ". George Bernard Shaw also had a very favorable response to
Meredith, particularly to his theory of comedy; Shaw states "Who
cares for comedy to-day?--who knows what it is?--how many readers of Mr. Meredith's perfectly straightforward and accurate account of the wisest and most exquisite of the arts will see anything in the book but a brilliant sally of table talk about old plays, to be enjoyed, without practical application, as one of the rockets in the grand firework display of contemporary belles lettres?" 9 In discussing Meredith's influence on later writers, V. S. Pritchett states, "By the twenties the patronising of Meredith had already begun, but the link is there. The personal conversational voice is clearly the mark of Meredith's immediate successors." 10 And In 1970 Gillian Beer responds to James' attack on Meredith as represented in Edith Wharton's A Backward Glance; Beer states, "I would suggest, on the contrary, that Meredith's rhetoric is a precise instrument . . . He wrote meticulously to achieve specific effects" and, "Meredith's kinship of methods and perceptions often seems to be with twentieth-century writers rather than with his own earlier contemporaries. The fragmented chronology, the refracted experience, the dense flux of symbol and metaphor in the novels, all link him with later writers." 11 Other critics also share Pritchett's and Beer's views on Meredith's narrative techniques. 12 The reason that Meredith's novels do work is that he creates characters of considerable complexity and dimension who are true to life and about whom the reader does care. The usually brief narrative interruptions Meredith creates in these three novels do not in any way change the nature of the characters themselves or of the plotline that he has created for them. The few sentences, the few paragraphs, or even the occasional few pages in which Meredith represents his narrators as seemingly digressing from
their narratives to create specific effects neither detract from nor erase the powerful effects of Meredith's characters; narrative digression cannot detract from a powerful impression of a particular character that an author has created much less can narrative digression erase that impression from the reader's mind. Meredith's narrative personae usually intrude to emphasize a point or to foreshadow future consequences; oftentimes, Meredith's asides are comic, which makes them enjoyable, as well as informative. Meredith's narrative strategy is to represent his narrator as speaking in a particular style to create comic, tragic, or mixed effects. In fact, in spite of all of Meredith's asides and chats and quips that certain critics find so detrimental to his novels, The Egoist may well be the greatest illustration of an egoist in English literature in terms of its verisimilitude and also in terms of its vivid representation of the relationship between the intricate workings of the narcissist's inner thoughts and his outward actions.

Unlike those critics who apparently hold preconceived expectations about what an author should and should not do, and who judge Meredith's novels in relation to particular standards, I read Meredith differently; it seems to me that Meredith's narrative strategies in The Egoist, Richard Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians are considerably complex and warrant a lot of discussion. In assessing Meredith's narrative techniques in these three novels, the reader is obliged to consider what is common knowledge: that although Meredith was very much aware that some of his critics condemned his narrative strategies as ineffective, he did choose over and again to continue to create the same kind of narrator in his novels. That over and again Meredith did take care to represent the same kind of
intrusive consciousness in his novels in spite of the negative and sometimes devastating criticism he received leads a discerning reader to conclude that Meredith did have specific purposes and intentions that he apparently felt were best realized precisely by means of the kind of narrative framework he creates. Meredith places special demands upon the reader; his narrative techniques defy easy classification because they defy the reader's presuppositions about what a narrator should and should not do in telling his story.

One of the chief failings of those critics who find fault with Meredith's style is that they have not recognized that Meredith uses his narrators to play a game with his reader; the key to understanding Meredith's narrative game is an awareness that his personae are purposefully self-conscious. Meredith's method is that he creates narrators who draw attention to the fact that they are telling a story, as Sterne, as Fielding, as Thackeray, as Dickens, and as Hawthorne similarly draw attention to the fact that they are telling a story. A part of Meredith's narrative strategy, like that of some of his predecessors, is that he wants to establish an intimacy with his reader. And the only way that an author can create a feeling of intimacy with his reader, or that anyone can create a feeling of intimacy with anyone else, is by talking to him. Any reasonably competent reader of Meredith's novels becomes aware fairly quickly that the author feels no compunction about representing a narrator who at any given moment might turn to the reader to talk for any given amount of time. It seems to me that what apparently motivates some of the critics' negative judgements about Meredith's novels is his unpredictability and his apparently unorthodox methods of communicating information; that is, some critics, who apparently
feel that there is a right or a best method for telling a story, find fault with Meredith because he refuses to follow those methods.

The argument that Meredith's narrators in effect usurp the spotlight from the narrative itself and refocus it onto themselves, as many critics have claimed, either fails to recognize or certainly to appreciate what Meredith is doing; Meredith himself makes plain his technique and explains his reasons for it. Meredith states that his intention is to create omniscient narrators who frequently intrude into the story and talk to the reader mainly to mimic the confusion that an individual experiences when his intense emotional response to his situation opposes his intellectual response to it.

In 1887 Meredith wrote a letter to George Pierce Barker, a critic who had written an article on Meredith's works and had sent him a copy of it; Meredith explains his intentions and his purposes in relation to his narrative strategies. He writes, "My method has been to prepare my readers for a crucial exhibition of the personae, and then to give the scene in the fullest of their blood and brain under stress of a fiery situation. Concerning style, thought is tough, and dealing with thought produces toughness. Or when strong emotion is in tide against the active mind, there is perforce confusion." And in various personal letters Meredith also reveals his disillusion with his critics and his readers who condemn his work without understanding his methods. In his mainly comic vision, *The Egoist*, and in his mixed visions, *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians*, Meredith does represent his protagonists and some of his main characters in situations that precisely reveal them as caught in the throes of an inner conflict that rages between their intellects and their emotions; in all three novels Meredith often represents his...
protagonists and some of his other main characters as torn between the possible alternatives and rationalizations for those alternatives that their intellects suggest, and the usually single alternative that their hearts tell them is right. In representing an individual caught up in that emotional conflict between his head and his heart, Meredith utilizes his narrators to reveal that individual's thoughts, which may be either simple or complex and which may or may not result from clear-thinking as determined by his emotional state; that is, Meredith's narrators may represent an individual's thoughts in response to a particular situation in a few words, in a few sentences, or even in a few paragraphs, and he may represent those thoughts as clear or as convoluted.

The observant reader is aware that in The Egoist, Richard Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians Meredith creates numerous and diverse kinds of narrative digressions; the reader discerns, as well, that if Meredith does take care to create his narrative digressions then he must have had some purpose for doing so. In the interest of understanding Meredith's meaning in these three novels, then, it behooves the reader to try to understand Meredith's meaning in relation to the narrator he creates to represent his ideas. In The Egoist Meredith creates just under thirty narrative digressions in which his narrator directly addresses the reader; the narrator variously offers opinions, interjects snide or sarcastically humorous remarks, tells the reader a story for his moral instruction, asks him a question or questions and then provides the answer or answers; on occasion, as well, the narrator begs the reader's indulgence for his recital of material that he feels the reader might consider boring, as well as he explains the reason for his digression and also the
importance of it in relation to his story. In *Richard Feverel* Meredith creates over fifty narrative digressions in which his narrator addresses the reader for reasons similar to those for which he addresses him in *The Egoist*; it is particularly noteworthy that at one point in *Richard Feverel* Meredith represents his narrator as addressing his protagonist, Richard Feverel, and also Sir Austin, a central character. In *The Tragic Comedians* Meredith also creates over fifty narrative digressions in which his narrator addresses the reader for reasons similar to those for which he addresses him in *Richard Feverel* and *The Egoist*. In *The Tragic Comedians* Meredith’s narrator at one point even refers to himself as “the chorus.” The reader is aware that in Greek drama the chorus was often highly visible. Thus, if Meredith creates a narrator who refers to himself as “the chorus,” then the reader can only conclude that at the very least visibility in his narrative persona is something Meredith intends, and also that Meredith intends that his narrator be an integral part of his narrative. In light of the care that Meredith takes in creating interruptions of his narrative flow, the reader can discern that Meredith did not intend to tell his story in a concise manner and that he did not intend that his reader seem directly to observe the words, thoughts, and deeds of his characters.

The observant reader understands, then, that Meredith's narrative style is a means to an end, that is, Meredith's narrative style is a means by which the author creates specific effects. The tactics that Meredith uses to create comic effects in his novels and the game that he plays with his reader are much like the tactics Fielding uses to create comic effects in *Tom Jones* and also like the
game Fielding plays with his reader; like Meredith, Fielding was similarly criticized for his narrative methods. Fielding's smart response to those critics who evaluated literature in terms of prescriptive standards and dictums as determined by classical critics, particularly by Horace, is especially applicable to Meredith. In *Tom Jones* Fielding represents his narrator as departing from his narrative to point out to the reader, "many Rules for good Writing have been established, which have not the least foundation in Truth or Nature; and which commonly serve for no other Purpose than to curb and restrain Genius, in the same manner as it would have restrained the Dancing-master, had the many excellent Treatises on that Art laid it down as an essential Rule, that every Man must dance in Chains."¹⁷ The observant reader understands that Meredith, like Fielding, transcends those limitations imposed by critics whose expectations are based on predetermined standards of what the "art of narration" is or should be.

Karl Guthke's discussion of the importance of the narrator's role in guiding the reader's response in tragicomic narrative is particularly helpful in analyzing Meredith's mixed novels, *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians*, as well as his mainly comic vision, *The Egoist*. The role of the narrator is especially important, as well, in understanding Meredith's comic and sympathetic effects. In reference to narrative fiction, as opposed to drama, Guthke states that "the realization of the tragicomic is primarily a matter of the attitude and perspective of the narrator" and that "it is easy to see that such a narrator . . . will have no difficulty in predisposing the reader towards a tragicomic vision of the narrated subject matter, if the author so desires."¹⁸ Guthke's point is that in
fiction an author conveys his information to the reader by means of a persona whom he creates in a particular manner and whom he represents as speaking in a specific way to create a particular effect. Guthke is saying that the reader interprets events as the author's narrator represents them; thus, if the author chooses to create sympathy or laughter or the complex combination of sympathy and laughter, a chief means by which he can achieve those effects is his narrator. The key to understanding Meredith's method of creating his mixed effects, as well as most of his comic and his sympathetic effects that he variously creates in *The Egoist, Richard Feverel,* and *The Tragic Comedians,* is an awareness that Meredith mainly uses his narrative consciousness precisely to guide the reader's response.

In their complaints about Meredith's narrative style, some critics have not recognized or have not appreciated that in fact, Meredith takes care to utilize his narrators to create the majority of his comic effects, as well as many of his sympathetic effects, in *The Egoist, Richard Feverel,* and *The Tragic Comedians;* Meredith's narrators variously elicit amused, benevolent, empathetic, or critical laughter, and elicit criticism or sympathy. Meredith also systematically utilizes his narrative voice to create comic effects to lighten his didacticism; a pedantic tract on the ills of society, like class structure or society's treatment of women, two key points that Meredith emphasizes in all three novels, would not maintain the reader's lively interest in the way that his comical treatment of those subjects does. Also, in light of the fact that in his *Essay On Comedy* Meredith specifically states that the "pedantic" individual deserves the lashings of the Comic Spirit, the discerning reader infers from his methods that Meredith chooses to make his points in a
subtle manner, that is, in a manner that is not obviously instructive or boring; creating comic effects to make a point, as Meredith does consistently throughout his novels, is one way of avoiding pedantry in making that point. Also, in relation to many of those situations that Meredith creates to elicit sympathy, he utilizes his personae either to underscore the folly of a particular character's behavior, to emphasize the necessity for a particular character's reform in relation to future consequences he may face, or to provide the reader with clues and to foreshadow the future.

Many critics have also either failed to understand or to appreciate that a significant part of Meredith's narrative strategy is to illustrate the relationship between the smallest and seemingly insignificant details he creates and his main ideas; many critics have not considered to appreciate that Meredith oftentimes utilizes his narrators to underscore his various points or to highlight his meaning. One of the ways Meredith utilizes his narrator to show that there is a connection between the seemingly trivial and the obviously important is that he represents him as dwelling upon an apparently insignificant detail and then as discussing it in relation to his theme; for example, Meredith represents his narrator as explaining Sir Willoughby's method of focusing on the seemingly miniscule to discern who is in accord with him and who is not. He states, "Regarding Clara, his genius for perusing the heart which was not in perfect harmony with him through the series of responsive movements to his own, informed him of a something in her character that might have suggested to Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson her indefensible, absurd 'rogue in porcelain.'" 20 By means of his narrator Meredith reveals that Willoughby is so successful at manipulating others precisely
because he understands their specific reflexive behaviors as manifestations of their thoughts: it is precisely Willoughby's full attention to the apparently insignificant details of an individual's mannerisms that allows him accurately to interpret their meaning and thereby predict that individual's response. Thus aware of what others are thinking, Willoughby is able to prepare whatever equivocation he feels will serve his purpose. Meredith also utilizes his narrators to draw analogies, to provide explanations, or to create metaphors to guide the reader to a full understanding of his meaning about a particular character or situation, as well as to emphasize particular points or to guide the reader to a deeper understanding of his meaning. Oftentimes, as well, Meredith represents his narrator as providing "inside" information about various characters that the reader would be unable to ascertain by direct observation. Meredith gives his personae specific characteristics that make reading his novels enjoyable: his narrators are personable in terms of being witty, dramatic, having a sense of humor, and oftentimes poking fun at particular characters; Meredith also creates narrators who are literate, which they demonstrate by means of their style of speech, as for example, on various occasions they create mainly comic effects by means of litotes, parody, oxymoron, hyperbole, circumlocution, personification, simile, or metaphor.

Another problem that I see in relation to some critics' interpretations of Meredith's narrative strategies is that they attempt to explain his intrusive personae in terms of his own personal life; in spite of the ease with which many critics go back and forth between Meredith's biography and his novels to explain his
fiction, the reader really does not know whether or not Meredith writes himself into his novels. Although some critics have interpreted Meredith's representation of his characters' thoughts as evidence of his own inability to keep out of his story, or as an obvious example of his own natural propensity to nag, the special effects that Meredith creates in his novels reveal that he does have specific purposes in his methods of representation. Meredith does expect his reader to be willing to follow him, that is, to engage with him on his own terms. Meredith expects his reader to allow him the flexibility to do things his own way to create his special effects; though the reader might become bewildered about Meredith's meaning because of what some critics have in effect called a barrage of words, Meredith expects that the reader will be able to figure out that his confusion is part of the intended effect. Many critics have pointed out certain obvious similarities between some aspects of Meredith's personal life and his novels, like the fact that Meredith's wife left him and his small son to elope with his friend, as Richard's mother does in Richard Feverel. But such similarities between Meredith's personal life and his fiction do not mean that Meredith's personal life should be the only basis for interpreting his fiction; explaining Meredith's art only in terms of facts relating to himself personally does not allow for the mimetic aspects of his fiction. The reader is obligated to consider the care with which Meredith creates his narrative framework in which he represents his ideas and to consider Meredith's meaning in relation to that framework; Meredith's narrative strategies indicate that he is an artist of considerable complexity and that he had particular purposes
and intentions in representing his ideas in the medium he chooses to represent them.

Another integral aspect of Meredith's narrative framework that some critics have considered faulty, as some of Ford's critics have similarly considered his narrative framework in The Good soldier faulty, is that he combines the disharmonious elements of comedy and tragedy; while many critics contemporary with Meredith, as well as many of those of the twentieth-century, condemn Meredith's tragicomic methods, as they condemn his narrative strategies, other critics, like Teresa Guerra de Gloss and Richard C. Stevenson, have understood that Meredith purposely combines comic and tragic effects; Teresa Guerra de Gloss concludes that The Tragic Comedians is tragedy "Because of its serious subject matter, concern with man's fate, paradoxical Providence, unhappy ending, a tragic hero, and, up to a certain point, a tragic heroine"21 and that The Tragic Comedians is "Not a great Shakespearean tragedy but an ironic tragedy as others Meredith wrote; or better yet, a comic tragedy as Meredith was interested in showing the comic side of tragedy. A comic tragedy where we cannot experience catharsis as the greatness of hero's soul is not presented, but the comic side of his nature" (222). In reference to Richard Feverel, Richard C. Stevenson alludes to the mixed moments that Meredith creates in the novel; he states, "in this first novel social comedy is joined with a 'tragic concern for the individual' in a manner that was to become distinctly Meredithian. Meredith works . . . to evoke responses that dramatic tradition has schooled us to keep separate."22 But J. B. Priestly, as well as other critics who support his view of Meredith's narrative strategies as faulty, have either failed to recognize or to understand that in
Richard Feverel and in The Tragic Comedians Meredith's method is to combine comic and tragic elements to investigate the link between motivation and provocation. Some critics have approached The Egoist, Richard Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians as comedy; a few have acknowledged the presence of other non-comic elements within The Egoist; and others have argued that Meredith alternates comic and tragic effects in Richard Feverel and in The Tragic Comedians. Like Ford's critics of The Good Soldier, some of these critics who see Meredith's vision in Richard Feverel and in The Tragic Comedians as mixed apparently presuppose that comic elements and tragic elements should not be combined, as proposed by Horace and as upheld by neoclassical and by Renaissance tradition, or, they feel that Meredith has in effect lost control of his narrative.

Priestly, for example, objects to Meredith's method of mixing comic and tragic elements in Richard Feverel; he states "Richard Feverel is presented as a comedy, and has a tragic ending thrust upon it, quite arbitrarily" (145) and that, "the ending of Richard Feverel mars the tale, because it is out of key, like a splash of black or crimson oil paint in a water-colour" (160). Priestley complains of Meredith's narrative framework and he describes him as a "pagan"; because Priestley's critical analysis and biography, George Meredith, written in 1926 was highly influential upon later critics, I will discuss his views in some detail. Priestly bases his claims about Meredith's narrators on his personal life. In reference to Meredith's narrative style, Priestly states, "Wilde's remark about Meredith, that 'as a novelist he can do everything, except tell a story', is a shrewd thrust" (144); Priestley adds, "If you regard the
Novel as a tale pure and simple, an arresting and convincing chronicle of events, then Meredith must inevitably appear a colossal failure. Few men who have put their names to a series of intelligent novels have shown less concern for the art of narration. He deliberately flouts it, and his later work is worse in this respect than his earlier" (145).

Priestley explains what he perceives as Meredith's faulty narrative techniques; he claims that Meredith "is a faulty narrator because narrative does not interest him. What he wishes to do is not to present us with an arresting and convincing chronicle of events, but to move from one scene to another as quickly as possible" (151). Priestly points out that Meredith's "method describes the action, at all heightened moments, not from the usual detached point of view of a disinterested spectator, but, as it were, from inside the mind of one of the actors, not as it appears to a merely observant onlooker, but as it appears in the consciousness of a character taking part in it. He gives us not the fact but the fact coloured by emotion and distorted by thought" (164-165) While Priestly's description of Meredith's method does precisely account for a large part of what Meredith is doing by means of his narrators, he does not seem to recognize that Meredith plays a game with his reader. In closing, however, Priestly praises some aspects of Meredith's novels; he states, "Any reader who is acquainted with a few competent pieces of fiction can remark the faults in Meredith, for they sprawl at length, inviting comment," and adds, "But a reader who can go no farther dubs himself incompetent" (193). Priestley's support of Meredith is tantamount to an apology for his faulty narrative techniques in support of the work as a whole, or in support of some things that
Priestly felt that Meredith did well in his novels. And Priestly does acknowledge Meredith as an innovator in the novel, as do many critics who follow him; he concludes, "Yet he may be justly considered as a great innovator in the art of narration, for he brought into existence a new method that did nothing less than begin a fresh chapter in the history of the novel" (164).

Priestly also discusses Meredith's system of beliefs, a subject many critics address in relation to what they see as Meredith's world view in Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians. Priestley states, "Meredith escapes the Science-Religion, materialism-idealism trap because he is by temperament something different from all his contemporaries; he is pure pagan. . . . Meredith, from the first, does not seem to live at all in the universe of Christian theology" (67). In describing Meredith as a "pagan," Priestley indicates that his creed was Naturalism; he states of Meredith, "He is a naturalistic philosopher, whose every naturalistic fact has somehow a mystical glow" (68). Yet, Priestley refutes the argument that Meredith was a pantheist, as some critics had claimed. Priestley argues, "The so-called pantheism of Meredith was only this occasional poetical state of mind, an uprush of elemental wonder" (82). Priestley's views of Meredith's narrative techniques as faulty and his views of Meredith as a "pagan," that is, as a naturalist, are important because most later critics seem to accept them as facts that require no analysis and like Priestley, dismiss the numerous Christian allusions and references that Meredith makes in his novels.

Meredith represents his protagonists and some of his main characters in situations in which their moral code is tested.
Meredith mixes comic elements that elicit various kinds of laughter with tragic elements that elicit sympathy because the complexity of a mixed medium allows him effectively to link laughter and despair to the predicaments of his main characters. In both novels Meredith consistently creates a mixed response by means of his narrators, who provide the reader with information to guide him to a response different from that which the circumstance apparently warrants. In The Tragic Comedians, for example, Meredith's method for creating a mixed response toward Clotilda is to utilize his narrator to mock her even while he reveals that she is suffering over Alvan's death; thus, Meredith elicits scorn toward Clotilda while also creating pity for her. Meredith reveals that Clotilda's motivation and her behavior are self-serving, though she deludes herself that her motives and actions are noble. By means of his narrator, Meredith also reveals that Clotilda's grief often results from her propensity to act out whatever particular emotion she thinks she ought to feel, and thereby is able to feel; thus, Meredith uses his narrator to diminish the emotional impact of Clotilda's predicament upon the reader.

It seems to me that one of the reasons some critics find fault with Meredith's method of mixing comic and tragic elements in Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians and comic and non-comic elements in The Egoist is that they approach his work as comedy in terms of the definition he proposes in his Essay on Comedy. While some critics have rightly interpreted the comic effects that Meredith creates in Richard Feverel, The Tragic Comedians, and The Egoist in terms of his own theory of comedy, they have seen Meredith's Essay as the single key to interpret his novels, despite the presence of elements that are obviously non-comic. Meredith's main themes in The Egoist,
Richard Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians are comic in terms of his own theory of comedy: they address egoism as manifested in self-delusion. For Meredith, self-delusion leads to hypocrisy, two chief conditions for which the Comic Spirit finds it irresistible to administer her physic, laughter. Another way that these three novels are comic in terms of Meredith's own theory of comedy is that they represent affectation and pretension, two conditions that Meredith also describes as deserving of laughter: in these novels Meredith satirizes the affectation of the aristocracy and also their pretentious notion of class as determined by birth. Also, Meredith creates comic effects in all three novels in terms of his own theory, as he mocks some of his protagonists and other main characters and thus elicits the reader's scorn; for Meredith, "Incidents of a kind casting ridicule on our unfortunate nature, instead of our conventional life, provoke derisive laughter, which thwarts the comic idea. But derision is foiled by the play of the intellect. Most of doubtful causes in contest are open to comic interpretation, and any intellectual pleading of a doubtful cause contains germs of an idea of comedy" (140). In analyzing The Tragic Comedians in terms of what Meredith says about "derisive laughter" in relation to "intellectual pleading of a doubtful cause" as containing "germs of an idea of comedy," the reader can infer that Meredith intends a comic response in representing his narrator throughout the novel as mocking Clotilda when he "pleads" for the reader's understanding of what he calls her "cowardice." Other ways that Meredith's characters in these three novels are comic in terms of Meredith's theory of comedy is that they do wax "out of proportion" and are "overblown" in their manifestations of rage; in The Tragic Comedians, for example, Alvan
and Clotilda's father are driven by rage to engage in behavior that is excessive and extravagant. Meredith creates further comic effects in all three novels in terms he proposes by discussing love as war; in *The Egoist*, *Richard Feverel*, and *The Tragic Comedians* Meredith represents relationships between men and women in terms of opposing forces who prepare arsenals, go to battle, fire missiles, and create flanking maneuvers as they march to victory. Also, in *Richard Feverel* and *The Egoist* Meredith creates comic effects by mocking conventional ideas about differences between boys and girls and between men and women, most of which he attributes to differences in education. Conventional assumptions about behavioral differences between men and women as genetic and also the presumed superiority of the aristocracy are two key themes that Meredith addresses in his novels.

While it is certainly appropriate as well as advisable to evaluate the comic effects that Meredith creates in his novels in terms of his own theory of comedy, it is neither appropriate nor advisable to presuppose that Meredith's novels must be comedies because he wrote a theory of comedy. Priestley makes that same point in stating that Meredith's "own work far transcends the limits imposed by him upon the creator of pure comedy" (117). Those critics who have determined that Meredith's novels are comic failures have apparently based their judgements on the fact that the disharmonious elements Meredith represents within these novels result in works that do not fit his own theory of comedy. In fact, some critics have missed what Meredith is saying in his novels precisely because they have determined that his methods of combining comic and tragic elements are faulty. Even in *The Egoist*, which is essentially comedy
and whose protagonist, Willoughby Patterne, is the paradigm of the
Meredithian comic character, few critics have considered the role
that non-comic elements within the novel play in relation to meaning.
Other critics, however, have glossed over these non-comic elements
that Meredith does create because the novel ends happily in the
tradition of comedy. But Meredith is not required to write comedy,
though he did choose to discuss it, and though he did choose, as
well, to create comic effects in his novels in the manner he proposes
in his Essay On Comedy. Meredith was obviously interested in comedy,
since he wrote a theory of it and since all of his protagonists and
other main characters in The Egoist, Richard Feverel, and The Tragic
Comedians are comic in terms that he defines as comic. And, it may
be as some critics have suggested, that Meredith may have intended
only to test the outer limits of comedy in his novels. But whether
or not Meredith intended to remain within the realm of comedy, he
does go beyond that realm in Richard Feverel and The Tragic
Comedians. In both novels Meredith goes beyond his own boundaries of
comedy by eliciting sympathy toward his protagonists and also toward
some of his other main characters. While the reader can feel
compassion for a comic character, if he experiences that powerful
moving of the emotions that results from sympathy, then his
perspective on that character, at that moment, at least, is mixed,
rather than comic. In his Essay Meredith talks briefly about
"humour" as in effect eliciting a mixed response,25 which is
precisely the kind of response that he does create in Richard Feverel
and in The Tragic Comedians. Both of Meredith's mixed novels, as
well as the mixed moments that he creates in his comedy The Egoist,
then, can be evaluated in terms of what Meredith calls "humour." Pirandello, as well, sees "humour" as creating a mixed response; Pirandello's theory of humor explains the mechanics of the mixed response that Meredith creates in The Egoist, Richard Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians. 26

In The Egoist Meredith uses mostly comic effects that he creates in terms of his own theory of comedy to represent his essentially comic vision of Sir Willoughby's self-delusion and hypocrisy; Meredith also uses some non-comic elements in his narrative. In relation to Clara's determined efforts to free herself from Willoughby, Meredith's narrator provides a precise description of an egoist that implies Meredith's intention to elicit critically amused laughter at Willoughby; the narrator states in reference of Willoughby, "a man so cunning in a pretended obtuseness backed by senseless pride, and in petty tricks that sprang of a grovelling tyranny, could only be taught by facts" (277). In his novel Meredith reveals the consequences that necessarily arise when an individual falls from the heights of his own egoism onto the plane of reality, where he must confront his own failings and also come to terms with the fact that others are aware of his failings. While Meredith does represent Willoughby as comic in his nearly insane though ultimately futile attempts to maintain an image of himself as invulnerable and as always in control of every situation, Meredith also uses some non-comic elements to represent the effects of Willoughby's manipulations and hypocrisy upon others. Meredith's method is to use non-comic elements to reveal how Willoughby terrorizes those most intimate with him, particularly Clara, his betrothed; Willoughby terrorizes his aunts, as well, who speak to him only in grovelling affirmatives and
are as little distinguishable from another as are Rosencrantz and
Guildenstern. The reader's laughter toward Willoughby's vigilance in
creating flanking maneuvers that he uses against his dreaded enemy,
the world and public opinion, becomes uncomfortable in relation to
Clara's response to the miasma that she understands will destroy her
if she marries Willoughby. The reader empathizes with Clara, who
discerns that Willoughby only wants affirmation of himself from a
wife, as from everyone else. Another way Meredith uses non-comic
elements is that he creates sympathy for Laetitia, a main character
who has always been in love with Willoughby; although Laetitia is
initially unaware that Willoughby uses and manipulates her to further
his own image of himself, as well as the world's image of him, as
attractive and as witty, she deludes herself that Willoughby is
better than he really is. But Meredith's vision in The Egoist is
mainly comic, as it does end happily: Clara finally escapes
Willoughby's clutches to find true happiness with Vernon Whitford,
Willoughby's cousin; Willoughby learns his lesson; and conflicts are
resolved to the satisfaction and to the betterment of the main
characters, as well as to the satisfaction of the reader.

In Richard Feverel, however, Meredith does go beyond the realm
of comedy as proposed in his Essay On Comedy by creating a mixed
vision; Richard Feverel concerns Sir Austin's creation of a "System"
of education for Richard to rid him of Original Sin. Meredith uses
tragic as well as comic elements in his representation of Sir Austin,
a main character and an egoist very much like Sir Willoughby, and
also in his representation of Richard, the protagonist and Sir
Austin's son. Initially, Sir Austin and his preposterous
undertaking, which in itself falls within the realm of comedy, for
the most part amuse the reader. The reader is usually entertained with his "pilgrim's Scrip," a collection of aphorisms that are offered to the world and accepted by some parts of it as gems of wisdom, but which are really casuistries; that is, these aphorisms, most of which are misogynistic generalizations about women, result from faulty logic and are based on false premises. Richard can also be seen as an egoist, though he asserts his egoism in a different way from that of his father or from Sir Willoughby. While Richard is unlike Sir Austin and Sir Willoughby, as he does not try to manipulate others to serve his own self-interest, he plunges into action usually with little thought or concern about the effects of his actions upon others. Meredith's method is to create mixed effects in his representation of Richard, who is a product of his father's System, and who shares his father's weaknesses of pride and anger. Although Meredith initially represents Richard as opposite to his father in terms of his tendency to express his true feelings and, thereby, does not dissimulate behind a mask, eventually, Richard becomes like his father and masks his feelings, as well. Thus, communication between father and son is ended and each dissimulates before the other to pursue his own ends. Meredith's chief method of creating a mixed response toward Richard is to represent him as struggling with his inherent weaknesses, that is, excessive pride and excessive anger; while Richard's emotions rule him, he suffers and often does repent of his actions. The final result of Richard's actions is that Richard's wife, Lucy, dies, and although Richard lives it is only in the sense that he survives; Richard is defeated, ending in a catatonic-like state and, thus, in effect leaves their son without any parents.
Meredith also creates a mixed vision in *The Tragic Comedians*. As in *Richard Feverel*, Meredith creates a comic atmosphere in terms of his own theory of comedy, as well as creating tragic effects in that they elicit sympathy; Meredith represents his main characters as finally defeated because of their egoism, which manifests itself in their self-delusion. Meredith represents Clotilda to some degree as egotistical, as well as self-deceived; her self-delusion culminates in hypocrisy. And Meredith represents Alvan as highly egotistical, as manifested in his belief that he, like Sir Austin, can play Providence. Meredith represents Alvan as self-deceived in his belief that he can control people and events just by setting his will upon a particular course of action; because Alvan has always obtained his will with men of the world, with mobs, and with women, he fosters the misguided assumption that it is impossible for him to fail in anything in which he determines he will succeed. Thus, when Alvan and Clotilda fall in love and Clotilda tells him that her father will never under any circumstance accept Alvan into the family because he is a Jew and a Radical, Alvan predictably scoffs. Meredith shows that Alvan's determination at any cost to accomplish his will on his own terms leads to disaster; ironically, Alvan's great eloquence that time and again has caused the world to marvel at him in his capacity as a lawyer, as well as in his strategic abilities as a politician and in his prowess as a marksman, amount to nothing in his determined efforts to marry Clotilda. Meredith's chief method for creating a mixed response toward Alvan is to reveal that Alvan is defeated because he sets his will to win the one woman whose cowardice and hypocrisy foil the success of all his attempts to see her; unable to admit defeat, however, and unable, as well, to control his anger,
Alvan perseveres in executing his will until he himself is finally defeated. Like Alvan, Clotilda deludes herself: she deludes herself that she is really stronger than she instinctively understands herself to be. Clotilda's self-deception leads her to rationalize every action that is at odds with her real feelings, such as the significant role she plays in Alvan's death and her rationalization for marrying Marko, whom she has told in the cruelest of manners on various occasions that she does not love; Clotilda's self-delusions, then, culminate in hypocrisy. Just as he creates a mixed response toward Richard Feverel, Meredith's chief method for creating a mixed response toward Alvan and Clotilda is to represent them as caught between the flood of emotion and intellectual restraint. The novel ends in Alvan's death, in Marko's death, and in Clotilda's defeat.

In my analysis of The Egoist, Richard Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians, I will first consider what is comic about these novels and what is tragic about them and I will then present my analysis of The Egoist as a comedy, which contains some serious non-comic elements; I will also present my analyses of Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians as tragicomedies in relation to Meredith's tragicomic techniques, and I will then discuss the nature of tragicomedy. Finally, I will discuss the significance of my interpretation of The Egoist as a comedy with some mixed moments and of Richard Feverel and of The Tragic Comedians from a tragicomic perspective.

Critics who have responded to the comic effects that Meredith creates in The Egoist, Richard Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians, particularly those critics who find fault with Meredith's narrative style, for the most part have either not recognized or have not
appreciated the significance of Meredith's narrative strategies in relation to his comic effects; in other words, it is precisely by means of his narrators that Meredith creates most of his comic effects or intensifies them. While critics are in agreement that The Egoist is a comedy and that Meredith's effects are comic in obvious ways, some critics, in fact, have even failed to recognize that one of Meredith's chief methods for creating his comic effects in The Egoist is that he parodies Carlyle. Lionel Stevenson makes that point; he states, "Some serious critics have singled out the third paragraph of the 'Prelude' as a shocking example of Meredith's exaggerated metaphors without realizing that it is a burlesque of Carlyle." In a personal letter to a prospective French translator of The Egoist, Meredith states that he does parody Carlyle in his novel.

In The Egoist Meredith creates various kinds of comic effects such as amused laughter, critical laughter, and scorn chiefly by means of his narrator. One way that Meredith creates amused as well as critical laughter at Willoughby, for example, is that he utilizes his narrator to posture as if he finds fault with Clara's determination to maintain her individuality and thus not to "become one" with Willoughby on his own terms; the narrator states, "She would not burn the world for him; she would not, though a purer poetry is little imaginable, reduce herself to ashes, or incense, or essence, in honour of him, and so, by love's transmutation, literally be the man she was to marry. She preferred to be herself, with the egoism of women! She said it: she said: 'I must be myself to be of any value to you, Willoughby.' He was indefatiguable in his lectures
on the aesthetics of love" (47). This example precisely demonstrates the way Meredith creates comic effects to lighten his didacticism. Meredith's method is to represent his narrator as being purposefully ironic by seemingly blaming Clara for refusing to become Willoughby; Meredith thereby guides the reader to a critically comic response to Willoughby and to his ideal of a wife. Willoughby believes that as an ideal wife Clara should gladly relinquish her will to him and happily conform her thoughts to his own, as well. But Meredith points to the fact that Clara is right in her determination to maintain her individuality. The way that Meredith makes his point that Clara should maintain her own individuality and that Willoughby is misguided in his self-deluded presumption that he should think for Clara is a lot more fun to read than it would have been if Meredith had used his narrator to turn to the reader and give him a sermon about the importance of a woman's maintaining her individuality in marriage.

Another example that illustrates Meredith's method of creating comic effects by means of his narrative persona is his representation of Willoughby's perception of the dubious merits of scholarship; the narrator discloses Willoughby's thoughts about scholarship in relation to his cousin, Vernon Whitford. The narrator informs the reader, "Vernon was useful to his cousin" (89); that is, Willoughby liked Vernon "to date his own controversial writings, on classical subjects, from Pattenre Hall. It caused his house to shine in a foreign field; proved the service of scholarship by giving it a flavour of a bookish aristocracy that, though not so well worth having, and indeed in itself contemptible, is above the material and titular; one cannot quite say how" (89-90). The narrator also states
that Vernon, "the rising scholar, the elegant essayist, was an unparalled decoration; of his kind, of course. Personally, we laugh at him; you had better not, unless you are fain to show that the higher world of polite literature is unknown to you" (90). The irony that Meredith creates here and its resulting comic effects are obvious in that the reader could hardly expect that Meredith would consider scholarship and literature contemptible. Meredith expects the reader to see that he mocks Willoughby's misguided priorities on the value of drawing room etiquette at the expense of learning and scholarship, the respective merits and failings of which Willoughby emphasizes throughout the novel; the reader understands that for Meredith the "drawing-room of civilized men and women" is precisely where comedy takes place ("Prelude," The Egoist, 1). Thus, Meredith elicits the reader's critical laughter at Willoughby. Meredith again utilizes his narrative consciousness to create critical laughter at Willoughby by representing him as thinking that perhaps it would be better for his image if he married Laetitia instead of Clara; the narrator states, "One who read and knew and worshipped him would be sitting there starlike: sitting there, awaiting him, his fixed star. It would be marriage with a mirror, with an echo; marriage with a shining mirror, a choric echo. It would be marriage with an intellect, a fine understanding; to make his home a fountain of repeatable wit: to make his dear old Patterne Hall the luminary of the county. He revolved it as a chant . . ." (405). Meredith's method is to elicit critical laughter at Willoughby's conception of the way he assumes that Laetitia, as his wife, should behave; Meredith creates comedy, as well, in emphasizing his point that he makes throughout the novel, that women must be treated like
individuals and not like "fixed stars," or as a "satellite," as Lawrence's Birkin similarly conceives Ursula. Meredith's method is to create a narrator who amuses the reader with his representation of Willoughby believing that he will have attained the ideal in marriage if his partner can make him feel as if indeed he had "a marriage with a mirror." Meredith's technique in pointing to Willoughby's wrong-mindedness is to use comic elements to lighten his didacticism; Meredith creates comic effects mainly by means of his narrator to lighten his serious point, as he does consistently throughout The Egoist, as well as throughout Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians.

Unlike The Egoist, which critics nearly unanimously interpret as comedy, Richard Feverel represents a considerably more complex vision in which Meredith combines the disharmonious elements of comedy and tragedy; Meredith creates most of his comic effects in Richard Feverel, as he does in The Egoist, by means of his narrator. The comic effects that Meredith creates in his representation of Richard, the protagonist, elicit three kinds of laughter: amused, critically amused, and scornful. An example of obviously comic effects that Meredith creates by means of his narrative consciousness to elicit amused laughter is "The Bakewell Comedy." "The Bakewell Comedy" entails Richard's plan to free Tom Bakewell from jail; Tom gets caught firing Farmer Blaize's rick with lucifers that Richard himself placed there. Richard places the lucifers in the farmer's rick in revenge for the lashing he receives from Farmer Blaize for poaching on his land. The narrator relates Richard's and Ripton's plan; he states that the boys entered Dame Bakewell's shop, purchased articles of "every description," and lingered until all of the
customers had gone. At that point, the boys "hurried her into her little back-parlour, where Richard had torn open his shirt and revealed the coils of rope, and Ripton displayed the point of a file from a serpentine recess in his jacket" (37) and "they had then told the astonished woman that the rope she saw and the file she saw were instruments for the liberation of her son; that there existed no other means on earth to save him, they, the boys, having unsuccessfully attempted all: how upon that Richard had tried with the utmost earnestness to persuade her to disrobe and wind the rope round her person: and Ripton had aired his eloquence to induce her to secrete the file: how when she objected to the rope, both boys began backing the file . . ." (37). The comic effects Meredith creates here result from his use of narrative voice, rather than from the events themselves. There would be no laughter if Meredith had allowed his narrator to say something to the effect that the boys went into the shop to speak to Dame Bakewell about a plan to get Tom out of prison. But Meredith represents his narrator as making fun of Richard and Ripton by describing their actions as in effect silly antics, by means of his high style of speech, his choice of colorful and dramatic words, and the grammatical structure of the sentence, which pieces several unrelated ideas together as one long, rambling thought. In using expressions like "utmost earnestness" to reveal Richard's absurd determination to get Tom's mother to disrobe and then wrap a rope around her underclothing, Meredith's narrator underscores the comic in relation to the boys themselves in representing them as ridiculous.

Other examples of the obviously comic effects that Meredith creates by means of his narrator occur within what he calls "The New
Comedy," which takes place five and one-half years after "The Bakewell Comedy"; some of the highlights of "The New Comedy" include Richard's losing Lucy's wedding ring on the morning of his wedding, his brilliant shift during the ceremony to replace the lost ring, and Ripton's tipsy toast with Mrs. Berry to the newly married couple. On the morning of his secret wedding to Lucy, whom he has recently "rescued" from marrying her uncle's abhorred nephew, Tom, Richard unexpectedly meets his Aunt Doria and her daughter, Clare, and his cousin Adrian. Chafing at his being detained by his relatives when he is due at his own wedding, Richard distractedly walks with them and unwittingly drops what was to be Lucy's wedding ring from his pocket; Clare, who is walking behind Richard, picks up the ring, though she says nothing about it. Finally, emphatically protesting his further detainment on account of an important appointment, Richard strides away from them and hurries to the church. During the wedding ceremony when Richard sees that no wedding ring is forthcoming from his pocket the narrator states, "The battle must be won on the field, and what does the hero now? It is an inspiration! For who else would dream of such a reserve in the rear? None see what he does; only that the black-satin bunch is remonstratingly agitated, stormily shaken, and subdued: and as though the menacing cloud had opened, and dropped the dear token from the skies at his demand, he produces the symbol of their consent, and the service proceeds: 'With this ring I thee wed'" (259): Richard has just pulled Mrs. Berry's wedding ring off her finger and has placed it upon Lucy's finger. Meredith creates comic effects here by means of his narrator's style of speech, specifically, his use of imagery, personification, and metaphor to describe the wedding ceremony: Mrs.
Berry is represented as a "black-satin bunch" that becomes "agitated"; Richard's outrageous action of tearing the wedding ring from Mrs. Berry's finger is represented as if given by God himself; and Richard's predicament is represented in terms of a "battle that must be "won on the field," a metaphor that Meredith uses over and again in reference to men and women to represent the comic. Another example of amused laughter that Meredith creates by means of his narrator is the toast that Ripton proposes with Mrs. Berry after Richard and Lucy depart for their honeymoon; the narrator states of Ripton, "Filling Mrs. Berry's glass, and his own, to overflowing, and again splitting the solitary female who formed his audience into two sexes, Ripton commanded silence, and penduously swayed over Mrs. Berry's lap in total forgetfulness what he had ventured on his legs to celebrate" (273), and that "Aware that they did duty for some purpose, he shut his eyes to meditate, but at this congenial action densest oblivion enwrapped his senses, and he was in danger of coming into Mrs. Berry's lap head foremost; a calamity she averted by rising likewise, and shaking him roughly, which brought him back to visionary consciousness, when he sank into his chair and mildly asked: 'Wha'm I 'bout? That you, Mizz Berry?'" (273)

Meredith utilizes his narrator, as well, to create a comic context within which he represents particular actions; the context within which an incident is represented is key in creating a particular response to it. For example, by means of his narrator Meredith trivializes Richard's misguided determination to make Bella an honest woman and thereby creates a comic effect. That is, Meredith could have represented Richard's seemingly noble intention to reform a prostitute in a way that elicits admiration; however, in
his narrator's representation of Richard as in effect attempting to save Bella from herself, Meredith creates effects that are obviously comic and that elicit amused and critical laughter at him. The narrator tells the reader, "The young man would ask himself where the difference was between her and the women of society? How base, too, was the army of banded hypocrites! he was ready to declare war against them on her behalf. His casus belii, accurately worded, would have read curiously. Because the world refused to lure the lady to virtue with the offer of a housemaid's place, our knight threw down his challenge" (380); the narrator adds, "But the lady had scornfully rebutted this prospect of a return to chastity. Then the form of the challenge must be: Because the world declined to support the lady in luxury for nothing! But what did that mean? In other words: she was to receive the devil's wages without rendering him her services. Such an arrangement appears hardly fair on the world or on the devil. Heroes will have to conquer both before they will get them to subscribe to it" (380). While Meredith could have guided the reader to admire Richard as noble and as praiseworthy, he guides him to a critically comic response toward Richard's intention to defend Bella against a world that he perceives will not allow her to become honest. Meredith's method is to guide the reader to see what Richard is unable to see, that although Bella provides a good deal of rhetoric to the contrary she is not so much concerned with her virtue as she is with maintaining her luxurious life style. Meredith creates comic effects to show that Richard, rather than Bella, is the one in need of rescue. Thus, Meredith utilizes his narrator to trivialize Richard's intention to help Bella by revealing him as misguided, that is, as hoodwinked. Meredith creates comic effects
here by means of his narrator's verbal style. The narrator parodies Richard by representing him as a chivalrous knight in his determination to come to the aid of a damsel in distress and thus to force the world to offer Bella a menial position so that she may return to a state of chastity, neither of which Bella wants to do: that is Richard's "casus belli," that is, his justification for war. In using a high form of burlesque to present Richard's misguided attempt to rescue someone who does not want to be rescued, the narrator mocks Richard as foolish. Also, in claiming that Richard, who is represented as the hero, would have "to conquer both" the world and the devil before he could force them to support Bella's high lifestyle "for nothing," the narrator further mocks mainly Richard as unrealistic.

Another way Meredith utilizes his narrator to create a comic context is that he represents Richard as rushing to Italy to liberate Italian forces. Meredith's method is to elicit criticism to trivialize what could have been seen as noble behavior if he had represented the situation differently: rather than allowing Richard to return home to his wife, Lucy, whom he has not seen for over a year, and to his son, whom he has never seen, Meredith represents Richard as choosing to become a soldier. In response to his aunt, Mrs. Doria, who tells him to return home at once to his wife, Richard responds, "I cannot go with you to my wife . . . No! say that I am abroad, seeking for that which shall cleanse me. If I find it I shall come to claim her. If not, God help us all!" (423) The reader is critical of Richard's refusal to return home to his wife on the fantastic grounds that he can only atone for his infidelity to Lucy by fighting in Europe. Rather than revealing Richard's magnanimous
nature and his nobility in his desire to help the oppressed, Meredith reveals Richard as unwilling to come to terms with reality. Richard shows, in fact, that he prefers to recreate reality in his own terms according to his own misguided notion of what it means to be noble and a hero; Richard deludes himself with the notion that his bravery on the battlefield will somehow result in Lucy's forgiving him for his infidelity. While Richard is aware of the magnitude of his fault, he is too proud to accept forgiveness from his wife on any terms but his own; Richard's terms are that he must commit some obscure but apparently grandiose and heroic action that he mistakenly imagines makes him worthy of forgiveness. But Meredith guides the reader to see that the real reason that Richard does not return to Lucy has little to do with anything except his pride. The reader's critical response toward Richard is also comic; throughout the novel Meredith has taken care consistently to distance the reader from Richard, mainly by representing him as engaging in a year long affair with Bella, so that at this point in the novel the reader is predisposed to mock Richard for his foolishness.

The reader feels that Richard does not deserve Lucy's forgiveness; Meredith's method is to guide the reader to criticize Richard for his foolish and un-thinking actions, as what the narrator calls his "profitless extravagance" (447), that has caused Lucy so much heartache. The reader sees, as Richard is unable to see, that there is nothing abroad or anywhere else that can "cleanse" him. That Lucy is magnanimous enough to offer Richard that second chance he fervently desires, but for which he will do anything but the one thing required, that is, to ask for it, and that Richard refuses to accept the forgiveness that Lucy offers without his asking for it,
elicit the reader's criticism of him. Richard's response to his infidelity, like his response to all of those situations of questionable circumstances in his life which for the most part he is responsible for bringing about, is extreme and shows no forethought; for example, the reader recalls Richard's decision at age fourteen to fire Farmer Blaize's' rick in revenge for a whipping that he did provoke and which he was warned he would receive if he did not surrender the game he poached and retreat. Another example that reveals Richard's behavior as immoderate and shows no foresight his decision to help reform Bella in particular and prostitutes in general; Richard neither consults his wife about his project nor attempts to discern the obvious, that Bella really does not want to be redeemed. The reader is not so much surprised as disappointed that ultimately Richard willingly throws aside his last chance for happiness with Lucy and with his son; that is, throughout the novel in his representation of Richard, Meredith has conditioned the reader to expect extravagant behavior from him in which his impulsive nature impedes his ability to analyze a situation. The reader almost expects that Richard will not comply with this obvious solution to his predicament only because it is not of his own design. Thus, the reader's critical response toward Richard precludes a tragic response.

By means of his narrative voice, as well, Meredith creates various kinds of comic effects and elicits various kinds of laughter in the context in which he represents Sir Austin, Adrian Harley, and Mrs. Berry. Meredith's narrator represents Sir Austin as a great egoist, who much like Sir Willoughby, is comical in his hypocrisy; like Sir Willoughby's hypocrisy, as well, Sir Austin's hypocrisy
often has serious effects on others. In the early part of the novel Meredith creates mostly amused laughter and to some degree critically amused laughter at Sir Austin, since his System has not yet had any detrimental effects upon Richard or upon anyone else; thus, the reader is more amused by Sir Austin, the aphorist and author of "The Pilgrim's Scrip," than he is critical of him. The narrator states, "There was a half-sigh floating through his pages for those days of intellectual coxcombry, when ideas come to us affecting the embraces of virgins, and swear to us they are ours alone, and no one else have they ever visited: and we believe them. For an example of his ideas of the sex he said: 'I expect that Woman will be the last thing civilized by man'" (1). The reader understands that in Meredith "civilized" has a negative connotation; Meredith represents Sir Austin, like Willoughby, as the civilized and egotistical male of the "drawing-room" who requires the lashings of the Comic Spirit to dispel his egoism.

Meredith also utilizes his narrator to create amused laughter at Sir Austin by means of the context in which he places him; for example, Meredith represents Sir Austin as in effect playing the role of emissary to Prince Charming in his quest for Cinderella. To ensure a bride worthy of the "son of a System" Sir Austin himself not surprisingly goes in search of the perfect bride for Richard. And among many other virtues that perfect bride must possess small feet. The narrator states of what is become Sir Austin's constant practice of measuring young ladies' feet, "It appeared that he had seen numerous young ladies. He had politely asked them to sit down and take off their shoes; but such monstrous feet they had mostly that he declined the attempt to try on the Glass Slipper, and politely
departed; or tried it on, and with a resigned sad look declared that it would not, would not fit!" (127) and, "Some of the young ladies had been to schools. Their feet were all enormously too big, and there was no need for them to take off their shoes" (127). The reader is amused by the obvious comedy that Meredith creates in representing Sir Austin's odd behavior. But throughout the novel Sir Austin engages in many such oddities. In fact, later in the novel the narrator points out that a good bout of laughter would have cured Sir Austin of those eccentricities that finally cause him to engage in behavior that is detrimental to others and that does elicit the reader's criticism; the narrator states, "For a good wind of laughter had relieved him of much of the blight of self-deception, and oddness, and extravagance; had given a healthier view of our atmosphere of life; but he had it not" (171).

Meredith also utilizes his narrator to create critically amused laughter at Adrian Harley, Sir Austin's nephew and Richard's mentor, whom he represents as cynical, lazy, and self-serving; the narrator refers to Adrian as the "wise youth," in terms of his being worldly wise, and states that he "lived in eminent self-content, as one lying on soft cloud, lapt in sunshine. Nor Jove, nor Apollo, cast eye upon the maids of earth with cooler fire of selection, or pursued them in the covert with more sacred impunity. And he enjoyed his reputation for virtue as something additional. Stolen fruits are said to be sweet; undeserved rewards are exquisite" (7). In fact, Adrian is so wonderfully discreet in his indiscretions that Sir Austin chooses him to be Richard's tutor. The reader is critically amused by Adrian, a hypocrite who does not believe in Sir Austin's System of education for Richard but, who, like most of the rest of
the family who wish to protect their own interests, shows the proper allegiance to Sir Austin's methods. In representing Adrian as Richard's tutor, Meredith creates critical laughter at Sir Austin, as well; for all of his efforts to provide Richard with what he deems a morally appropriate environment, Sir Austin chooses the last person who is a fit model of morality for Richard. In choosing Adrian to be Richard's tutor, Sir Austin reveals his lack of perspicacity, a trait about which he mistakenly prides himself throughout the novel. Another example that demonstrates Meredith's method of using his narrator to create critical laughter is Adrian's response to his discovery that Richard has just gotten married. Upon finding Mrs. Berry and Ripton alone with Richard's and Lucy's wedding cake, Adrian asks Mrs. Berry to, "cut me a fair quarter" (279); he says that he plans to take the cake to Richard's unsuspecting relatives to whom he will "apportion it equitably according to their several degrees of relationship" (279) that he might, as he says, "go sow nightmares" (279).

But Meredith utilizes his narrator to create benevolently amused laughter at Mrs. Berry, who unlike Adrian, is a genuinely good individual; for example, the reader's laughter at Mrs. Berry's colorful way of stating things, as at her way of taking charge of the situation, is not critical because her motives, unlike Adrian's motives, are selfless rather than selfish. Mrs. Berry creates empathetically amused laughter when she relates her own woes to Richard and Ripton about her own husband, whom she has not seen for quite some time, but who she knows will return when it suits him to do so; Mrs. Berry tells Richard, "That man gave me noth'in but his name. . . . He got among them kitchen sluts, which was my mournin'
ready made, and worse than a widow's cap to me, which is no shame to wear, and some say becoming. There's no man as ever lived know better than my Berry how to show his legs to advantage, and gals look at 'em. I don't wonder now that Berry was prostrated. His temptations was strong, and his flesh was weak" (363). Although the reader is amused by Mrs. Berry's comical description of her problem, as by her improper use of some words, he is also sympathetic to her troubles with her erring husband. Arriving at her point that matrimony is "so comfortable" (363) because "ye are not a sinnin'! And they that severs ye they tempts ye to stray" (363), Mrs. Berry continues, "We all know what checked perspiration is . . . . It fly to the lungs, it gives ye mortal inflammation, and it carries ye off. Then I say checked matrimony is as bad. It fly to the heart, and it carries off the virtue that's in ye, and you might as well be dead! Them that is joined it's their salvation not to separate!" (363-364). Although the reader is highly amused by Mrs. Berry's analogy between "checked perspiration" and "checked matrimony" as by her inappropriate use of specific words, he is not critical of her because he understands that what she tells Richard makes sense; the reader understands, as well, that Mrs. Berry's motives for telling Richard her story are that she hopes to make him see his folly in leaving Lucy for an indefinite period of time merely because it pleases Sir Austin to separate them. Meredith guides the reader to respect Mrs. Berry and also to esteem her for talking common sense to Richard, who is so badly in need of it. Another reason the reader is not critical of Mrs. Berry is that he respects her understanding of things that Richard's father, who especially esteems what he considers is his intellectual prowess and his deep understanding of
human nature, should understand, but does not understand. Meredith's method is to guide the reader to compare Mrs. Berry to Richard's father, whose very place it is to look after Richard's best interests and who should be counseling Richard as Mrs. Berry counsels him; the reader, thus, applauds Mrs. Berry and criticizes Sir Austin.

Another example of Meredith's method of creating comic effects by means of his narrator is his representation of Clare's wedding; in spite of the outcome of the marriage between Richard's cousin, Clare, and John Toddhunter, an ancient and long-time suitor to Clare's own mother, Meredith does take care to create some obviously comic effects in relation to John as he stands at the altar. The reader is amused by the narrator's reference to John as in effect a well preserved, but not very bright relic; the narrator states, "The gentleman, though more than twice the age of his bride, had no idea of approaching senility for many long connubial years to come. Backed by his tailor and his hairdresser, he presented no such bad figure at the altar" (328) and that, "John Toddhunter was esteemed a shrewd, sensible man--only not brilliant; that he was brilliant could not be said of him. In fact, the man could hardly talk, and it was a fortunate provision that no impromptu deliveries were required of him in the marriage service" (328-329). Meredith creates comic effects here by means of litotes and innuendo. In describing John in terms of what he is not, the narrator guides the reader to think of John as precisely those things; thus, Meredith's narrator creates laughter by telling the reader in effect that John is stupid, old, and soon to be senile, and he implies that John looks presentable only because his hairdresser has covered his bald spots and that his tailor did a pretty good with an old wreck. The narrator's method of describing
John Toddhunter, though not harsh, makes it obvious that he does not think it appropriate for him to marry Clare because of the age difference, since John is somewhat older than Clare's own mother; in fact, as the narrator previously points out, John has always loved Clare's mother and has continually petitioned her to marry him. The only reason John marries Clare is because her mother suggests it, insists upon it, and orchestrates events to achieve that end. That Meredith is not harsh with John and almost excuses his folly in relation to Mrs. Doria's scheme to bring about this disastrous marriage is evident in his narrator's comment about John and Clare's mother; he states, "The rape of such men is left to the practical animal" (329). Meredith is saying that when an individual like Mrs. Doria, who is pragmatic, tyrannical, and manipulative, determines on a course of action, such as choosing the right husband for her daughter, she can in effect force a docile man, like John Toddhunter, to submit to her will.

Another character at whom Meredith utilizes his narrative voice to create critically amused laughter is Lord Mountfalcon, a notorious libertine who falls in love with Richard's wife, Lucy; Mountfalcon is like John Toddhunter in that he, too, can "hardly talk" and is not very bright. Meredith creates highly comic effects in his narrator's representation of Mountfalcon's feelings for Lucy; the narrator states, "He was a man with mighty tidings, and no language; intensely communicative, but inarticulate. Good round oaths had formerly compassed and expounded his noble emotions. They were now quite beyond the comprehension of blasphemy, even when emphasized, and by this the poor lord divinely felt the case was different" (391-392), and, "He swore by this and that he had come across an angel for his
sins, and would do her no hurt. The next moment he swore she must be his, though she cursed like a cat. His lordship's illustrations were not choice" (393).

In comparing Meredith's treatment of Lord Mountfalcon to his treatment of Mrs. Berry, the reader discerns that although Meredith does create laughter at both characters because of their lack of eloquence, there is a marked difference between Meredith's methods of representing Mrs. Berry and Lord Mountfalcon; that is, Meredith mocks Mountfalcon's lack of articulation, but he does not mock Mrs. Berry for her confusion with language. In representing his narrator as mocking Lord Mountfalcon in terms that emphasize that he is a member of the aristocracy, Meredith guides the reader to see him as a symbol of his class, that for the most part is idle and in effect is useless to society; Meredith also guides the reader to see that Mountfalcon is not right-minded and does not have a good heart. In his illustration of Mrs. Berry, however, Meredith represents his narrator as silent about some of her obvious failings with language; Meredith also takes care to guide the reader to see her as a member of the lower classes, who work hard and are useful to society. Meredith reveals, as well, that Mrs. Berry is insightful, that she is right-minded, and that she does have a good heart. Also, in revealing the contrast between Lord Mountfalcon's rather low intelligence and Mrs. Berry's mental acumen about human nature and about life, Meredith makes one of his favorite points about his society's misguided ideas in relation to an individual's worth as determined by his birth; characteristically, Meredith utilizes his narrator to create comic effects in making his point.
While many critics have responded to the comic effects that Meredith creates in *Richard Feverel*, the complexity of his mixed vision in this novel has caused many other critics to respond to the tragic effects that Meredith also creates; some of those critics who have responded to the sympathetic effects that Meredith creates in *Richard Feverel* have also complained about his narrator's intrusiveness and have not recognized or have not appreciated that Meredith usually uses his narrator to create sympathy. In fact, one of the most important ways that Meredith creates sympathy for Richard is by means of his narrator, who plays a major role in guiding the reader's response in the manner proposed by Guthke in his discussion of tragicomic narrative; on three different occasions Meredith's narrator reveals the degree to which Richard is subject to what he calls Sir Austin's "abhorrent despotism" (82), as well as to Sir Austin's pride. Meredith's method is to create a good deal of sympathy for Richard in the early stages of his adolescence and his adulthood when he is subject to his father's tyranny. For example, when Richard is in his mid-teens he begins to write poetry; Sir Austin hears of it and immediately demands that Richard burn all of it in front of him, as well as he exacts a promise from Richard that he will never again write poetry. The narrator states that Sir Austin, who is quite self-satisfied with this achievement, "told Lady Blandish that Richard had, at his best, done what no poet had ever been known to be capable of doing: he had, with his own hands, and in cold blood, committed his virgin manuscript to the flames" (82). The narrator comments, "Killing one's darling child is a painful imposition. For a youth in his blossoming season, who fancies himself a poet, to be requested to destroy his first-born, without a
reason (though to pretend a reason cogent enough to justify the request with a mockery) is a piece of abhorrent despotism, and Richard's blossoms withered under it" (82). Meredith creates a good deal of sympathy for Richard in representing him as forced metaphorically to commit murder by burning his poetry. Meredith elicits the reader's shock and his disapprobation of Sir Austin, whom Meredith represents as grossly unfair; Meredith also guides the reader to understand that Richard's father has stifled his son's creativity, as well as a key means and a healthy means by which he can express his feelings. Meredith's method, then, is that he guides the reader to feel outraged with Sir Austin on Richard's behalf and thus to sympathize with Richard.

Another example of the way Meredith utilizes his narrator to create sympathy for Richard as subject to his father's "abhorrent despotism" is his representation of Richard's broken spirit after he tries to flee to Lucy. Richard determines to steal away to Lucy when he comes to learn that the reason his father had detained him in town for several weeks, even after admitting that his supposed apoplexy was only a pretext to get Richard to come to him, was so that Lucy could be sent away. But on his ride through heavy rains one night in his attempt to find Lucy, Richard collapses from illness and is put to bed at an inn by Tom Bakewell, his trusted companion and a principal in the "Bakewell Comedy." The narrator represents Sir Austin's response in seeing his son lying in bed senseless with fever and upon learning the reason for Richard's stealthy departure; the narrator states, "Was the Scientific Humanist remorseful? He had looked forward to such a crisis as that point in the disease his son was the victim of, when the body would fail and give the spirit calm
to conquer the malady, knowing very well that the seeds of the evil
were not of the spirit... Anxious he was, and prayerful; but with
faith in the physical energy he attributed to his System" (188).
Meredith creates sympathy for Richard by guiding the reader to blame
Sir Austin for tyrannizing over him. Meredith's method is to
represent Richard as at the mercy of a father who is really a
misguided egomaniac with little use for romance. Meredith's narrator
has revealed that Richard and Lucy love each other, as well as he has
represented Lucy as innocent, as wholesome, as intelligent, and as
perfectly suitable for Richard; the reader feels certain that Sir
Austin would approve of Lucy if he only knew her.

In fact, Sir Austin comes too late to approve of Lucy as the
only person suitable for Richard. Meredith guides the reader to
understand that Richard's stealing away to find Lucy is the only
option that his father leaves him. Thus, Meredith creates further
sympathy for Richard, in guiding the reader to hope that Richard's
attempt to find Lucy will meet with success. Meredith also guides
the reader to criticize Sir Austin, who attributes Richard's natural
and emotional development to his System. Meredith guides the reader
further to criticize Sir Austin for anticipating some "crisis" in
Richard's life that would test Sir Austin's theory that the spirit
can conquer the flesh. The reader is critical that Sir Austin can
look calmly upon Richard, though he is well aware that his son could
die; that is, the reader is critical of Sir Austin because he treats
his son like an experiment. In eliciting the reader's anger toward
Sir Austin for his constant plotting against Richard and Lucy, as
well as his criticism of Sir Austin's pose of cool detachment from
his son, Meredith guides the reader to sympathize with Richard.
Later in the novel Meredith also uses his narrator to create sympathy for Richard by representing him as subject to his father's pride, as well as to his father's revenge for marrying Lucy. After Sir Austin learns that Richard has eloped with Lucy, he instructs Adrian to show Richard something of the world with the intention that Richard should come to regret his marriage to Lucy as foolish. In response to Sir Austin's request, Adrian orchestrates events so that Richard believes that as a diversion he is to attend a dinner party where the guests appear as ladies and gentlemen, but are really prostitutes and their clients; it is at this party that Richard meets Bella and begins an acquaintance with her that leads to his defeat. Upon hearing of the potential danger that Lady Blandish understands awaits Richard in the company he is keeping, she immediately writes to his father informing him of the circumstances, asking him to put an immediate stop to the situation by calling Richard to his side at once. Sir Austin, however, refuses to do anything; the narrator explains, "He quitted London to take refuge among the mountains; living there in solitary commune with a virgin note-book. Some indefinite scheme was in his head in this treatment of his son. Had he construed it, it would have looked ugly; and it settled to a vague principle that the young man should be tried and tested" (343). Meredith's narrator implies that Sir Austin is glad that something will happen to shatter Richard's marriage; he implies that Sir Austin wants revenge because Richard chooses his own wife, rather than allowing his father to choose the bride that he deems best for him. Sir Austin's rationalization that Richard should be "tried and tested" allows him to indulge his hypocrisy without feeling like a hypocrite. Meredith guides the reader to a highly critical response
toward Sir Austin, who does not act like a father who loves his son, although the narrator tells the reader numerous times throughout the book that Sir Austin does love Richard; also, Meredith guides the reader to question why he feels that he should judge Richard; the reader also questions why Sir Austin would even want to test his son. Meredith guides the reader to criticize Sir Austin for his self-deluding and self-righteous conviction that he is fit to test anyone else, as well as to question why Sir Austin should be so anxious for results of a test that could well be and, in fact, are detrimental to Richard. By means of his narrator, Meredith guides the reader to feel that if Sir Austin had stepped in at this critical moment in Richard's life when he needs his father's guidance most, his involvement with Bella could have been prevented. Meredith guides the reader to see that Sir Austin does not so much care about what is morally appropriate, or that it is his paternal duty to warn his son of the potential danger that he does understand awaits Richard; Meredith reveals that Sir Austin cares only about his own feelings. Meredith's method, then, is to elicit the reader's disapprobation of Sir Austin and his sympathy for Richard, who at least initially in his acquaintance with Bella is extremely naive, as he fully trusts her and believes everything she tells him.

While Meredith does create sympathy for Richard by revealing that he is subject to the tyrannical whims of his father, Meredith also creates sympathy for Richard in representing him in terms of the tragic hero as proposed by Aristotle. Meredith represents Richard as basically good and as noble, or, at least as aspiring to be noble; for example, Meredith guides the reader to see Richard mainly as an obedient son who tries to please his tyrannical and often
unreasonable father, as well as he guides the reader to see him as
noble in his elopement with Lucy; that is, Richard never tries to
compromise Lucy. He takes for granted that they will get married,
and after briefly discussing the situation with Lucy Richard makes
all of the arrangements and they do get married. And, at the end of
the novel Meredith does guide the reader to admire Richard's
determination and his decision to be honest with Lucy, though he
understands that he could lose her. Even when Richard attacks
Benson, who has nightly been spying upon him and Lucy and reporting
back to Sir Austin, Richard warns him that his method of positioning
himself is making him receive a greater impact from the punches;
standing over a felled Benson Richard relates the situation to Adrian
who knows precisely what has happened and who appears on the scene in
his own good time. Richard states, "The coward bobbed while I
struck. I marked his back. He ducked. I told him he was getting it
worse" (153). Although the situation is comically presented,
Meredith guides the reader to see that even in a justified rage at
being spied upon Richard does have a sense of fair play. Richard is
also like the Aristotelian tragic hero in terms of his social
position and his wealth: he is a member of the highest class and is
extremely wealthy. Also, Richard has two specific character flaws,
p pride and anger, that trigger the behavior or the error that finally
brings about his defeat, as well as the defeat of others.

Meredith also uses his narrator to create sympathy for Richard
by foreshadowing trouble and by creating a sense of urgency about
Richard's future; for example, Meredith's narrator draws the reader's
attention to the fact that something is going to happen to Richard as
he makes arrangements to marry Lucy. Each morning while in the midst
of making wedding arrangements Richard writes his father a letter in which he makes excuses for not visiting the Grandisons, the family of the girl whom Sir Austin has chosen as Richard's prospective bride. The narrator discusses the baronet's response to Richard's letters; he states, "That cold dutiful tone assured him there was no internal trouble or distraction... Complacently, he sat and smiled, little witting that his son's ordeal was imminent, and that his son's ordeal was to be his own" (245). Although the emphasis in the narrator's description points to Sir Austin's ordeal, the reader feels anxious for Richard rather than for his father; that is, Sir Austin's "ordeal" will be whatever happens to Richard rather than to himself. Meredith does not guide the reader to sympathize with Sir Austin, whom he represents as motivated by his own self-interest rather than by a selfless concern for Richard's welfare. Another example of the way Meredith utilizes his narrator to foreshadow trouble for Richard and to create a sense of anxiety about Richard's future is that he draws a parallel between Richard and Caesar; the narrator states, "Richard Feverel was now crossing the River of his Ordeal... And yet the young man loved his father, loved his home: and I dare say Caesar loved Rome: but whether he did or no, Caesar when he killed the republic was quite bald, and the hero we are dealing with is scarce beginning to feel his despotic moustache. Did he know what he was made of? Doubtless, nothing at all" (248). In representing Richard's "Ordeal" as similar to Caesar's ordeal, Meredith creates anxiety for Richard; that is, the reader understands Meredith's subtle implication that however successful Caesar was when he "killed the republic," it ended in his death. And another example of the way Meredith utilizes his narrator to allude to trouble in Richard's
future and thus to create a sense of anxiety in the reader, is his discussion of Richard in relation to his friendship with Lord Mountfalcon; the narrator states, "The son of a System was, therefore, launched; not only through the surf, but in deep waters" (309). Again, the reader feels troubled for Richard who, in effect, is abandoned by his father to deal with those elements in the world that he has never encountered and that he does not understand; the reader, however, does understand the impending danger awaiting Richard.

Meredith utilizes his narrator, as well, to create sympathy for Lucy; Meredith's chief method for eliciting pity for Lucy is to reveal her as motivated to do what she believes is best for Richard and as willing to forego her own happiness for his sake; for example, Lady Blandish visits Lucy and asks her to leave the county supposedly because her presence is harmful to Richard, and she informs Lucy, as well, that Richard's prospective bride has been selected. Lucy agrees to leave because she does believe that it would be in Richard's best interests for her to go. Meredith guides the reader to infer that Lucy is told that because she belongs to a class inferior to Richard's and also because she is a Catholic and Richard is a Protestant that a union between them would be impossible. Meredith guides the reader to feel sorry for the heartache that Lucy must have felt and to admire her unselfish determination to do what she is made to believe is best for Richard. Meredith guides the reader to admire Lucy, as well, by representing her as loving, as kind, as gentle, and eventually as a devoted wife and mother. In fact, even before Richard and Lucy become romantically involved, Meredith represents Lucy as acting like a friend to Richard, as she
tries to protect him: when Richard is about to be transported for his role in firing Farmer Blaize's rick, Lucy pleads with her uncle to spare him. The reader admires Lucy for trying to help Richard, though she had never before met him, and also in spite of the fact that Richard is barely civil to her and dismisses her as a tiresome little girl. After Richard and Lucy do elope Meredith creates sympathy for Lucy by taking care to underscore her belief that Richard is with his father, when he is having an affair with Bella. The reader is emotionally moved by the fact that Lucy, who is being deceived by Richard, does not tell him that she is pregnant, as she does not later tell him that she has given birth to their son, because she believes that he must stay away so that he can reconcile with his father. In representing Lucy as going through her pregnancy, as giving birth, and as raising their child without her husband because he is with Bella, Meredith creates a great deal of sympathy for Lucy.

Meredith also creates sympathy for Lucy in the same way that he creates sympathy for Richard: Meredith foreshadows trouble and thereby creates a sense of anxiety about her. For example, Meredith's narrator implies that unfortunate consequences will result from Lucy's decision to follow Adrian's suggestion that she not return with Richard to see his father. He states, "The conquest of an epicure, or any young wife's conquest beyond her husband, however loyally devised for their mutual happiness, may be costly to her" (322). Meredith takes care further to elicit sympathy for Lucy by representing her as the best individual in the novel; that is, although Lucy is the very one who has been most unfairly treated, she is the only one who is willing to forgive others. Meredith reveals
that in spite of the fact that Sir Austin intentionally mistreats Lucy and that Richard unintentionally mistreats her, Lucy is willing to forgive them. In comparing Lucy to Sir Austin, the reader is aware that he is like Sir Willoughby, since he often talks and seems almost to brag about his inability and his unwillingness to forgive anyone who purposefully crosses his purposes. Richard, as well, can neither forgive others nor accept their forgiveness; he cannot forgive Mountfalcon for his unsuccessful attempt to seduce Lucy, nor can he accept Lucy's forgiveness for his own weakness in succumbing to Bella's successful attempt to seduce him. Thus, if Lucy were to follow Sir Austin's policy in dealing with those who work at cross purposes with him, she would not forgive him because his constant schemes and plots to keep Richard from her cause her great heartache. Similarly, if Lucy were to follow Richard's policy in dealing with those who deceive him, like Mountfalcon, she would not forgive Richard, who deceives her on a daily basis for over a year.

Meredith's method, then, is to represent Lucy as the injured party and also as the only one who possesses a truly generous and forgiving spirit; also, in revealing that Sir Austin and Richard need and do obtain Lucy's forgiveness for their treatment of her, Meredith guides the reader to admire Lucy. In fact, Meredith creates admiration and sympathy for Lucy by contrasting her genuinely Christian behavior with Sir Austin's and with Richard's hypocrisy. That is, Meredith guides the reader to see that in spite of all of Sir Austin's talk about Lucy as unsuitable for Richard in large part because she is a Catholic, as well as his talk about himself as in effect a model Christian, Lucy is the only one who demonstrates Christian charity
and forgiveness, as she is the only one willing to forgive those who do not deserve her forgiveness.

One of the most significant ways that Meredith elicits sympathy for Richard, Lucy, and their newborn son, is that he represents Richard's and Lucy's lost potential: in taking care to represent Richard as given a second chance and in effect as throwing that chance away by risking and by losing everything he wanted and could have had, Meredith guides the reader to see the lost potential of what could have been; in representing Lucy as dying because of the choice Richard makes, in revealing Richard as all but dead at the end of the novel, and in guiding the reader to see that their child will in effect have no parents, Meredith elicits the reader's pity for what could have been but can never be. Meredith's whole pattern is that he underscores what might have been; he points to the happy ending that seems so certain, but that finally can never be.

Meredith's overarching method in representing Richard's actions and their repercussions is to guide the reader to see that the potential for everyone's happiness is there and is very attainable but is forever lost: the potential for a loving relationship between Richard and Lucy is lost; the potential for a happy family life with their son is lost; the potential for a reconciliation between Richard and his father is lost. The reader feels that even the life of material comfort and ease that Richard would no doubt live would be of little comfort to him in light of the state of his health at the end of the novel.

Analysis of Meredith's tragic effects in Richard Feverel indicates that he apparently considered that one of the ends of tragedy is to deter an individual from engaging in particular kinds
of behavior in the manner proposed by Sidney. Although Meredith does not allow the didactic aspects of his fiction to overtake the artistic aspects of it, throughout the novel he represents his narrator as pointing out the folly of Richard's and Sir Austin's behavior, as warning the reader about the consequences resulting from specific behavior in which Richard or his father engage, or as instructing the reader for his moral edification. For example, after Richard burns his poetry as his father requests him to do, Meredith's narrator underscores the repercussions of Sir Austin's tyranny; he states, "And so Farewell my young Ambition! and with it Farewell all true confidence between Father and Son" (82). Another example of Meredith's method of utilizing his narrator to point to tragic repercussions that may result from folly is that Sir Austin tells his sister, Mrs. Doria, that she must remove her daughter, Clare, from the house because her presence "was undesirable" (85); the narrator states that Mrs. Doria "felt culpable that she had not before, and could not then, tell her brother that he had set up an Idol in his house--an Idol of flesh! more retributive and abominable than wood, or brass, or gold. But she had bowed to the Idol too long . . . She had, and she dimly perceived it, committed a greater fault in tactics, in teaching her daughter to bow to the Idol also. Love of that kind Richard took for Tribute" (86). By means of his narrator Meredith further foreshadows trouble ahead for Richard and Lucy and he also guides the reader to understand that tragic repercussions may result from actions based in "Folly"; in relation to Mrs. Berry's anxiety over the wedding breakfast she prepares for Richard and for Lucy, Meredith's narrator states, "Many hours, much labour and anxiety of mind, Mrs. Berry had expended upon this breakfast, and
why? There is one who comes to all feasts that have their basis in Folly, whom criminals of trained instinct are careful to provide against: who will speak, and whose hateful voice must somehow be silenced while the feast is going on. The personage is THE PHILOSOPHER. Mrs. Berry knew him" (265).

In The Tragic Comedians, as in Richard Feverel, Meredith creates a vision of considerable complexity by combining comic and tragic elements; in The Tragic Comedians as in Richard Feverel, as well, some critics who have responded to Meredith's comic effects have either not recognized or have not appreciated that Meredith creates the great majority of these effects by means of his narrator. Meredith utilizes his narrators variously to elicit amused, critical, and derisive laughter at his protagonists and some of his other main characters in his novel. For example, Meredith uses his narrator to guide the reader to criticize the von Rudigers in their hatred of Alvan because he is a Jew; the narrator points out, "The Jew was to Clotilda as flesh of swine to the Jew. Her parents had the same abhorrence of Jewry. One of the favorite similes of the family for whatsoever grunted in grossness, wriggled with meanness, was Jew: and it was noteworthy from the fact that a streak of the blood was in the veins of the latest generation and might have been traced on the maternal side" (9). Meredith creates irony here by representing the von Rudigers as hating the very thing that Mrs. von Rudiger and Clotilda are themselves; Meredith's irony is the more poignant because it is precisely "on the maternal side" that Jews trace lineage. Meredith's method is to shroud the basis of the von Rudigers' disgust toward Alvan within a comic atmosphere; that is, Meredith represents Clotilda's parents as the objects of ironic
observation in their blind hatred of Alvan in particular and of Jews in general. Thus, in revealing the von Rudigers as hypocrites, Meredith trivializes their objections to Alvan as unsuitable for their daughter. Meredith also amuses the reader with his narrator's representation of General von Rudiger's rage toward Clotilda, who claims that she loves Alvan and wants to marry him; for example, after Alvan hands Clotilda back to her mother, the narrator states that her father "dragged her indoors, muttering of his policy in treating her at last to a wholesome despotism" and that "With a frightful noise of hammering, he himself nailed-up the window shutters of the room she was locked in hard and fast, and he left her there and roared across the household that any one holding communication with the prisoner should be shot like a dog" (81). General von Rudiger's extravagant verbal and physical demonstrations of his anger precisely reveal him as waxing "out of proportion" and as "overblown," two conditions that Meredith cites as comic in his *Essay On Comedy*.

Meredith utilizes his narrator to create amused laughter at Clotilda, as well; for example, Meredith represents Clotilda as playful in her description to Alvan of the letter concerning their upcoming marriage that she plans to write to the baroness, who is much older than Alvan and who has been his friend and mentor for many years. After Alvan shows her a photograph of the baroness, Clotilda is visibly critical of her age and her looks; while Clotilda does not at this point consider the baroness a rival, she is slightly jealous of the baroness because she is unclear about the nature of Alvan's attachment to her. Clotilda says, "I will compose a beautiful, dutiful, modest, oddest, beseeching, screeching, mildish, childish
epistle to her . . ." (57-58). The comic effects are obvious, as Clotilda uses sing-song rhymes to describe the kind of letter she will write; also, that the letter should be "beautiful" as well as "oddest," "screeching," and "childish" seems contradictory and it amuses the reader, as well as guiding him to consider that the letter will most likely be inappropriate. Meredith later guides the reader to understand that Clotilda's letter is, in fact, very inappropriate. Meredith creates another instance of amused, benign laughter toward Clotilda by means of his narrator, who informs the reader of her daydream about Alvan's method of rescuing her. In spite of the fact that Clotilda has already renounced Alvan in a letter she writes to him, as well as having renounced him in another letter to his friend, Clotilda conceives Alvan's plan to rescue her; the narrator informs the reader that Clotilda daydreams that she goes into a confessional "where sat a man with his head in a hood, and he soon heard enough of a mixed substance to dash his hood, almost his head, off. The black page comprised a very long list. 'But put this on the white page,' says she to the surging father inside the box--'I loved Alvan!' A sentence or two more fetches the Alvanic man jumping out of the priest . . . 'How could you expect a girl, who is not a Papist, to come kneeling here?' she says. And he answers with no matter what of a gallant kind" (100-101). Aside from the obvious comic effects that Meredith creates here, the reader is amused, as well, by Clotilda's plan in light of the fact that neither Clotilda nor Alvan is Catholic. Another example of benign, amused laughter that Meredith creates toward Clotilda is her response to her father's stories about the baroness as in effect something less than a lady. After she writes her "beautiful dutiful" letter to the baroness and
subsequently receives a reply that is not quite the sympathetically sentimental endorsement Clotilda expects, she is ready to listen to her father's stories about the baroness' smoking habits; Clotilda exclaims to her father, "The woman is hateful" (106). The narrator elicits laughter in his presentation of Clotilda's thoughts about the baroness; he states, "He and she!--the miserable old thing with her ancient arts and cajoleries had lured him back! She had him fast, in spite of--for who could tell? perhaps by reason of her dirty habits; She smoked dragoon cigars! All day she was emitting tobacco-smoke; it was notorious, Clotilda had not to learn it from her father . . . ." (106).

Meredith also guides the reader to a critical response toward Clotilda, although the situation in which he represents her could have elicited sympathy if Meredith had chosen to represent it in a manner that would create an emotional impact upon the reader; in representing Clotilda as imprisoned by her father in her bedroom, Meredith could have guided the reader to sympathize with her, as for example, in Clarissa Richardson guides the reader to sympathize with Clarissa's imprisonment in her bedroom by her family. Yet Meredith trivializes Clotilda's imprisonment by representing her as socially deprived, that is, as deprived only of interaction with her family rather than as physically deprived, that is, as deprived of essential bodily needs like food and water. In taking care to make clear that Clotilda is deprived of interaction with the family, rather than of life supporting sustenance, Meredith guides the reader to criticize her for succumbing to her father's demands that she renounce Alvan. While Clotilda is imprisoned in her room Meredith mocks her by representing her grief as motivated by self-pity; thus, he guides the
reader to scorn her. The narrator states, "She wept through the night. . . The reason why she wept with so delirious a persistency, was that her nature felt the necessity for draining her of her self-pitifulness, knowing that it nourished the love whereby she was tormented. They do not weep thus who have a heart for the struggle" (82) and, "The tears were now mixed drops of pity for her absent lover and her family; she was already disunited from him when she shed them, feeling that she was dry rock to herself, heartless as many bosoms drained of self-pity will become . . . " (83). In utilizing his narrator to tell the reader that Clotilda was "self-pitiful" and "heartless," Meredith guides him to criticize her; Meredith's method, then, is to elicit a critical response toward Clotilda and thereby distance the reader from her to deprive her sorrow from affecting the reader with tragic force.

Meredith further guides the reader to criticize Clotilda by revealing her readiness to believe the flimsy and false information about Alvan with which her parents provide her; that is, the reader does expect that at the very least Clotilda should question whatever information about Alvan her family gives her. For example, Clotilda does not question the veracity of her maid's telling her that Alvan has left the city when she knows and has often stated that Alvan does not run from anything or from anyone; nor does Clotilda question the reliability of the information that her parents ascertain in relation to Alvan's relationship with the baroness. Thus, Meredith elicits the reader's criticism of Clotilda's inability to see what is or should be obvious to her. By means of his narrator Meredith further lessens the emotional impact of Clotilda's situation upon the reader by guiding him to criticize her for refusing Alvan an interview;
although Clotilda is held a prisoner in her bedroom by her parents, Alvan is able to reach the head of her father's office to insist that Clotilda be allowed an interview with him. Thus, in effect with the eyes of the country, or at least, with the eyes of her father's superiors watching the situation, Clotilda's parents cannot do anything to prevent that meeting. Meredith guides the reader's critical response toward Clotilda by representing her as refusing to have an interview with Alvan only because she does not like von Tresten and because she listens to her father's rendition of Alvan's relationship with the baroness. Later in the novel Meredith elicits the reader's criticism toward Clotilda by taking care to affirm the reader's suspicions that Clotilda must have been highly skeptical or, at least, should have been highly skeptical about the integrity of the information about Alvan with which her family provides her; Meredith's narrator states of Clotilda, "She had been swayed to act against him by tales which in her heart she did not credit exactly, therefore did not take within herself, though she let them influence her by the goad of her fears and angers; and these she could conjure up at will for the defense of her conduct, aware of their shallowness, and all the while trusting him to come in the end and hear her reproaches for his delay" (110).

Meredith also creates critically amused laughter toward Clotilda; for example, the reader is critical of Clotilda though he is amused by her odd reaction to Professor Storchel's response to her letter renouncing Alvan. The reader is critically amused by Clotilda's inability to anticipate the professor's very predictable response to the letter she writes to him renouncing his friend, Alvan. After succumbing to her father's demands that she write a
letter to Alvan renouncing him, Clotilda again submits to her father's demand to write a second letter renouncing Alvan to his good friend, Professor Storchel. Clotilda receives a letter in reply from the professor in which he advises her to listen to her parents; the narrator states of Clotilda, "She wept over Alvan for having had so false a friend" (99). The reader is critical of Clotilda, though he is amused by her as well, because it is she who is false. The reader is also surprised that Clotilda should expect that Professor Storchel would not take her at her word; the reader expects, as well, that Clotilda must have surmised that her father would also write a letter of his own to the professor affirming and reinforcing Clotilda's stated determination to renounce Alvan. And Clotilda's father predictably does write such a letter to the professor. But Clotilda fosters the expectation that somehow Alvan's friend should simply know that she really did not want to write that letter and that, therefore, he should have openly declared her letter to be false. Yet the reader understands, as Clotilda does not understand, that it is no one's place but her own to make clear what should be deemed as true and what as false in relation to her personal feelings for Alvan; the reader understands as Clotilda does not, that it is in her own self-interest to be truthful about her real feelings for Alvan. The reader discerns that Meredith's method is to represent Clotilda as unwilling to act on her own behalf, yet as expecting others to be willing to act for her; in guiding the reader to equate Clotilda's expectations with those of a child, Meredith guides the reader to respond toward Clotilda with critically amused laughter.

Throughout the novel Meredith methodically utilizes his narrator to elicit various degrees of criticism toward Clotilda, by
which means he distances the reader from her, to the point that he eventually elicits critical laughter at her. In guiding the reader to criticize Clotilda, Meredith distances her from him. By means of his narrator Meredith uses three methods to guide the reader to a critical response toward Clotilda: he trivializes her feelings for Alvan; he variously mocks her motivations and her actions; and at the end of the novel after Alvan is killed he tells the reader that in spite of Clotilda's actions to the contrary there is no doubt that she would have gone with Alvan if he had come for her. Meredith's method of trivializing Clotilda's feelings for Alvan is to equate her feelings for him precisely with those of a child; the narrator states, "Her duty was thus performed: she had plighted herself. For the first few days she was in dread of meeting, seeing, or hearing of Alvan . . . . and neither meeting, seeing, nor hearing of him, she began to yearn, like the child whose curiosity is refreshed by a desire to try again the startling thing which frightened it" (37). In discussing Clotilda's feelings for Alvan in terms of a child who wishes to satisfy his curiosity about something that frightens yet fascinates him, Meredith's narrator implies that her feelings are not deep and that she does not understand the nature of the thing that frightens her. Meredith guides the reader to understand that Clotilda's feelings for Alvan are like a child's feelings for something out of his ordinary scope of experience: Clotilda is captivated by the novelty of the experience. Another way that Meredith's narrator trivializes Clotilda's feelings is that he reveals her thoughts, which in large part motivate her feelings, as superficial; typically, Meredith makes his point in metaphorical terms. The narrator states of Clotilda, "She owned that she could
better live the poetic life—that is trifle with fire and reflect on its charms—in the society of Marko" (38). Meredith is saying that Clotilda is afraid of Alvan, yet fascinated by him and that although she likes brief public encounters with Alvan, she prefers the quiet safety of Marko's company where she can reflect on the possibilities of a dramatic life with Alvan. Meredith's metaphorical representation of Clotilda's feelings guides the reader to understand that Clotilda's feelings for Alvan, as well as her feelings for Marko, are not great; thus, Meredith guides the reader to criticize Clotilda for leading Alvan to believe that she is more committed to the relationship than she really is, as well as for trifling with Marko's affections.

Another example of Meredith's method of eliciting a critically comic response toward Clotilda is that he represents her as desiring that her family, who are completely opposed to her relationship with Alvan, help her to be with him. Meredith's narrator reveals that Clotilda would like her family to show her the affection and warmth that she requires to strengthen her resolve to marry Alvan; at such time, she can cast them off with no regrets and can then publicly blame them in a written record of their guilt. Meredith represents his narrator as stating that Clotilda "was undirected either in thinking or wishing by any desires, except that the people about her should caress and warm her, until, with no gaze backward, she could say good-bye to them, full of meaning as a good-bye to the covered grave, as unreluctantly as the swallow quits her eaves-nest in autumn: and they were to learn that they were chargeable with the sequel of the history . . . " (112). The reader is comically amused by Clotilda's expectation that her parents should in effect make it
easy for her to defy them. The narrator goes on to say, "There would be a sequel, she was sure, if it came only to punish them for the cruelty which thwarted her timid anticipation of it by pressing on her natural instinct at all costs to bargain for an escape from pain, and making her simulate contentment to cheat her muffled wound and them" (112).

As the novel progresses, however, Meredith guides the reader to scorn Clotilda, as his narrator systematically trivializes her feelings for Alvan and mocks her. As is his wont, Meredith makes his points about Clotilda's failings metaphorically and by means of his narrator, who often refers to Clotilda as a "shallow vessel." For example, the narrator reveals Clotilda's thoughts in response to Alvan's decision that they will not elope; while Alvan insists that Clotilda return to her parents so that they can have a respectable marriage, Clotilda fears the worst and insists that they must elope if they are to be together. The narrator states that Clotilda "could almost have said: 'Know me better;' and she would, sincere as her passion in its shallow vessel was, have been moved to say it for a warning while yet there was time to leave the house . . ." (74). In representing Clotilda's love for Alvan as contained within a "shallow vessel," Meredith guides the reader to understand that her feelings, however "sincere," cannot be much because they are not deep. Another way that Meredith trivializes Clotilda's feelings for Alvan and thereby distances the reader from her is that he represents his narrator as posing the question of whether or not she loves Alvan and then as answering that question; in answer to his question, "Was it love?" the narrator responds, "It was as lofty a stretch as her nature could strain to" (65). The narrator's response is not really
a "yes." And while it is true that an individual's emotional response is subject to the limits of his own nature, that is, that an individual can only feel as much as he is capable of feeling, the narrator has informed the reader that her feelings for Alvan reside within a "shallow vessel." The diligent reader is aware that although Meredith does not praise Clotilda here in representing her feelings for Alvan as "shallow," and in implying, as well, that by nature she is not capable of deep feelings, these two comments are the best things that his narrator says about her.

Another way that Meredith trivializes Clotilda's feelings for Alvan and thereby elicits the reader's criticism of her is that he reveals that after being ostracized from her family for forty-eight hours, Clotilda submits to her mother; describing her "submission" as "the last wrestling with a weakness that was alternately her love and her cowardice," the narrator states, "the interpretation of the act ran: 'He may come, and I am his if he comes: and if not, I am bound to my people" (84). Meredith characteristically underscores his point by utilizing his narrator to create a comic effect by way of analogy; the narrator states, "In a similar mood, the spiritual waverer vows to believe if the saint will appear" (84). As in his affirmation of the "sincerity" of Clotilda's passion as contained within a "shallow vessel," Meredith does not much praise Clotilda in comparing her to a "spiritual waverer," whose affirmation of faith depends upon his obtaining tangible proof that his faith is not misplaced. Meredith reveals that in her "submission" Clotilda in effect says that she will marry Marko, of whom her family greatly approves, if Alvan does not come to claim her hand. In representing Clotilda as in effect saying that she will marry whoever is strong
enough to accomplish his will, Meredith reveals that she does not much care whether she marries Alvan or Marko; thus, Meredith underscores his point that Clotilda's feelings for Alvan, as well as her feelings for Marko, do reside within a "shallow vessel."

Other ways that Meredith makes light of Clotilda's feelings for Alvan are that he represents her as acknowledging herself as an actress and he also reveals her as an actress. For example, after her initial meeting with Alvan, Clotilda resolves to return home to tell her parents that she is going to marry him; Clotilda tells Alvan that she does "not really dread the scenes from anticipating failure, still--the truth is, I fear I am three parts an actress, and the fourth feels itself a shivering morsel to face reality" (67-68). And at the end of the novel Meredith represents Clotilda precisely as the actress she fears herself to be, as she practices her parting words to Marko who departs to fight a duel in her father's place with Alvan; the narrator states that Clotilda had, "gone through the pathos of her fatalism above stairs in her bedroom before Marko took his final farewell of her, so she could speak her 'Heaven be with you!' unshaken, though sadly (151). Although Meredith amuses the reader with his representation of Clotilda as practicing her lines to effect just the right touch of pathos in wishing Marko well, Meredith simultaneously guides the reader to criticize Clotilda's hypocrisy.

Another method Meredith uses to guide the reader to a critical response toward Clotilda is that he systematically represents his narrator as describing her as a coward. In fact, so many times does Meredith's narrator call Clotilda a "craven" or some variation of that term, like "pusillanimous" or "cowardly," that Clotilda's cowardice is a motif in the novel. For example, in reference to
Alvan's stating that he immediately wants to see her parents to petition them for her hand, the narrator describes Clotilda's reaction; he states, "she separated herself from him in spirit, and beheld him as her father and mother and her circle would look on this pretender to her hand. . . . She saw him in their eyes, quite coldly: which imaginative capacity was one of the remarkable feats of cowardice, active and cold of brain even while the heart is active and warm" (33-34). Another example of Meredith's method of using his narrator to elicit scorn toward Clotilda's cowardice is his description of her decision to write a second letter to Alvan's friend, Professor Storchel, and to tell him the truth about the falseness of her previous letter to him in which she renounces Alvan; the narrator states, "Now to write to him to bind him to his beautiful human emotion. . . . the nervous little advocate seemed an emissary of the skies, and she invoked her treasure stores of the craven's craftiness in revolt to compose a letter that should move him, melt the good angel to espouse her cause" (145).

But even before Clotilda and Alvan meet, Meredith guides the reader to a critical response toward her by sketching her as trifling with the feelings of others, as "volatile," and as cruel. In the opening pages of the novel, for example, Meredith's narrator discusses Clotilda's dissatisfaction with the numerous conquests she had made by her seventeenth year; after alluding to Clotilda's inexperience and to her unthinkingly flirtatious manner, the narrator states that one day while she is out walking with Count Constantine, Clotilda's current suitor, she sees Marko, and very shortly thereafter she concludes her relationship with the Count to form an attachment with Marko. The narrator describes Count Constantine as
"not an example" of "goodness"(5), and Marko as "goodness"(5). And while Meredith guides the reader to conclude that Clotilda makes a wise decision in concluding her relationship with the Count and in beginning one with Marko, he also guides the reader to criticize Clotilda's behavior toward Marko. The narrator shows that she does not love Marko as anything other than what his narrator terms as a "pet" or as a "slave," yet she plights herself to him. Clotilda explains that she became engaged to Marko to please "her dying relative and dearest on earth and had pleased her parents by following it up with the kindest attentions to the prince" (52). Thus, Clotilda makes everyone, especially Marko, believe that she is engaged to him. At this point in the novel the narrator states that Clotilda hears of Alvan, immediately becomes intrigued with him, and arranges to attend a party where she knows he will be present; later during that evening of their first meeting, Clotilda publicly plights herself to Alvan in a "demi-ceremony of betrothal" (45). Another example that precisely demonstrates the way Meredith guides the reader to a critical response toward Clotilda to distance her from him is that he represents her as purposefully hurting Marko's feelings; in relation to her feelings for Alvan Clotilda asks Marko "how deep" (39) is his love for her and if he could bear even her "unfaithfulness" (39) to him. Marko responds, "I would wait till he flung you off, and then kneel to you" (40). The narrator states that in reflection Clotilda "reached to the dim idea of some such nauseous devotion" (40). Meredith takes care to guide the reader to feel angry with Clotilda on Marko's behalf, as well as to feel critical of her callous treatment of him.
By means of his narrator Meredith guides the reader further to criticize Clotilda by revealing her desire for a husband who will dominate her; in revealing that the principal reason Clotilda is attracted to Alvan is because of his desire and his ability to tyrannize her, and in illustrating, as well, that Clotilda is practically contemptuous of Marko because of his desire to please her, Meredith distances the reader from Clotilda. In Meredith and also in life an individual's desire to dominate another individual or his desire to be dominated by another individual is not a high aspiration. Meredith always underscores the need for a woman either in or out of marriage to express her own individuality; in his novels Meredith is always critical of any woman who desires male domination, as he is critical of any male who desires to dominate a woman. Meredith uses the same method to mock Clotilda for her desire that Alvan dominate her and to mock Alvan for his desire to dominate Clotilda, as he uses to mock Sir Willoughby; Meredith makes fun of Sir Willoughby for his desire to dominate Clara and for his concept of the ideal woman as one who does want to be thoroughly dominated by a man. In his representation of Clotilda as desiring that her husband dominate her, Meredith in effect represents Willoughby's ideal wife. By means of Clotilda, Meredith is also critiquing society's approbation of submissiveness in wives. In this novel, and particularly in The Egoist and Richard Feverel, Meredith finds fault with society's determination to educate boys and girls differently; he underscores the need for women to think for themselves and is particularly critical of society's practice of teaching girls to submit to their husbands.
Also, by means of his narrator Meredith blames Clotilda for her own suffering and defeat; throughout the novel, in fact, Meredith’s narrator does not treat Clotilda’s shortcomings, which bring about her defeat, with the same compassion and understanding with which he treats Alvan’s shortcomings, which bring about his own defeat, as well. Meredith uses his narrator to a high degree to reveal Clotilda as blameworthy for her role in Alvan’s death by referring to her “guilty destiny” (103). Although the narrator says of Clotilda, “Years later she wrote her version of the story, not sparing herself so much as she supposed” (157), the reader never sees that “version”; the reader only sees the narrator’s “version” of Clotilda’s story in which he does represent her precisely as “sparing herself” and as blaming others. Meredith’s narrator’s version of Clotilda’s story does guide the reader to criticize her final predicament and thus prevents her from eliciting a tragic response.

One of Meredith’s chief techniques for limiting the reader’s sympathy for Clotilda is that he takes care to point out that she certainly would have gone with Alvan if he had come for her; the narrator points out that if Alvan had come for Clotilda “she would have gone to him; without any doubt his presence and the sense of his greater power declared by his coming would have lifted her over to him. The part of her nature adoring storminess wanted only a present champion to outweigh the other part which cuddles security” (110-111). Meredith’s method is to take care to make the reader clearly understand that Clotilda is a hypocrite; Meredith reveals that Clotilda does not have the courage of her convictions and, therefore, acts in opposition to her feelings. In revealing that the strength of Clotilda’s feelings for Alvan is only realized in Alvan’s
masterful presence, Meredith further trivializes Clotilda's feelings for Alvan, as well as for Marko. Meredith shows that Clotilda's feelings are not of sufficient strength to allow her to realize her intention to be with Alvan; once again Meredith reveals Clotilda as a "shallow vessel." Thus playing the hypocrite, Clotilda enrages Alvan and thereby incites him to set into motion a course of action that results in his death and in her defeat. If Meredith had created some doubt about Clotilda's feelings for Alvan, or if he had not taken care to emphasize the point that Clotilda "would have gone" to Alvan if he had come for her, the reader would not be as critical of Clotilda as Meredith guides him to be. But in utilizing his narrator to guide the reader to feel that the calamity was all for naught, that it could have been avoided if Clotilda had not been duplicitous, Meredith elicits the reader's criticism toward Clotilda and precludes her from eliciting a tragic response.

In comparing Meredith's treatment of Clotilda to his treatment of Richard Feverel, the reader is aware that Meredith is much harder on Clotilda than he is on Richard. Although Meredith does create a lot of sympathy for Richard because of his domineering father, the ramifications of which Meredith reveals throughout Richard's adult life, in the final analysis Meredith represents Richard as responsible for his own defeat. In relation to Clotilda, whom Meredith certainly reveals as responsible for her own defeat, as well, he does place some blame for Clotilda's ruin upon her parents; his narrator states, "She was not under a French mother's rigid supervision. In France the mother resolves that her daughter shall be guarded from the risks of that unequal encounter between foolish innocence and the predatory. Vigilant foresight is not so much
practiced where the world is less accurately comprehended" (3).

Still, Meredith's narrator openly mocks Clotilda, whom he continually calls a "craven," or some variation of that term, while he does not openly mock Richard with the same degree of severity. It seems to me that the reason Meredith treats Clotilda differently from Richard is that *The Tragic Comedians* is based on a real incident.29 It would appear that Meredith apparently attributes the defeat of the lovers mainly to Helene's cowardice, since Ferdinand died in a duel, and Helene, though apparently in love with Ferdinand, married the man who killed him.

Meredith variously creates amused laughter and critical laughter toward Alvan as he does toward Clotilda; however, Meredith does not create a sustained critical response toward Alvan as he does toward Clotilda. Meredith creates five incidents that elicit amused laughter toward Alvan, two of which Meredith creates by means of his narrator. All five incidents concern Alvan's extravagant rage in response to Clotilda's letter renouncing him; like General von Rudiger's excessive rage over Clotilda's desire to marry Alvan, Alvan's angry responses to Clotilda's letter renouncing him are comic in obvious ways. After initially reading Clotilda's letter in which she renounces him, Alvan states to Von Tresten, "See! my girl has hundreds of enemies, and I, only I, know her and can defend her--weak, base, shallow, trickster, traitress that she is . . . . Incomprehensible to you Tresten? But who understands women!" (92-93). Meredith prevents the reader from sympathizing with Alvan's pain because of the verbal style in which he represents his narrator as presenting the incident. In analyzing the sentence structure of Alvan's response, the reader sees that Meredith's method is first to
represent Alvan as claiming that he alone understands Clotilda; as the reader awaits further enlightenment from Alvan's apparent insights about Clotilda, he is surprised by Alvan's abrupt shift in tone, as he hurls a string of insults at Clotilda, all of which highlight her character as contemptible. Thus, Meredith creates laughter by surprising the reader in representing Alvan as claiming special knowledge, but only revealing his anger. In describing Alvan's further reaction to Clotilda's letter the narrator states, "He twisted his body, hugging at his breast as if he had her letter sticking in his ribs. The letter was up against his ribs, and he thumped it, crushed it, patted it; he kissed it, and flung it, stamped on it, and was foul-mouthed" (92). Meredith comic method here is to represent his narrator as describing Alvan as performing a quick series of actions, some of which are in opposition to others, and all of which escalate in intensity and represent extravagant behavior. Thus, the narrator creates an image of Alvan as not in control of his emotions; Alvan prides himself on his ability to control himself, particularly his anger. Alvan's third reaction to the letter creates comedy, as well; Alvan states, "You see plainly she was nailed down to write the thing. This letter is a flat lie. She can lie--Oh! born to the art! born to it!--lies like a Saint tricking Satan!" (93). Meredith creates laughter here by means of the choice of words he attributes to Alvan in relation to the images he creates; in attempting to substantiate his contention that Clotilda was forced to write her letter renouncing him, Alvan becomes highly dramatic in making his point by equating Clotilda to a "Saint tricking Satan." The comedy here revolves around the image of a saint, who represents goodness on a level beyond that of most
individuals, as lying to the devil, who is himself "The father of lies." Alvan's point, dramatically made, is that Clotilda's a pretty good liar. Shortly thereafter Alvan responds for a fourth time to Clotilda's letter; the narrator tells the reader that Alvan "unwinkled the letter carefully for it to be legible, and clenched it in a ball—'Signs her name, signs her name, her name!—God of heaven! it would be incredible in a holy chronicle—signs her name to the infamous harlotry!' (93) Again, Meredith creates laughter here by means of his narrator's manner of talking; the narrator reveals Alvan as initially taking care to unwrinkle the letter and then as immediately wadding it into a ball; the contradiction in behavior is amusing because it is dramatic, as well as unproductive. Also in analyzing the sentence structure, the reader detects that the dashes indicate the narrator's abrupt shift in tone; the repetition of particular words and phrases is also comical. Alvan's description of Clotilda's letter as "infamous harlotry" is excessive and creates laughter. Meredith sustains the reader's comic response toward Alvan in his final representation of Alvan's response to Clotilda's letter: Meredith represents Alvan as emphatically reversing his opinion of it. Alvan states, "'She writes that letter. Well? It is her writing, and the moment I am sure of it as hers, I would not have it unwritten. I love it!' He looked maddish with his love of the horrible thing . . ." (95). Although Alvan is in pain, Meredith does not allow the reader to focus on it because of the way his narrator describes him; Alvan's final reaction to Clotilda's letter surprises the reader who is amused at the contrast between Alvan's sudden decisive determination that he loves Clotilda's letter and his previously resounding claim that it is in effect a detestable lie.
Also, in using the whimsical term, "maddish," to describe the way Alvan looked in his sudden "love" of Clotilda's letter, the narrator touches the comic, rather than eliciting sympathy for Alvan's pain.

Meredith again utilizes his narrator to elicit laughter at Alvan in his treatment of Alvan's motivation to obtain an interview with Clotilda; as Meredith often chooses to do in his novels, he utilizes his narrator to speak metaphorically to illustrate his point; Meredith represents Alvan as writing Clotilda a letter. In relation to Alvan's mistaken assumption about Clotilda as completely faithless and as shifting like "sand" (90), the narrator states that Alvan's "counsellors to that poor wisdom set to work to complete it: Giant Vanity urged Giant Energy to make use of Giant Duplicity" (90). Although Meredith represents his narrator as mocking Alvan, he guides the reader mainly to feel amused by him, rather than critical of him. In interpreting the activity of Alvan's three "Giants," the narrator states that Alvan writes a letter to Clotilda "with one voice quoting the law in their favour, with another commanding her to break it" (90) and that "He gathered and drilled a legion of spies, and showered his gold in bribes and plots to get the letter to her, to get an interview--one human word between them" (90). Another way Meredith creates a comic response toward Alvan is that by means of his narrator he represents Alvan's anxiety about his success in persuading Clotilda to agree to an interview with him; the narrator states, "All means were to be tried . . . . His interpretation of the law was for the powers of earth, and other plans were to propitiate the powers under the earth, and certain distempered groanings wrenched from him at intervals. . . . to the powers above, so that nothing of him should be lost which might get aid of anything
mundane, infernal, or celestial" (114). Meredith creates a comic response by means of the style of speech he creates for his narrator; the narrator uses a rather high style of speech and takes care to describe Alvan's plan of action in global terms. In describing Alvan's prayer, the narrator refers to the earth as his point of reference and refers to powers both below and above it; the narrator reveals Alvan as in effect "covering all the bases" as he feels compelled to turn to these various agencies that he suddenly perceives might possibly exist to implore their help. It is amusing that Alvan should resort for help to such powers that he determines could exist in and beyond the world in that up until this point in the novel Alvan's rhetoric has been all about his own powers as fully sufficient for him to realize anything he desires; certainly sufficient for what Alvan considers as the ridiculously small task of getting the "girl" who has already agreed to be his wife to marry him.

Meredith also uses his narrator to create laughter at Alvan that to various degrees is critical laughter; Meredith's method is to represent Alvan in various respects as an egoist, like Sir Willoughby. Meredith represents Alvan like Sir Willoughby in his extraordinarily high opinion of himself and in his abilities to manipulate others. Unlike Sir Willoughby, however, Alvan takes action without first considering what the world's opinion of him may be. An example that reveals Meredith's method of creating critically amused laughter at Alvan is Alvan's discussion of his own magnanimous nature; Meredith represents Alvan as stating, "For that woman--Tresten, you know me--I would have sacrificed for that woman fortune and life, my hope, my duty, my immortality. She knew it . . . ." (93).
The reader is amused by Alvan's apparent presumption that he will live on immortally, considered by the world to be one of history's great men. But Alvan's presumption that he will, in fact, live on in the annals of history as a great man is rendered ironic in that he dies without accomplishing any of those political aims that he deems a certainty and upon which he bases his presumed greatness and thus his "immortality." Yet Meredith represents his narrator as affirming that Alvan does have reason to boast; in his affirmation of Alvan Meredith creates a comic effect. The narrator states, "Alvan was no vain boaster; he could gain the ears of grave men as well as mobs and women. The interview with Clotilda was therefore assured to him . . ." (115). The reader is amused by the narrator's implication that Alvan can talk sense with serious men, as well as he can please a crowd and can tell a woman what she wants to hear. In fact, so successful has Alvan been in any situation in which he has exercised his will that he considers himself as master of any situation. In his treatment of Alvan as master of any situation, particularly in relation to his perception of his marital relationship with Clotilda, Meredith creates critically amused laughter at him; Meredith reveals that Alvan thinks of himself as the master and of Clotilda as his horse. In his fourth response to Clotilda's letter renouncing him, Alvan says to von Tresten, "We pardon nonsense in a girl. Married, she will put on the matron with becoming decency, and I am responsible for her then; when I have her with me I warrant her mine and all mine, head and heels, at a whistle, like the Cossack's horse" (124).

Another method Meredith uses to guide the reader to criticize Alvan though to feel amused by him, as well, is that he represents
him as an aphorist; in Meredith an aphorist generally indicates a comically self-deluded character, as Sir Austin and as Sir Willoughby admirably demonstrate. Sir Austin and Sir Willoughby are revealed as hypocrites, who do not take their own advice and who offer as wisdom what is really casuistry. The aphorisms that Alvan creates, like nearly all of the aphorisms that Sir Austin and Sir Willoughby create, are not as insightful as Alvan proclaims them to be or as Clotilda believes them to be. For example, Meredith guides the reader to a critically comic response to Alvan's two aphorisms "Barriers are for those who cannot fly" and "Two wishes make a will"; both of these maxims are rendered ironic in relation to Alvan, as well as to Clotilda, as both protagonists prove that they are the very two who cannot "fly" and who are, in fact, bound by "barriers" like class distinction. Both characters are also bound by their inherent frailties: Clotilda is bound by her weakness of will that manifests itself in rationalization and hypocrisy, and Alvan is bound by his colossal pride, excessive anger, and a false sense of his own invulnerability. Alvan's second aphorism, "Two wishes make one will," is intrinsically flawed, as it is based only on Alvan's belief in his abilities in effect to play Providence; Alvan believes that if anyone makes a wish that is in accordance with his own wish that is sufficient enough basis for him to make that wish a fact. But Meredith guides the reader to understand, as Alvan too late comes to understand in relation to Clotilda, that one will, however strong it may be, may not be sufficient to realize a particular desire when there are two individuals involved; Alvan comes too late to learn in relation to Clotilda that all individuals cannot be controlled. Clotilda also believes Alvan's aphorism, "Two wishes make one will,"
and even quotes it; Meredith guides the reader to see that the reason Clotilda likes this saying so well is that it is convenient for her to believe that her wish to be with Alvan can be realized by himself alone because it serves her self-interest to believe it. Meredith guides the reader to see that Clotilda finds it particularly attractive to believe that her wish to be with Alvan can be realized without her help, as Alvan finds it particularly attractive to believe that his wish to be with Clotilda can be realized solely through his own efforts without regard to her inability to keep her word to act as she declares she would act.

Another technique that Meredith uses to elicit the reader's criticism toward Alvan is that he reveals his egoism as manifesting itself in Alvan's misguided belief that he can control events, specifically, in his belief that in effect he can play Providence; rather than revealing that he can control forces beyond his control, Alvan only reveals that he cannot control his own temper. Meredith guides the reader to discern that the reason Alvan cannot control himself is that he does not really know himself; Meredith's method is to create critical laughter at Alvan in revealing his hypocrisy. Meredith represents Alvan as boldly proclaiming on four different occasions that never under any circumstances could he be induced to fight another duel; that he is beyond such a barbaric practice; and that he solves his problems by way of reason. At one point Alvan even says to Clotilda in reference to any possible adversary that he might encounter, "Never need you fear that I shall be at sword or pistol with any one. I shall challenge my man, whoever he is that needs a lesson . . . but I will not fight him though he offend me, for I am stronger than my temper, and as I do not want to take his
nip of life, and judge it to be of less value than mine, the imperilling of either is an absurdity" (64). Yet Alvan dies in a duel that he himself initiates. In initiating a duel with Clotilda's father, Alvan reduces to nothing all of his rhetoric about the foolishness of violence as opposed to the appropriateness of reason as a means to an end. The reader is critical, as well, of Alvan, who on various occasions tells Clotilda, "be wise of what you really are..." (51); the reader is aware of the hypocrisy in Alvan's statement. While the reader understands that Alvan is right in his judgment that Clotilda will be incapable of maintaining her resolve to marry Alvan while under pressure from her family, Alvan is not aware of his own frailty: Alvan is unaware that he is incapable of keeping his anger under control when he feels that his will is thwarted or when he perceives that he has been played for a fool.

Some critics, however, have not responded to the comic effects that Meredith creates in *The Tragic Comedians*, but have responded to the tragic effects, which elicit sympathy, that Meredith creates in his novel; like those critics who respond to Meredith's comic effects in his novel, many of those critics who have responded to Meredith's tragic effects within it and who have also complained about his narrative voice have either failed to recognize or have not appreciated that Meredith creates most of his sympathetic effects by means of his narrator. Although throughout the novel Meredith's narrator guides the reader to a comic response toward Alvan's extraordinary egoism, his excessive anger, and his insuperable pride, Meredith also consistently guides the reader to sympathize with Alvan. Meredith's method is that he represents Alvan as "great-hearted" (89) and as heroic, as well as having integrity, strength
of character, and a deep intellect. Meredith's narrator states, "Alvan was great-hearted: he could love in his giant's fashion, love and lay down life for the woman he loved, though the nature of the passion was not heavenly . . ." (89). Although Meredith treats Alvan's passion in a somewhat comic light, by trivializing it as "not great," his narrator does guide the reader to feel that Alvan is noble, as he could and would "lay down life" for Clotilda. By means of his narrator Meredith also reveals Alvan as strongly motivated to bring about social change to improve the quality of life for the working classes, as well as representing him as highly educated; thus, Meredith guides the reader to think highly of Alvan. Meredith also uses his narrator to create sympathy for Alvan in relation to Clotilda, as the narrator often praises Alvan at Clotilda's expense. For example, when Clotilda wavers in her determination that Alvan loves her, as she does consistently throughout the novel, the narrator says, "But there was as much more in Alvan than any faint-hearted thing, seeing however keenly, could see as there is more in the world than the epigrams aimed at it contain" (75). Another example of the way Meredith guides the reader to sympathize with Alvan at Clotilda's expense is that he consistently refers to Alvan as a "giant" in contrast to Clotilda, whom he consistently refers to as a "craven."

But in spite of the fact that Meredith does represent his narrator as calling Clotilda "pusillanimous" and "shallow," he also creates sympathy for her, as he does for Alvan. While it might seem odd that Meredith would take care to create sympathy for a character toward whom he has consistently elicited amused laughter and particularly critical laughter and scorn, Meredith does create
sympathy for Clotilda. While Clotilda is like Dowell, as she
constantly misjudges appearances as substantial and constantly
commits actions based on wrong conclusions, which trigger reactions
from Alvan and from others that bring about his death and her living
the rest of her life in misery, Clotilda does commit one critical
action, which could be called heroic, and which could have averted
disaster: after escaping from her bedroom where her father imprisons
her to prevent her from running to Alvan, Clotilda does run to Alvan
and tells him that they can now elope. But, disastrously, Alvan
smilingly hands her back to her mother, despite her repeated protests
that she knows herself well enough to be certain that she will not be
strong enough to withstand the ostracism of her family, and that she
will capitulate to her father's demands. The reader believes her as
Alvan does not believe her, and senses nothing but disaster ahead.

In that action, Meredith reveals what Clotilda is capable of doing;
in having Clotilda herself acknowledge her natural tendency to
"escape from pain," Meredith reveals that she does know her own
limitations. Clotilda's action and her acknowledgment of her
failings cause the reader to admire her and to sympathize with her.

Another way Meredith creates sympathy for Clotilda is that he
utilizes his narrator to represent her as too late in coming to the
realization that she loves Alvan: Clotilda only comes to realize that
she does love Alvan after his death when she agrees to marry Marko
and finally suffers in defeat. Unlike Meredith's method of creating
sympathy for Alvan, which he chiefly accomplishes by revealing him as
noble and to a high degree as heroic, Meredith's method of creating
sympathy for Clotilda is to represent her as suffering in defeat in
an irrevocable predicament; Meredith guides the reader to feel that
Clotilda will never be happy again, that she knows she will never be happy again, and that there is nothing she can do about it. Meredith's narrator guides the reader to see that in spite of all of Clotilda's self-deceptions and cowardice, which have led to her rationalizations and to her hypocrisy, she is suffering. Meredith reveals that an individual's inherent frailty, which is rarely much regarded by that individual, as Alvan and as Clotilda admirably demonstrate, can be controlled, but cannot be overcome. Meredith reveals, as well, that if an individual's inherent weaknesses are not controlled they will bring about disaster. Meredith's final representation of Clotilda is his narrator's discussion of her misery after she marries Marko, believing that by means of this marriage she will escape from her pain; the narrator states, "She shut her eyes on the past, sure of his goodness; goodness, on her return to some sense of being, she prized above other virtues, and perhaps she had a fancy that to be allied to it was to be doing good. After a few months she buried him. From that day, or it may be, on her marriage day, her heart was Alvan's" (157). In representing the futility of Clotilda's plight, Meredith strikes a chord in the reader and elicits his sympathy. The reader feels compassion for Clotilda, who finds herself in a predicament that she is powerless to change though she would if she could; the reader understands that the plight in which Meredith represents Clotilda represents what it means to be human.

It seems to me that in eliciting laughter and sympathy toward Alvan and Clotilda, as well as toward Richard Feverel and also toward some of his other main characters in Richard Feverel, Meredith purposefully complicates the reader's response toward them. Tragicomedy, a mixed vision that results from the blending of comic
and tragic effects, is concerned with the individual's emotional response. The nature of tragicomedy is that it elicits one single mixed response to dual or multiple stimuli, such as one mixed response which incorporates both a comic response and a tragic response: the reader's comic response is expressed either in his amused or empathetic laughter at the individual, or in his being critically distanced from him; the reader's tragic response is expressed in his sympathy for that individual. Although two such disharmonious emotions simultaneously demand the reader's response, there are not two distinct and separate parallel responses elicited from that reader or viewer; disharmonious feelings, like scorn and pity, modify or impede one another so that the reader's response is a mixture or a synthesis of both emotions. That is, because neither a comical nor a tragical response is fully developed, the reader's response is somewhere in between laughter and tears.

The complex response Meredith creates by means of his narrator in Richard Feverel is represented in Richard's response to the picture in his mind's eye of Tom Bakewell; although Richard, rather than the reader, has a mixed response to his vision of Tom in prison, the example illustrates Meredith's tragicomic method of mixing disharmonious elements. Also, Richard's feelings of "disgust and comicality, mixed up with pity and remorse" mimic what the reader oftentimes feels toward Richard. Tom is in prison because he gets caught firing farmer Blaize's rick as Richard paid him to do. The narrator tells the reader that Richard's vision of Tom "afflicted him with the strangest sensations of disgust and comicality, mixed up with pity and remorse--a sort of twisted pathos . . . . He laughed at him, and wept over him. He prized him, while he shrank from him. It
was a genial strife of the Angel in him with constituents less
divine; but the Angel was uppermost and led the van--extinguished
loathing, humanized laughter, transfigured Pride. . . . " (45-46). In
*The Tragic Comedians*, as well, Meredith uses his narrator to create a
complex emotional response; in reference to Clotilda's feelings for
Marko, Meredith's narrator represents what he calls Clotilda's
"strangest mood of the tender cruelty." The narrator states, "Her
strangest mood of the tender cruelty was when the passion to
anatomize him beset her. . . . Anatomy is the title for the
operation, because the probing of herself in another, with the
liberty to cease probing as soon as it hurt her, allowed her while
unhurt to feel that she prosecuted her researches in a dead body"
(39) and that, "She was charitably tender. If it be thought that she
was cruel to excess, plead in her the temptation to simple human
nature at sight of a youth who could be precipitated into the
writhings of dissolution, and raised out of it by a smile" (40).
Meredith is being purposefully ironic in representing his narrator as
pleading that the reader understand Clotilda, who like Sir Austin, in
effect likes to play Providence; Meredith is mocking Clotilda by
being purposefully ironic in asking the reader to excuse Clotilda
because it is only natural for her to want to manifest what she
discerns as her absolute power to inflict pain upon Marko so that she
can alleviate it. Although that kind of "tender cruelty" may well
represent "human nature," it does not represent the best side of it.
Meredith does expect that his reader see that. Rather, Meredith
guides the reader to criticize Clotilda and to feel disturbed by her
desire to inflict pain upon Marko so that she can comfort him.
Although the discerning reader can see that Meredith's tragicomic methods in *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians* indicate that he does take care to elicit mixed emotions, in *The Tragic Comedians* Meredith specifically states that his novel represents a tragicomic vision. On page two of the novel in reference to Alvan and Clotilda Meredith represents his narrator as discussing "how the comic in their natures led by interplay to the tragic issue" (2). But some critics have downplayed the novel's comic effects and have emphasized its tragic effects because the novel is based on a true story. It seems to me, however, that while *The Tragic Comedians* may be based on a real incident, as Meredith himself implies in his introduction, Meredith's mimetic effects are also apparent by the fact that his narrator consistently and systematically fully accounts for the motivations of Alvan and Clotilda: even though Meredith's novel is based on a real incident, Meredith's artistic license is apparent in his representation of protagonists who themselves are not nearly as aware of their motivations as is the story's omniscient narrator. That Meredith represents his narrator as knowing and understanding each character's motivation and actions to a far greater degree than the principals themselves know and understand their motivation and actions indicates to me that Meredith is writing fiction in representing his story. Meredith's method, then, is to represent a story that is based on an actual incident within the fictive world of the novel, a strategy that allows him to create his own version of the story in which actual individuals come to ruin. It is appropriate, then, to analyze *The Tragic Comedians* in terms of the comic effects that Meredith does
take care to create, as well as in terms of the tragic effects that he also takes care to create.

While the comic effects that Meredith creates in *The Tragic Comedians*, as well as in *The Egoist* and in *Richard Feverel*, are based on his own theory of comedy, Meredith does go beyond the realm of comedy in his mixed visions *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians*, as well as occasionally in *The Egoist*; in these three novels to different degrees Meredith creates sympathy for his comic characters. In *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians*, in fact, Meredith represents the mixed effects of what he discusses in his Essay as "humour." Yet, in spite of the care Meredith does take to create his mixed visions in *The Tragic Comedians* and *Richard Feverel*, and his own stated intention to represent a mixed vision in *The Tragic Comedians*, some critics have largely dismissed Meredith's tragicomic methods as well as his own statement about his mixed vision in *The Tragic Comedians*. Gillian Beer, for example, argues that in *The Tragic Comedians* Meredith "wrote a work which annihilated comedy" (*A Change Of Masks*, 114); in relation to *Richard Feverel* Priestley similarly claims, "*Richard Feverel* is presented as comedy, and has a tragic ending thrust upon it, quite arbitrarily" (145).

But neither Beer's determination nor Priestley's determination is true; those critics who find fault with Meredith's method of combining comic and tragic elements have failed to recognize that comedy has not been "annihilated" in *The Tragic Comedians*, as nothing has been thrust upon *Richard Feverel* that was not always there from the beginning of the novel. Meredith creates the potential for both novels to turn out as a comedy, or as tragedy, or as a tragicomedy
because he allows the human nature of each of his principal characters to play itself out. Meredith's method for creating a mixed response in Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians is to allow his characters the freedom to realize their full human potential; as the reader understands from his own lived experience, a human being's freedom to make choices necessarily implies the possibility for ruin. Meredith elicits a mixed response toward particular individuals who have the potential for happiness, but who end up in defeat usually because they become subject to their own innate weaknesses. In representing Richard Feverel to different degrees as responsible for the deaths of others, as well as for his own ruin, and in representing Clotilda to a high degree as responsible for Alvan's death and also for her own defeat, as well as in representing Alvan as driven to behave in ways that he does understand will completely destroy any possibility of his marrying Clotilda, Meredith reveals that he truly did understand that "truth is stranger than fiction." Meredith did understand that no matter how obviously logical a particular course of action may be for an individual to pursue to bring about his own happiness, sometimes that individual's inherent human potential for perversity, that is, his inherent propensity to do things his own way at any cost, impels him to engage in actions that can and, in fact, do destroy everything toward which he has aspired. In Richard Feverel and in The Tragic Comedians Meredith reveals how well he understood that an individual's inherent frailty might well cause him to refuse precisely that thing which he has so ardently striven to achieve for no other reason than that he chooses to achieve his goal on his own terms. Although that course of action may not always make a great
deal of sense, as it certainly does not in relation to Richard Feverel, it does represent the human determination to control life. The motivations for actions that Meredith attributes to his principal characters in Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians and the unfortunate consequences that result from their actions reveal that Meredith understood, perhaps better than most people, the tenuous situation in which individuals often find themselves because they are driven by the dark side of their nature to engage in behavior that is detrimental to themselves, as well as to others. In both novels Meredith creates a mixed response toward his protagonists and some of his other main characters, whom he represents as victims of that mysterious human potential for inexplicable behavior that seems unwarranted and that ends in their defeat.

In literature the virtue of people is tested by the way they get out of trouble, rather than by the fact that they get into trouble; in Richard Feverel and in The Tragic Comedians one of Meredith's chief methods for creating a mixed response toward Richard, Alvan, and Clotilda is to show that they never get out of trouble, but usually get deeper into it. In Richard Feverel, for example, Meredith represents Richard as paying Tom Bakewell to fire Farmer Blaize's rick in revenge for his whipping; Richard's method of rectifying his error in poaching is in effect to become an arsonist. And even after the plot is discovered, Richard does not admit to his role as conspirator; although Richard does go to see farmer Blaize resolved to tell him the truth, Richard only compounds his fault by lying to farmer Blaize and claiming that he himself set the fire. Meredith takes care to guide the reader to see that the only reason Richard does not go to prison for arson is that his cousin, Adrian,
bribes the witness. Another example of Meredith's method of creating a mixed response toward Richard by revealing that he gets himself deeper into trouble rather than ever getting himself out of it is Richard's flight to Italy; Meredith guides the reader to see that the only reason Richard abandons his imagined heroics in Italy is that his cousin, Austin, goes there with the determination to induce him to return home. After finding Richard and telling him that he has a son, Austin is finally able to persuade Richard to return home with him. Although Meredith does guide the reader to feel that Richard finally does do the right thing in returning home to his wife and son, Meredith also guides the reader to feel that Richard would probably not have returned home if his cousin, Austin, had not come for him and informed him that he had a son; Austin, in fact, thought Richard was aware that Lucy had given birth to their child. Meredith's method, then, is to guide the reader to approve of Richard's action, but also to feel disappointed that Richard does not return home on his own and that he probably would not otherwise have returned home if he had not discovered that he was a father. In taking care to point out that Richard must deliberate about whether or not he will return home with Austin, and that Richard is only induced to return home on account of his son, rather than on Lucy's account, Meredith limits Richard's tragic impact upon the reader. Also, Meredith's representation of the effects upon Lucy and the implication of future effects upon their son, who will in effect have no parents, prevents Richard from affecting a tragic response; the reader's admiration for Richard who does return home and who is truthful with his wife, is tempered by his criticism of him.
In *The Tragic Comedians* Meredith also represents Alvan and Clotilda as always getting deeper into various kinds of trouble, rather than ever really getting out of any of it; Meredith's consistent method for limiting sympathy and thereby creating a mixed response toward them is to replace self-sacrifice, which represents noble behavior and which is traditionally represented as within the realm of tragedy, with self-interest, which represents ignoble behavior and which is traditionally represented as within the realm of comedy; that is, Meredith guides the reader variously to criticize Alvan and Clotilda or to laugh at them when they disregard the interests of others in behalf of their own self-interests. Meredith's method for creating a mixed response toward Alvan and Clotilda is to represent them as suffering in large part because they are each "on a line of conduct suiting his appreciation of his duty to himself," as Meredith's narrator states of Willoughby (*The Egoist*, 232): Meredith prevents Alvan and Clotilda from eliciting a tragic response by revealing that they are motivated by self-interest. Meredith represents them as suffering precisely because they persist in engaging in behavior that they know or at least, suspect will sooner or later lead to their ruin. While it seems paradoxical that individuals who are motivated by selfish interests would elicit sympathy, they do; even though Meredith guides the reader to see that Alvan and Clotilda engage in behavior that on some level and to some degree they know or, at least, suspect will bring about their own defeat, Meredith also creates sympathy for them by representing them as subject to their limitations and, therefore, as representative of the human dilemma. For example, Clotilda constantly rationalizes her duplicity, as when she pledges herself to Marko and then to Alvan;
Clotilda also writes letters denouncing Alvan and feels justified in her anger because Alvan has not yet rescued her, as well as encouraging Marko's advances as in effect something to do until Alvan arrives. Also, Clotilda constantly rationalizes that her intention is the important thing and that, therefore, her actions contrary to her intentions count for nothing. Meredith represents Alvan as continually getting deeper into trouble, as well, rather than ever getting out of it, as he continues to press his will to obtain his own ends; although he intuitively understands on some level that his further efforts to prosecute his schemes are folly, Alvan nevertheless forges ahead and finally loses his life because of his arrogant presumptions about Clotilda and about his abilities to control situations and events. As in his representation of the trouble that Richard causes and its effects upon Lucy, Meredith represents the effects upon Marko of the trouble that Alvan and particularly Clotilda create; like Lucy, Marko is innocent and undeserving of his fate. Thus, Meredith further limits the reader's sympathy for the plights of Alvan and of Clotilda and thereby creates a mixed response toward them.

Another chief method Meredith uses to create his tragicomic response toward Alvan and Clotilda, as he does toward Richard Feverel, is to represent their downfall as having no significance. By means of his narrator Meredith guides the reader to see that Richard Feverel chooses to toss away his undeserved second chance for happiness to prove a point; all he does prove, however, is that gratifying his own pride to obtain satisfaction from Mountfalcon even in light of his own abominable behavior is more important than what Lucy has suffered, as it is more important than the potential risks
to her, as well as to their son. In guiding the reader to feel that Richard ruins things particularly for others, as well as for himself, just one time too many, Meredith deprives Richard's defeat from eliciting a tragic response. In *The Tragic Comedians* Meredith reveals that Alvan dies because his pride and anger will not admit defeat; Alvan understands that Clotilda is, as the narrator corroborates, "shallow," and he also understands that, as the narrator also points out, his passion for her is "not divine." Alvan does finally understand, as well, that the duel he initiates is all for naught, as Clotilda's final refusal to see Alvan results in his abusing her with the "foulest of names" in a letter that he writes challenging her father, a tactic that Alvan does understand can only destroy any possibility of his marrying Clotilda; still, he insists on writing the letter to obtain satisfaction for his treatment at Clotilda's hands. At the end of the calamity, in fact, the narrator describes Alvan's end as "a derision." Thus, Meredith guides the reader to see that whatever Alvan himself was, his behavior that led to his defeat was not noble. Meredith is derisive, as well, in his representation of Clotilda as mainly responsible for bringing about Alvan's death, her own defeat, and also to a high degree for bringing about Marko's death because of her rationalizations and thus her hypocrisy. The reader discerns that Meredith could have represented the death and downfall of Alvan and Clotilda, as well as of Richard Feverel, in ways that would elicit sympathy. In assessing Meredith's method of presentation to represent the deaths or the defeat of these three characters, the reader discerns that Meredith purposefully limits the emotional impact upon the reader of the disasters that befall them.
The Egoist, Richard Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians are analyzable in terms of Meredith's own theory of comedy as proposed in his Essay On Comedy, as the critics have pointed out, as well as in terms of Guthke's explanation of the function and importance of the narrator's point of view in tragicomic fiction. Also, Pirandello's theory of humour is important in understanding Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians because it accounts for the mechanics of the tragicomic response that Meredith elicits in both novels.

In his Essay On Comedy Meredith states "Life, we know too well, is not a comedy, but something strangely mixed . . ." (32); it seems to me that to some degree in The Egoist and consistently throughout Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians Meredith does take care to show that life is precisely "something strangely mixed." It seems to me that in The Egoist Meredith combines disharmonious elements, such as comic and non-comic elements, and in Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians he combines comic and tragic elements to represent the dilemma of the individual who brings about his own defeat. Meredith's method is to mix elements of comedy and tragedy to show how an individual's natural inclinations and his free will can bring about his own defeat.

While most critics have responded to Meredith's comic effects in The Egoist, only a few critics have responded to the other non-comic elements that Meredith also creates within his novel; those critics who have interpreted the novel as comedy and even those few who have seen the novel or parts of it as non-comic, have found fault with Meredith's narrative voice without either recognizing or appreciating that Meredith creates his comic effects as well as his
non-comic effects by means of his narrator. In *The Egoist* Meredith uses serious elements in addition to comic elements; serious elements are like tragic elements, which elicit the reader's anxiety and concern for a character, but they are different from tragic elements, in terms of allowing for some kind of satisfactory resolution and, thus, do not fulfill their tragic potential. Serious elements, then, eventually allow for an acceptable solution to the individual's predicament, which is ameliorated or even resolved; tragic elements, however, do not allow for any means that could ameliorate, much less resolve, the individual's dilemma. Meredith uses serious elements in *The Egoist* by orchestrating situations and events so that a potentially dangerous situation that a particular character discusses or alludes to as imminent is constantly deferred: Meredith defuses potential danger with a comic resolution and thereby deprives the situation or event from eliciting a tragic response from the reader. For example, Clara is able continually to evade Willoughby's pressing demands to reaffirm her betrothal to him by various means; in what is probably the most intense scene in the novel Meredith guides the reader to feel anxious for Clara because Willoughby's persistent eloquence, in addition to his cellar of exquisite wines, sways her father in favor of Willoughby's suit. Thus, Dr. Middleton demands that Clara either provide signal and specific reasons why she cannot marry Willoughby or else reaffirm her promise to marry him. The reader is anxious for Clara, who is repulsed by Willoughby but who understands that she cannot say that she has come to know he is an "egoist" without being dismissed as silly and consequently without being held to her promise to reaffirm her engagement to him. But Meredith allows Clara to bargain for one hour alone to collect her
thoughts after which she promises to meet her father's terms. And since Meredith's vision in his novel is ultimately comic, he sends Colonel De Craye to the river where Clara sits in distressed contemplation; discerning the nature of Clara's distress, the colonel tells her the entire story of Willoughby's duplicity. Thus, Clara learns that on the previous night, unknown to anyone, Crossjay was sleeping on the couch in the drawing room in which Willoughby proposed to Laetitia. Now armed with the knowledge of Willoughby's deceit, Clara returns to the house secure in her happy understanding that she cannot be forced to keep an engagement to a man who has himself broken it by asking another woman to be his wife. Meredith's method, then, is to eliminate the potential danger of Clara's apparently imminent marriage to Willoughby with a comic resolution. Thus, a situation with tragic potential is defused by means of a comic resolution.

Another example that reveals that Meredith does take care to mix discordant elements in The Egoist to create a mixed effect is that he creates sympathy for Laetitia; in spite of the fact that Meredith represents his narrator as telling the reader of Laetitia's "willful self-delusion" (31), a condition that Meredith describes in his Essay as comic, he does guide the reader to feel sorry for Laetitia because of the way Willoughby treats her. The narrator represents Willoughby's callous and unfeeling attitude toward Laetita; he states, "A clear approach to felicity had long been the portion of Sir Willoughby in his relations with Laetitia Dale. She belonged to him; he was quite unshackled by her. She was everything that is good in a parasite, nothing that is bad" (138). The reader is critical of Willoughby and is disturbed by the fact that he knows
he can use Laetitia and manipulate her because she loves him. Meredith reveals that Willoughby's behavior toward Laetitia is always in accordance with his own policy as proposed in what the narrator refers to as The Book Of Egoism: the narrator reads from Willoughby's book that "Possession without obligation to the object possessed approaches felicity" (137). Thus schooled, Willoughby feels confident enough about Laetitia's feelings for him to make disparaging remarks about her to Clara; for example, in comparing Laetitia's complexion first to snow and then to Clara's complexion, Willoughby says to Clara, "Miss Dale, for example, becomes old lace within a dozen yards of it. I should like to place her under the tree beside you" (79). Another example of the way Meredith utilizes his narrator to reveal Willoughby as callous in his treatment of Laetitia and thereby guides the reader to pity her is Willoughby's scheme that Laetitia marry his Cousin, Vernon Whitford; Willoughby thinks that by convincing Laetitia and Vernon to marry he can prevent Vernon from leaving him to go to London. The narrator reveals Willoughby's thoughts, "'I shall have to hand Letty Dale to him at last!' he thought, yielding in bitter generosity to the conditions imposed on him by the ungenerousness of another" (90). The reader is angry with Willoughby on Laetitia's behalf and criticizes him for his demeaning scheme for her; the reader also feels anxious about Laetitia and is distressed because he anticipates that she will be hurt, as predictably she is hurt when Willoughby does disclose his preposterous scheme for her to marry Vernon.

Meredith also creates some mixed moments in the novel in relation to Clara's attempts to free herself from Willoughby's haughty possessiveness and from his nearly insane determination to
have her at any cost. For example, the reader is troubled by Willoughby's distress that he has not harmed Clara; in explaining Willoughby's thoughts about Clara, the narrator states, "We toss away a flower that we are tired of smelling and do not wish to carry. But the rose--young woman--is not cast off with impunity" (235) and that he "thought of her lying by the roadside without his having crushed all bloom and odour out of her which might tempt even the curiosity of the fiend, man" (236). Meredith also represents Willoughby as indulging in another reverie in which he envisions Clara as maimed for life by some accident, a situation that allows him to gratify what he views as his generosity and thereby to stoop to her; the narrator states, "Contemplating her in the form of a discarded weed, he had a catch of the breath: she was fair. He implored his power that Horace De Craye might not be the man! Why any man? An illness, fever, fire, runaway horses, personal disfigurement, a laming, were sufficient. And then a formal and noble offer on his part to keep to the engagement with the unhappy wreck: yes and to lead the limping thing to the altar, if she insisted. His imagination conceived it, and the world's applause besides" (311). But Meredith's comical treatment of Willoughby's garish thoughts dissipates the reader's anguish; his narrator states, "Nausea, together with a sense of duty to his line, extinguished that loathsome prospect of a mate, though without obscuring his chivalrous devotion to his gentleman's word of honour, which remained in his mind to compliment him permanently" (311). In spite of the anxiety that the reader feels in response to the cruel streak in Willoughby's nature that rejoices to see Clara hurt rather than free and therefore potentially able to have another relationship, the reader responds, as well, to the comical tone in
which Meredith's narrator represents Willoughby's thoughts. Thus, Meredith elicits a comic response toward Willoughby that is critical, as well, since he is concerned about his own image while he imagines sufferings that Clara must endure. It is also comical that in his daydream Willoughby perceives himself as magnanimous and as chivalrous when his imagined thoughts and motivations reveal that he is neither thing. Meredith's method is that he elicits a mixed response by using comic elements to treat Willoughby's reprehensible thoughts about mistreating Clara; Meredith also minimizes the emotional impact of Willoughby's thoughts by representing them only as thoughts. Willoughby's thoughts are never realized; Meredith guides the reader to feel that Willoughby would never actually harm Clara. And, too, at the end of the novel Willoughby changes his ways and does give Clara her freedom. Meredith's method, then, is to prevent Willoughby's desire to see Clara as permanently disfigured from affecting the reader with tragic force by means of his narrator's comical representation of Willoughby's thoughts and also by means of his comic resolution to Clara's predicament.

Another example of Meredith's method of eliciting a mixed response by means of creating a comic resolution to what he has represented as a disturbing situation is the final outcome of Laetitia's relationship with Willoughby; at the end of the novel Meredith represents Laetitia as telling Willoughby over and again that she does not want to marry him, though the narrator states that he pleads for her hand all night long "with outrageous pathos, an eloquence to move anyone but the dead" (534). Throughout the novel Meredith guides the reader consistently to feel troubled by Laetitia's love for Willoughby because of the way he callously
manipulates her and because of his disregard for her feelings. But Meredith's vision is essentially comic in The Egoist, and he, therefore, provides a comic resolution to Laetitia's plight; Meredith makes Willoughby plead all night long for Laetitia's hand, shouting so loud at times that he disturbs her father's sleep. Though Laetitia is firmly resolved to leave Patterne Hall in the morning and to return home with her father, who has always wanted Laetitia to marry Willoughby, the next morning Willoughby renews his suit for Laetitia's hand. This time, however, the reader feels relieved rather than upset because Willoughby finally drops his facade and says to Laetitia, "I believe I don't know myself. Anything you will, only give me your hand; trust to me; you shall direct me. If I have faults, help me to obliterate them" (539); in response to Willoughby's suit Laetitia says to his aunts in his presence, "Ladies, you are witnesses that there is no concealment, there has been no reserve on my part. May heaven grant me kinder eyes than I have now. I would not have you change your opinion of him; only that you should see how I read him. Whatever is of worth in me is at his service. I am very tired. I feel I must yield or break. This is his wish, and I submit" (542). Although Laetitia does not sound a very enthusiastic "Yes" to Willoughby's proposal, by means of his narrator Meredith guides the reader to understand that Laetitia does still love Willoughby, though at the time she is too much aware of his duplicity and of his machinations, as she is too weary of his "outrageous eloquence" to feel it; the narrator states, "Then, moreover, if her sentiment for this gentleman was gone, it was only a delusion gone; accurate sight and knowledge of him would not make a woman the less helpful mate. That was the mate he required: and he
could be led" (537). The reader concludes that Willoughby comes to realize after all that he has always loved Laetitia and also that she still loves him, as well. In fact, early in the novel by means of his narrator Meredith makes the point that Willoughby, whether knowingly or unknowingly, always returns to Laetitia because he has always loved her; in reference to Willoughby's broken engagement with Constantia Durham, his affianced previous to Clara, the narrator states of Willoughby, "Science, he said, was in our days the sole object worth a devoted pursuit. But the sweeping remark could hardly apply to Laetitia, of whom he was the courteous quiet wooer you behold when a man has broken loose from an unhappy tangle to return to the lady of his first and strongest affections" (22-23). Since the reader does not know anything, except through the narrator, the reader can conclude that Meredith takes care to guide him to understand that what appears as Laetitia's unrequited love is not hopeless. Meredith precludes Laetitia's ten years of silent suffering over Willoughby from eliciting a tragic response by orchestrating events so that Laetitia controls the situation and by revealing that Willoughby finally comes to see that he does love her and that he does have faults.

Unlike critics of The Egoist, however, who have nearly unanimously interpreted the novel as essentially comedy, critics of Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians have variously responded to the complex vision that Meredith creates in both novels by combining comic elements and tragic elements; Meredith's method for creating a tragicomic response toward Richard Feverel and Alvan is to utilize his narrators to reveal them as noble, as well as foolish. While the narrator is the vehicle through which an author disseminates
information, the verbal style that Meredith creates for his narrators in *The Tragic Comedians* and *Richard Feverel* is significant because it is the chief means by which he elicits a mixed response. Meredith's method in creating a mixed response toward Clotilda is to reveal her as intuitive and as particularly courageous at one point when clear thinking and courage are called for, and as Meredith does with Alvan and with Richard, he also reveals Clotilda as foolish. It would seem that a character cannot be both admired and scorned, but Meredith does take care to represent Richard, Alvan, and Clotilda both ways. The mixed response that Meredith creates in *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians* is analyzable in terms of Pirandello's theory of humor; like Pirandello, Meredith complicates the reader's response by combining disharmonious elements. In both novels Meredith represents Richard, Alvan, and Clotilda as caught in the conflict that he represents as raging between the head and the heart.

One important technique Meredith uses to elicit a mixed response toward Richard is to guide the reader to understand that Richard returns home intending to do the right thing and that the outcome of the situation between Richard and Lucy, as well as between Richard and his father, would have been different "Yesterday." If Richard had acted upon his intention "Yesterday," the ending of the novel would have been different; in fact, it would have been happy. The narrator states, "Yesterday he would have listened to his father, and blamed himself alone, and done what he had done humbly before God and her: now in the recklessness of his misery he had as little pity for any other soul as for his own" (460). Meredith's narrator does guide the reader to infer from his comment that the ending of *Richard Feverel* could easily have been a happy one. Now, if Meredith had
chosen to stop his novel "Yesterday," as he certainly could have done, which would be at that point before Richard found out about Mountfalcon's plot for Bella to seduce him and thus to detain him so that Mountfalcon might seduce or even abduct Lucy, then everything would have turned out the way Richard, Lucy, Sir Austin and everyone wanted it to turn out. The novel, then, would have been essentially a comedy; although there would be some uncomfortable moments within the novel, conflicts would finally get resolved, as they do in The Egoist. But Meredith does not choose to end his novel "yesterday"; Meredith chooses to allow Sir Austin to take things too far, as well as choosing to allow Richard to plunge into "deep waters" and to stay there. Meredith chooses to create a complex response by telling the reader precisely how Richard would have done the right thing if he had not come to discover Mountfalcon's plot against him. In guiding the reader to reflect upon the only appropriate resolution to the conflict, which is precisely that Richard would have adopted "Yesterday," Meredith elicits the reader's admiration for Richard's resolution. But, as with Richard's noble resolution to be truthful with Farmer Blaize, Meredith elicits the reader's criticism in revealing that Richard rejects his noble resolution mainly because of his pride, as well as his desire for retribution. Meredith also elicits the reader's criticism of Richard by revealing that he chooses to leave Lucy in spite of the extreme mental and emotional anguish she displays when he tells her that he must briefly leave her. Meredith's method of complicating the reader's response toward Richard is explainable in terms of Pirandello's theory of humor in that he guides the reader to reflect upon his initial admiration for Richard's noble desire to be truthful and yet to criticize Richard
for failing in his determination to do the right thing; thus, Meredith simultaneously elicits the reader's admiration for Richard, who had determined to act appropriately and who could have set everything right, and also his criticism of Richard for the course of action he does take.

In his representation of one of the final moments between Richard and Lucy, Meredith further inspires a mixed response toward Richard; Meredith's tragicomic technique is analyzable in the manner proposed by Pirandello. Meredith guides the reader to applaud Richard for finally coming to see his past year with Bella, as what the narrator calls his "profitless extravagance," as precisely that; in representing Richard as finally coming to realize that he wants to be home with Lucy and his son and not elsewhere with others, Meredith guides the reader at least to approve of his decision. Richard also earns the reader's admiration for his determination to be truthful with Lucy though he understands and even fears that she may reject him. Meredith represents Richard as saying, "Lucy. I stayed away from you--I could not come to you because . . . I dared not come to you, my wife, my beloved! I could not come because I was a coward: because--hear me--this was the reason: I have broken my marriage oath" (464) and that, "I love you, and I have betrayed you, and am unworthy of you--not worthy to touch your hand, to kneel at your feet, to breathe the same air with you" (464). Although the reader is critical of Richard's outrageous behavior with Bella, he also admires him for determining to tell Lucy the truth and also for facing the truth and for calling himself what he was. Because Richard calls himself a "coward" and refers to his unworthiness, the reader is inclined to be easier on Richard than he is on himself.
Yet, the reader's admiration for Richard, who does tell Lucy the truth without rationalizing his behavior, cannot eliminate his criticism of Richard's behavior for the past year. Meredith's method is to guide the reader to feel a great deal of sympathy toward Richard in these final moments of his epiphany; the reader does admire Richard who finally comes truly to understand his error and to understand and to appreciate what is important in life. In this final scene Richard apparently becomes in effect the adult that being a husband and a father would require. But Meredith has already taken care to guide the reader to criticize Richard for detestable and hurtful behavior toward Lucy; the reader's response toward Richard's actions over the past year cannot be dismissed simply because he is now repentant. Thus, Meredith complicates the reader's response by initially guiding him to criticize Richard, but later guiding the reader to admire Richard. The reader is unable fully to dismiss either perception of Richard and, therefore, responds to both portraits of Richard that Meredith creates.

Meredith also creates a mixed response toward Richard in his representation of his and Lucy's final moments together; like the other mixed responses toward Richard that Meredith creates, this one is analyzable, as well, in terms of Pirandello's theory. In parting from Lucy, Richard states, "O my Lucy! my wife! you that have made me man! I called you a coward. I remember it. I was the coward--I the wretched vain fool! Darling! I am going to leave you now. You are brave, and you will bear it. Listen: in two days, or three, I may be back--back for good, if you will accept me. Promise to go to bed quietly. Kiss the child for me, and tell him his father has seen him. He will learn to speak soon. Will he soon speak Lucy?" (467)
While the reader is moved that Richard does acknowledge his own cowardice in contrast to Lucy's bravery, the reader is critical, as well, of Richard for treating his departure as if it were nothing at all; that is, although Meredith creates a highly emotional scene here, he also guides the reader to criticize Richard by representing him as expecting that after confessing to Lucy why he has been away for over a year that she should quietly accept that he is going to leave her again with no certainty of his return. In telling Lucy that he may be back in two or three days and in then immediately telling her to "Promise to go to bed quietly" Richard reveals himself as unreasonable and as unfeeling and, thus, elicits the reader's criticism; like Lucy, the reader sees no reason why Richard should go at all and thus criticizes his motives as foolish, as well as he criticizes Richard's lack of consideration for Lucy and for his son if he should get killed. But in representing Richard as immediately asking when his son will be able to talk, Meredith distracts the reader's attention from the intensity of the situation. The reader is amused by Richard's question because the child is so far from learning how to speak, but he is also moved because he feels that Richard asks that question partly because he does not know what else to say and partly because he feels that he may not see his son again. Meredith's method here is initially to elicit criticism toward Richard for his determination to leave Lucy and his child, and then Meredith to elicit a comic response toward Richard's questions about the baby, as well as to elicit the reader's sympathy for Richard's intimation that he may not see his son again; thus, Meredith complicates the reader's response by representing Richard in
situations that simultaneously elicit criticism, laughter, and sympathy.

Another significant way Meredith creates a mixed response toward Richard mainly by means of his narrator is that he systematically reveals that Richard's moral code does not necessarily motivate his actions; the complex response that Meredith creates is analyzable in terms of Pirandello's theory. There are three examples that reveal a discrepancy between Richard's intention, which is motivated by his moral code, and his actions; one example is Meredith's representation of Richard as conquered by his propensity to lie, to protect his own self-interest, and thus to play the hypocrite; for example, Richard tells Farmer Blaize that he fired the rick, though he paid Tom Bakewell to fire it and though the Farmer tells Richard that he does not believe that he himself fired the rick. Richard, however, does not desist from his lies; in fact, calling Richard a liar only makes him lie all the more. And while thus far everything turns out all right for Richard, the narrator states, "To have determined upon an act something akin to heroism in its way, and to have fulfilled it by lying heartily, and so subverting the whole structure built by good resolution, seems a sad downfall if we forget what human nature, in its green weedy spring, is composed of" (59). Meredith's technique is to use his narrator to guide the reader initially to admire Richard's resolve; Meredith also guides the reader to see that Richard subverts that resolve by ignoble means, that is, by lying. Thus, Meredith elicits the reader's criticism, as well as his admiration of Richard. Although Meredith's narrator to some degree excuses Richard's lying because he is young and needs guidance, Meredith also guides the reader to
criticize him because he never does tell farmer Blaize the truth. And the reader does expect that at some point, especially in light of the fact that Richard marries the farmer's niece, Lucy, that Richard should admit the truth that the farmer already does know. Although the reader is critical of Richard for lying, later in the novel Meredith represents Richard as admitting his propensity to lie and as repentant for lying; Meredith represents Richard as telling Ripton, "'O Rip! old Rip! I'm distracted. I wish I were dead! What good am I for? Miserable! Selfish! What have I done but make every soul I know wretched about me? I follow my own inclinations--I make people help me by lying as hard as they can--and I'm a liar. And when I've got it I'm ashamed of myself" (381). In representing Richard as finally admitting his failings in a rather dramatic manner and also in a manner in which he is hard on himself, Meredith guides the reader to feel sympathy for him. The reader admires Richard for finally facing the truth about himself and about his past actions. Yet, the reader is also disappointed that Richard never does tell Farmer Blaize the truth about his role in firing his rick. By representing Richard as deceptive and then as repentant, Meredith guides the reader to a mixed response toward him.

Another example of Meredith's method of creating a mixed response toward Richard, which can be explained in terms of Pirandello's theory of humor and which occurs at the end of the novel, is his representation of Richard engaging in actions that are not motivated by his moral code. At the close of the novel the narrator states of Richard, "He had come to see his child once and to make peace with his wife before it should be too late. Might he not stop with them? Might he not relinquish that devilish pledge? Was
not divine happiness here offered to him?--If foolish Ripton had not
delayed to tell him of his interview with Mountfalcon all might have
been well. But pride said it was impossible. And then injury spoke" (466) and that, "A mad pleasure in the prospect of wreaking vengeance
on the villain who had lain the trap for him, once more blackened his
brain" (466). Although the final outcome of Richard's duel with
Mountfalcon inspires pity for his plight, the reader is critical of
Richard, as well; in revealing that Richard could have chosen to
"relinquish his devilish pledge," but that he refused to do so
because he was motivated by "Pride," "injury," and "revenge."
Meredith guides the reader to criticize Richard, as well as to feel
sorry for him; thus, although the reader is sympathetic toward
Richard, he reflects upon his decision in effect to leave Lucy and
their son to an uncertain future. Meredith complicates the reader's
response toward Richard by taking care to guide the reader to
criticize Richard for allowing "pride," "injury," and "revenge" to
rule him, while representing Richard as repentant in his epiphany.

Although Meredith also guides the reader to criticize Lucy, as
well as Richard, ultimately, he guides the reader to sympathize with
her. Meredith represents Lucy as committing one grave error and he
does guide the reader to criticize her for it; Meredith reveals Lucy
as misguided in allowing herself to be ruled by Richard's cousin and
mentor, Adrian, who contradicts Richard's judgment that Lucy should
accompany him to see his father. Meredith reveals that Lucy is happy
enough to accept Adrian's judgment to allow Richard to go alone to
his father because she is really afraid of Sir Austin. And while
Meredith guides the reader to view Lucy's fears of Sir Austin as
reasonable, since he does represent Sir Austin as someone to be
feared, Meredith also guides the reader to criticize Lucy; the reader understands that Lucy should go with Richard because she is his wife. The reader is also critical of Lucy because in listening to Adrian she must pretend, that is, lie to Richard with some trumped up pretext about why she cannot go; Richard is understandably disappointed in what he discerns as Lucy's cowardice. Later in the novel, Meredith also reveals Lucy as unwise in acquiescing in Sir Austin's unreasonable demands that he detain her husband for months on end; however, Meredith does guide the reader to see that Lucy really does believe that she is acting in Richard's best interests, especially since Adrian instructs Lucy that things will be quickly resolved if she can convince Richard to remain with his father without her. Although Lucy does discern Richard's disappointment, she has made up her mind to dissemble because she allows Adrian to persuade her that she is in fact acting in Richard's best interests.

Although Mrs. Berry tells Lucy many times that she is wrong and that she should go at once to Richard, who at the time is still with his father rather than with Bella, Lucy refuses to be persuaded; the reader is critical of Lucy's persistence in her misguided determination not to go to Richard. Critics like Priestley claim that Meredith goes too far in his representation of Lucy as refusing to go with Richard; Priestley in effect claims that the reader cannot really accept that Lucy would not go. But the reader can accept that Lucy decides not to go with Richard because individuals do not always do what to others clearly seems the right thing to do. As he does with Richard and also with Sir Austin, Meredith allows Lucy's natural inclinations to play themselves out: Meredith allows Lucy the freedom to be ruled by her weaknesses and thus to make the wrong decision.
Meredith understood that human beings often do make the wrong decision; he understood, as well, that oftentimes they suffer for those wrong decisions. In the final analysis Lucy does suffer for her mistake; in fact, in evaluating individual responsibility in the complexity of the final disaster, the reader discerns that Lucy dies partly because of her mistake.

But Meredith creates far more sympathy for Lucy than he does criticism of her. Meredith's method is to guide the reader to feel that in spite of her single mistake that is so costly to her, Lucy patiently and uncomplainingly waits for Richard, who is unfaithful to her. Meredith guides the reader to feel that even though Lucy should initially have gone with Richard and also that she should later have joined him, as on numerous occasions he asks her to, Lucy is not responsible for Richard's infidelity. While Lucy's presence would have prevented Sir Austin from testing Richard apart from his wife, Richard himself is the one who does fail these tests. Meredith creates sympathy and admiration for Lucy, whom he represents as noble in her Christian forgiveness of Richard's infidelity, as well as revealing her as brave and strong, as she uncomplainingly raises their son alone. Also, Meredith creates a great deal of sympathy for Lucy by revealing that her suffering is far greater than her error warrants: she finally ends her struggle in death. Another technique Meredith uses to create a good deal of sympathy for Lucy is to represent her as misjudged and as mistreated by Sir Austin; Sir Austin constantly plots against Lucy, though when it is too late he comes to see that she is the one person who is the best possible mate for Richard. Thus, the reader is far more sympathetic toward Lucy than he is critical of her; yet Meredith guides the reader always to
feel that if only Lucy had gone with Richard things would have turned out differently. The critical attitude that the reader harbors toward Lucy, however, is not of the same intensity as that which the reader harbors toward Richard; the reader is understanding of Lucy's weakness and mainly sympathizes with her.

Meredith treats Richard's father, Sir Austin, in a manner similar to that with which he treats Lucy; that is, Meredith initially creates a mixed response toward Sir Austin, though finally he does guide the reader to a single response toward his behavior. But, unlike his treatment of Lucy, for whom Meredith ultimately elicits a great deal of pity, in his treatment of Sir Austin, Meredith ultimately elicits a great deal of criticism. Initially, Meredith guides the reader to feel mostly amused by Sir Austin's arrogance, his presumptions, and his egoism; as the novel progresses, however, and as his futile System for Richard begins to have serious effects upon Richard and finally to have tragic effects upon him, as well as upon others, Meredith guides the reader only to criticize Sir Austin. Although at the end of the novel Meredith represents his narrator as describing Sir Austin as, "troubled, much to be pitied, even if he deserved that blow from his son which had plunged him into wretchedness" (461), that comment from the narrator is not sufficient to make the reader much pity Sir Austin. Meredith takes care that the narrator's final comment about Sir Austin has little impact on the reader, since throughout the novel he takes care to guide the reader to see that because Sir Austin insists upon pursuing his wrong-minded and hypocritical line of conduct, he will have to learn things the "hard way"; for example, Meredith's narrator says, "False to his son it could not be said he had been: false to his System he
was. Others saw it plainly, but he had to learn his lesson by and by" (455). Meredith's method is initially to guide the reader to pity Sir Austin because he has been abandoned by his wife and left alone to raise their infant son, as well as feeling amused by his erroneous presumptions mostly about women and human nature; later in the novel, however, Meredith guides the reader only to criticize Sir Austin, who learns nothing from his "ordeal," who cannot admit his fault, and who apparently feels no remorse for the devastation that to a high degree he himself has caused. In fact, Meredith guides the reader to reaffirm the statement that Lady Blandish makes in reference to Sir Austin at the end of the novel; she states, "there are some who are worse than people who deliberately commit crimes" (469).

Meredith also creates mixed effects in The Tragic Comedians; as in Richard Feverel, in The Tragic Comedians Meredith mainly utilizes his narrator to elicit a mixed response that is analyzable in terms of Pirandello's theory. Meredith's tragicomic technique for creating a mixed response toward Clotilda is to elicit amused and critical laughter, as well as criticism, to detract from the inherently tragic nature of the events themselves; Meredith creates comic effects to deprive events like the death of Clotilda's lover and Clotilda's final suffering and defeat from eliciting a tragic response. The reader is initially attracted to Clotilda's intelligence, her outspoken free-spirited nature, and her apparent strength of character; she soon reveals, however, that like Ashburnham in Ford's The Good Soldier, whose apparent goodness is not substantiated by his moral conduct, Clotilda's apparent strength of character is similarly unsubstantiated by her actions. Lacking the courage of her
convictions, Clotilda engages in duplicity, which results in hypocrisy. Although the reader initially perceives Clotilda as possessing strength of character and as having her own opinions, he responds, as well, to Meredith's representation of Clotilda's apparent strength of character as insubstantial because of the fact that she rationalizes her duplicity and thus waxes hypocritical. The reader retains his initial perception of Clotilda as possessing certain admirable qualities, or, at least, as revealing that she has the potential to develop a good mind as well as to rise above conventions; he is also critical of Clotilda because she does not have the courage of her convictions and also because she sacrifices others, as well as she compromises herself, to attain a situation that she perceives as conducive to her own self-comfort. While Meredith elicits sympathy for Clotilda by representing her finally as suffering, he also takes care to guide the reader to criticize her and to blame her for her plight which directly results from her continual practice of duplicity and hypocrisy. Meredith reveals that Clotilda's fatal flaw or her error is what the narrator calls "her natural instinct at all costs to bargain for an escape from pain" (144); Clotilda expresses her "natural instinct" in large and small ways throughout the novel. In fact, it is precisely Clotilda's "natural instinct" that causes her to engage in behavior that reveals her as comically limited in terms of being a hypocrite; the reader understands that for Meredith hypocrisy is one of the chief comic conditions. For example, although Clotilda suffers in defeat, Meredith guides the reader to criticize her by revealing that she fails to maintain her resolve to wait for Alvan, whom she claims she loves and will marry, and her decision to marry Marko, who kills
Alvan, for whom she feels only mild affection. Clotilda agrees to marry Marko because she rationalizes that she is doing something good by making him happy and also in the narrator's words, "Besides, he was a refuge from the roof of her parents" (157). Meredith guides the reader to criticize Clotilda because she marries Marko out of charity and because she wants to escape from her parents' house.

Although Meredith does create a mixed response toward Clotilda, Meredith does not treat Clotilda's failings in the same way that he treats Alvan's failings; that is, Meredith is not as easy on Clotilda as he is on Alvan. Meredith does not represent his narrator as guiding the reader to see Clotilda as noble or as great in any way, as he takes care to do on Alvan's behalf. Yet by means of his narrator Meredith does create sympathy for Clotilda by describing her, as well as Alvan, as a "tragic comedian." Meredith takes care to guide the reader to pity Clotilda's predicament, which is that she lives in sorrow with her mistakes; she cannot alter her plight because she cannot alter the past. The reader is aware of the knowledge that can and often does come to an individual too late to allow him to help himself; thus, Meredith guides the reader to sympathize with Clotilda's plight. Meredith guides the reader to understand Clotilda's predicament in which she is in effect sentenced endlessly to relive her "guilty destiny" as a significant part of what it means to be a human being. Meredith reveals that to the extent to which she is able, that is, to the extent to which she can face the truth about her actions and, thereby, collapse her self-delusions, Clotilda is regretful. Thus, Meredith creates sympathy for Clotilda by revealing that on some level she discerns that her equivocations, her rationalizations, and her hypocrisy, all of which
spring from her cowardice, are for naught. Clotilda comes to see that nothing works out for her own happiness as she had assumed that action motivated by self-interest naturally would; rather, the unimaginable and the unthinkable happen when Alvan is killed by Marko; Marko dies of a broken heart; and Clotilda is sentenced to life-long misery. Thus, although Meredith uses his narrator consistently to mock Clotilda for her cowardice, which does bring about her defeat, as well as Alvan's and Marko's deaths, he also takes care to create sympathy for her. Meredith's method is to create disharmonious perceptions about Clotilda toward both of which the reader must respond; Meredith deprives Clotilda's suffering and defeat from affecting a tragic response by revealing that she, like Alvan and Richard Feverel, systematically persists in following a course of action that on some level she does know is wrong.

Probably the best example that shows that Meredith does take care to create comic effects while simultaneously eliciting the reader's anxiety is his representation of Clotilda as she prepares to elope with Alvan; the mixed response that Meredith creates here, as elsewhere in the novel, can be explained in terms of Pirandello's theory. Meredith creates comic effects in his representation of Clotilda as scampering about her room preparing for tomorrow in happy anticipation of the expected good news that Alvan has killed Marko; Clotilda perceives Marko's determination to accept Alvan's challenge in her father's place, a determination that the odds would indicate would be fatal to him, as an astounding piece of good fortune. In fact, Clotilda embraces what she logically perceives as the probability of Marko's death as the workings of Providence: Clotilda concludes that at last God, with whom she believes herself to be a
great favorite, is working to unite her with Alvan. Thus, Clotilda prepares for what she believes will be her happy day; the narrator states, "Her soul was in full song to that contriving agency, and she with the paralyzed limbs became practically active, darting here and there over the room, burning letters, packing a portable bundle of clothes, in preparation for the domestic confusion of the morrow when the body of Marko would be driven to their door, and amid the wailing and the hubbub she would escape unnoticed to Alvan, Providence-guided! Out of the house would then signify assuredly to Alvan's arms" (150) and that "The prospect might have seemed too heavenly to be realizable had she not been sensible of paying heavily for it; and thus, as he would wish to be, was Marko of double service to her; for she was truly fond of the beautiful and chivalrous youth, and far from wishing to lose him. His blood was on the heads of those who permitted him to face the danger! She would have felt for him still more tenderly if it were permitted to a woman's heart to enfold two men at a time. This, it would seem, she cannot do: she is compelled by the painful restriction sadly to consent that one of them should be passed away" (150-151).

The reader is amused by Clotilda's "darting" about the room and "burning letters," which the reader presupposes are from previous admirers, as he is amused, as well, by Clotilda's unsophisticated notion that God has come at last to rescue her from her predicament by killing Marko, who is the only truly generous and kind individual in the novel; the reader is also disturbed that Clotilda should be thrilled to think if not to expect that her means to happiness should result from Marko's death. The reader is critical of Clotilda, who reveals herself as callous and as self-deluding in rationalizing that
it is appropriate and even desirable that Marko, who loves Clotilda deeply, should be killed while defending her honor so that she can marry Alvan. But Meredith distracts the reader from the distress he feels over Clotilda's rationalization that Marko must die so that she can at last be happy; Meredith creates comic effects, as well, in representing Clotilda as thinking that Marko would have liked to be of "double service to her." Although the reader is acrimonious toward Clotilda, he is also amused by Clotilda's incredibly self-serving conclusion that since she cannot love two men, one of them must go, and that death is a good method for eliminating one lover too many; the reader discerns that by means of his narrator Meredith is making fun of Clotilda, who is represented as forced, though regretfully, to accept the sad, but self-serving, fact that one of her lovers must die because she cannot love both of them. The narrator mocks her in pointing to her shallowness and to her insincerity. Meredith's method then is to make a farce out of her supposed grief and to reveal her as a hypocrite. The reader is simultaneously critical of Clotilda for rationalizing that it is the fault of others that Marko is allowed to go to what seems certain death when she is the very one who at the very least should voice her objection that he not be permitted to fight in her father's place. Meredith's method, then, is to complicate the reader's response toward Clotilda by representing her as comically self-deluded in foisting her own responsibility for Marko's fate onto God and onto others who allow him to fight, and also by representing her as callous in her desire and in her expectation that Marko get killed so that her predicament can be easily resolved for her.
Meredith's technique for creating a mixed response toward Alvan is different from his technique for creating a mixed response toward Clotilda. Meredith's method in relation to Alvan is to create sympathy for him in representing him as defeated in large part because of Clotilda's hypocrisy; in the final analysis, however, Meredith utilizes his narrator to guide the reader to understand that Alvan's "end was a derision" precisely because he himself was driven by pride, vanity, and especially anger to prove that his will could not be thwarted. Meredith complicates the reader's response toward Alvan by revealing that although he is justified in his anger at his treatment from Clotilda, he is finally defeated because he allows himself to be driven by his emotions.

A chief method that Meredith uses to create a mixed response toward Alvan is to utilize his narrator to reveal him as noble as well as foolish; Meredith creates a mixed response as proposed by Pirandello by creating two opposing views of Alvan to which the reader must simultaneously respond. Meredith's method is to discuss the foolishness of Alvan's "end," as well as to imply the needlessness of it, while guiding the reader to admire the accomplishments that Alvan achieved during his life. Meredith takes care to guide the reader to see beyond Alvan's final action and thus to judge him within the context of his life: Meredith guides the reader to balance Alvan's accomplishments, which result from his intellect, as well as from his brave and his noble character, against his final "derision," which results from his emotions. Meredith utilizes his narrator to represent what Alvan might have perceived as the bittersweet irony of his fate; the narrator points out, "Haply if he had lingered without the sweats of bodily tortures to stay
reflectiveness, he, also, in the strangeness of his prostration, might have cast a thought on the irony of the fates felling a man like him by a youngster's hand and for a shallow girl! He might have fathered some jest at life, with rueful relish of the flavour: for such is our manner of commenting on ourselves when we come to shipwreck through unseaworthy pretensions" (155). In using the oxymoron "rueful relish" to describe how Alvan might have considered his predicament, the narrator points out in effect that if Alvan were able he might have liked to torment himself with bitter reflections on his own folly, that is, with bitter reflections on the way he systematically brought about his own ruin. If Alvan had, in fact, been afforded these reflections he might have come to realize what the reader already understands and what by inference Meredith understood, that life is not predictable and that the seemingly impossible and the apparently unthinkable can and do occur.

Meredith further underscores his point that Alvan was noble as well as foolish by means of his narrator, who discusses Alvan's weakness in conjunction with his strength; he states, "He perished of his weakness, but it was a strong man that fell. If his end was unheroic, the blot does not overshadow his life. His end was a derision because the animal in him ran him unchained and bounding to it. A stormy blood made wreck of a splendid intelligence" (155). While Meredith does guide the reader to find fault with Alvan, whose final action the narrator describes as "unheroic" and whose "end" he describes as a "derision," the narrator also takes care to say that he was "strong" and that his intelligence was "splendid." Meredith reveals that Alvan is defeated and his great potential is lost because he allowed his weaknesses, mainly his anger and pride, to
motivate his behavior; Meredith's technique, then, is to elicit admiration for what Alvan did accomplish and for what he could have been and also to elicit criticism toward Alvan in revealing that his temper destroys his potential.

In guiding the reader to consider the noble and heroic actions for which Alvan's "splendid intelligence" earned him public renown and respect as an attorney and as a politician in relation to his final action, which the narrator describes as a "derision," Meredith limits the reader's criticism toward him. Meredith's method is to guide the reader to perceive Alvan as strong and to view the accomplishments of his life as heroic; Meredith then creates another perception of Alvan as misguided and in effect as ridiculous toward which the reader must also respond. In guiding the reader to retain his original perception of Alvan while currently criticizing his folly, Meredith complicates the reader's response toward him by eliciting a mixed response. His narrator further states, "Yet they that pronounce over him the ordinary fatalistic epitaph of the foregone and done, which is the wisdom of men measuring the dead by the last word of a lamentable history, should pause to think whether fool or madman is the title for one who was a zealous worker, respected by great heads of his time, acknowledged the head of the voluminous coil of the working people, and who, as we have seen, insensibly though these wrought within him, was getting to purer fires through his coarser when the final intemperateness drove him to ruin" (155-156) and that, "The last word of his history ridicules the eulogy of partisan and devotee, and to commit the excess of worshipping is to conjure up by contrast a vulgar giant . . . He was neither fool nor madman, nor man to be adored: his last temptation
caught him in the season before he had subdued his blood, and amid the multitudinously simple of this world, stamped him a tragic comedian: that is a grand pretender, a self-deceiver, one of the lividly ludicrous, whom we cannot laugh at, but must contemplate, to distinguish where their character strikes the note of discord with life . . ." (156). Meredith guides the reader to conclude that although Alvan's end was not noble: Meredith guides the reader to judge Alvan in terms of the nobility of his life's accomplishments and also in terms of his final weakness. Meredith's narrator does take care to guide the reader to understand that Alvan was neither absurd nor mad, the two descriptions that would make it relatively easy to judge him, to dismiss him. Meredith makes it clear that Alvan is not to be dismissed either by laughter or by pity, by guiding the reader seriously to consider the reasons for his defeat. In taking his leave of Alvan, Meredith represents his narrator as pointing out, "The characters of the hosts of men are of the simple order of the comic; not many are of a stature and a complexity calling for the junction of the two Muses to name them" (156). Meredith's narrator concludes that Alvan was noble and that he came to his end because of his human frailty. Meredith guides the reader to understand that Alvan, like any other individual, had certain vulnerable points in his constitution which under certain circumstances proved his undoing.

The significance of my interpretation of The Egoist as essentially comedy with some mixed moments and of Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians as tragicomedies is that it allows the reader more fully to understand Meredith's meaning; it seems to me that Meredith's method in these three novels is to mix the disharmonious
elements of comedy and tragedy chiefly to investigate the link between motivation and provocation and to reveal the degree if any to which individuals know themselves. One of the chief means Meredith uses to reveal how well, if at all, his principal characters know themselves is that he tests them; Meredith places his principal characters within particular kinds of situations and has them confront particular kinds of events to determine whether or not they follow the moral code that they implicitly or explicitly claim. Meredith's principal characters usually fail these tests. Meredith guides the reader to see that the chief reason his characters fail these tests is that they do not know their own limitations. Meredith's protagonists, Willoughby, Richard Feverel, Alvan, and Clotilda, to various degrees are egoists; Meredith shows that their egoism leads them to deceive themselves about their own abilities to control themselves and/or other people and events. Meredith reveals that individuals like Sir Willoughby, Richard Feverel, Sir Austin, Alvan, and Clotilda, who do not know their own limitations, engage in self-delusions, rationalizations, and finally hypocrisy, so that they do not have to face who they are and what they have done; they do not have to face the fact that they fail in their obligations to others, as well as they fail themselves. By means of his principal characters, then, Meredith is saying that the chief obligation of a human being is to "know thyself."

In The Egoist, Richard Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians Meredith reveals the relationship between hypocrisy and the degree, if any, to which an individual knows himself; that is, Meredith reveals that what an individual presumes to be an inherent strength may, in fact, be an inherent weakness. Meredith shows how that
weakness can have detrimental effects upon others, as well as upon the individual himself; for example, Meredith reveals that a key reason Richard Feverel is finally defeated is that he is self-deceived about what he supposes is an inherent strength, but which is really an inherent weakness. Richard's presumption about his own inner moral fortitude leads him arrogantly to engage in a relationship that proves his undoing. The effect of Richard's "profitless extravagance" is that he breaks his marriage vows and causes his wife to suffer for over a year. Meredith takes care to reveal that Richard is warned time and again by people like Adrian, whom Richard discerns may not be as good as he appears to be; although Adrian tells Richard, "Drop the woman, my son" (369), he refuses to listen to Adrian or to anyone else about his actions that others see as obviously inappropriate. After the fact, however, when Richard falls, he sees things as they really are, rather than as they were made to appear. In connection with Richard's lack of self-knowledge Meredith also makes the point about the way vice works: through Richard, Meredith reveals that vice only gradually usurps the individual until he suddenly finds himself inextricably caught in its grip. Ironically, Sir Austin makes that very point to Mr. Thompson, Ripton's father; he states, "Vice, taken little by little, usurps gradually the whole creature" (116). After Richard begins his affair with Bella he feels too ashamed of his hypocritical behavior to face Lucy or anyone else and thus chooses to remain with Bella, with whom he feels comfortable because he now shares in her morally reprehensible behavior.

Sir Austin is also defeated because of his self-deceptions; although Sir Austin is always finally able to quiet his conscience as
he plots to control and to manipulate his son, his rationalizations about his self-serving behavior lead him to become the consummate hypocrite. Meredith reveals that Sir Austin continually chooses to reject the promptings of his conscience that tell him that his System is a sham and that he has all along only been selfish; thus, he is able to delude himself about the merits of his System even in the face of the deaths and devastation that are in part precisely attributable to his System. Meredith's method, then, is to guide the reader ultimately to criticize Sir Austin in his final misery, as does Lady Blandish, who has loved him throughout the novel.

Alvan in *The Tragic Comedians*, like Richard, is lacking in self-knowledge and considers as an inherent strength what is really an inherent weakness; Alvan presumes that he has mastered his temper, but like Richard, is finally undone by it. For example, Alvan is so supremely self-confident in his ability to succeed in anything that he tells Clotilda he "cannot fail" (78) when he perseveres against all odds to accomplish his will. But Alvan finally dies because he deludes himself that he is invulnerable. Clotilda is also like Alvan and particularly like Sir Austin, in rationalizing her behavior and thus playing the hypocrite to shield herself from facing her responsibility for Alvan's death, for Marko's death, and for her own defeat.

A chief aspect of hypocrisy and its effect on others that Meredith represents in *The Egoist*, *Richard Feverel*, and *The Tragic Comedians* is the relationship between the individual's system of beliefs and his actual practices; Meredith analyzes hypocrisy in relation to the way most people view God, particularly in relation to his Providence. In *The Egoist*, *Richard Feverel*, and *The Tragic
Comedians Meredith is saying that most people's views on Providence, which is usually defined as the way God governs the world, are in accordance with their own self-interests. In The Egoist, for example, Meredith represents Sir Willoughby as periodically claiming that he is a good Christian, yet he does not treat others as he himself would be treated: he does not love others as he loves himself, which is the chief commandment for Christians. In fact, Willoughby's only concern for others is in relation to the way they affect himself. Also, Sir Willoughby, like Sir Austin, has no Christian charity, as he is not forgiving; like Sir Austin, who seems to enjoy pointing out that he does not forgive those whom he perceives to be at cross purposes with himself, Sir Willoughby similarly emphasizes that he cannot forgive anyone who in effect will not allow themselves to be ruled by him. For example, Fletch, Sir Willoughby's former employee, leaves his service to start his own shop; when the shop fails and Fletch cannot support his wife and nine children, he asks Willoughby and continues to ask him throughout the novel if he can be reinstated in his former position. Willoughby's constant response to Fletch is that he is trespassing and that he must leave his property. At one point Willoughby explains to Clara and Colonel De Craye, both of whom plead for Fletch, that it is not possible to reinstate someone who could leave a man like himself, even if his reason for leaving is that he wants to better himself.

Another way Meredith reveals Willoughby's hypocrisy in relation to his professed Christianity and his actual practices is that he represents him as blaming God for not furthering his treachery. When Willoughby discerns that Laetitia somehow knows that Clara has asked him for her freedom, he immediately reflects on what he perceives as
Providence gone awry; the narrator states, "For him to be pitied by Laetitia seemed an upsetting of the scheme of Providence. Providence, otherwise the discriminating dispensation of the good things of life, had made him the beacon, her the bird . . . . There appeared to be another power. The same which had humiliated him once was menacing him anew. For it could not be Providence, whose favourite he had ever been. We must have a couple of Powers to account for discomfort when Egoism is the kernel of our religion" (310). By means of his narrator, then, Meredith makes fun of Willoughby's "Egoism." Meredith reveals, as well, that Willoughby, like Sir Austin and Clotilda, sees himself as a special favorite with God; he, therefore, expects that God should accommodate his wishes, though unchristian, and thereby further his own self-interest. As another example, Willoughby perceives his duplicitous proposal to Laetitia as a blessing; thus, Willoughby concludes that for Laetitia to be chosen to be his wife is to be favored by God. Willoughby sees his proposal to Laetitia as a grace providentially provided, as it is certainly not deserved. So, when Laetitia refuses to marry him, Willoughby is at a loss to understand why; after Laetitia initially rejects him, Willoughby reflects on her "He entirely trusted her to be discreet; but she was a miserable creature, who had lost the one last chance offered her by Providence ..." (433).

Later in the novel, when Willoughby is dumbfounded that Clara knows of his deceit in asking Laetitia to marry him, Meredith guides the reader to see Willoughby as the Christian hypocrite par excellence. Meredith's narrator reveals Willoughby's thoughts about God as conspiring against him since he is not furthering his cause. The narrator states, "he was on tiptoe to learn whether Vernon was as
well instructed as Clara, and hung to the view that he could not be, while drenching in the sensation that he was:—and if so, what were the powers above but a body of conspirators? . . . He could not conceive the human betrayal of the secret" (470) and that "Willoughby strove and muttered. Providence had grown mythical in his thoughts, if not malicious: and it is the peril of this worship, that the object will wear such an alternative aspect when it appears no longer subservient" (475). Thus, Meredith reveals that Willoughby's belief in Providence is based on his tacit assumption that God must serve his own self-interest, or else he is not really God; and if not God, he is certainly not deserving of allegiance. By means of Willoughby, Meredith is saying that many people talk well about what it means to be a Christian, but when it comes time to put their beliefs into practice, these people are sophisticated enough in terms of worldly wisdom to know that it is not necessary to take these beliefs too far: it is not necessary to practice what you claim to believe. Meredith reveals the hypocrisy of many self-professed Christians, who are sophisticated enough in terms of worldly wisdom to know that they certainly should not take their spiritual beliefs so far that their own self-interest should suffer for it. Through Willoughby, Meredith shows that some people feel it is well enough to say the right thing; it is not necessary to do the right thing.

In *Richard Feverel* Meredith also unmasks Sir Austin as a hypocrite in relation to his professed Christianity. Meredith reveals Meredith that Sir Austin's ostensible actions, like Sir Willoughby's, are not motivated by Christianity's highest commandment: to love others as you love yourself. Throughout the novel Meredith consistently shows that Sir Austin does not give
others the consideration that he demands from them and Meredith also reveals that like Sir Willoughby, Sir Austin views Providence as an agency to further his own self-interest. For example, when Sir Austin finds Richard lying unconscious at the inn, the result of his attempt to flee in the rain to find Lucy, the narrator speaks Sir Austin's thoughts; he states, "Anxious he was, and prayerful; but with faith in the physical energy he attributed to his System. This providential stroke had saved the youth from heaven knew what!" (188-189) In his representation of Sir Austin's response to his son's illness, Meredith is saying that Sir Austin, like many people, is willing to accept the dealings of Providence as long as they coincide with his own plans. Sir Austin's supreme hypocrisy, however, is that he believes that he can in effect eradicate Original Sin by means of a special System of education, which Meredith guides the reader to discern is really based on misogyny and casuistry.

A particularly significant way that Meredith reveals Sir Austin as the supreme hypocrite in terms of the contradiction between his spiritual beliefs and his actual practices is that he represents his narrator on various occasions as calling Sir Austin a "Manichee." Meredith expects that the reader knows that those who followed the teachings of Manichaeus, who taught that there were two equal forces in life, one good and the other evil, that were always contending for dominion over the universe, were called Manichaeans, and that the Church denounced the teachings of Manichaeus as the "Manichaean heresy." Meredith, then, guides the reader to understand that Sir Austin is not a Christian, as he constantly proclaims himself to be, but a heretic. Meredith uses his narrator to make that point in a particularly poignant manner; he states, "A Manichaean tendency, from
which the sententious eulogist of nature had been struggling for years (and which was partly at the bottom of the System), now began to cloud and usurp domination of his mind. As he sat alone in the forlorn dead-hush of his library, he saw the devil" (299) and asks, "How are we to distinguish the dark chief of the Manichaeans when he talks our own thoughts to us?" (299) Thus, Meredith's references throughout the novel to Providence and his discussion of Sir Austin as a Christian are precisely designed to guide the reader to assess Sir Austin's Christian rhetoric in relation to his actions and to his professed Christian principles and to determine that he is, in fact, not a Christian. Although Sir Austin numerous times extols Christian, virtues, the wisdom of Providence, and implies that he is himself a model Christian, Meredith guides the reader to discern that hypocrisy motivates his apparently Christian behavior. In his representation of Sir Austin, as in his representation of Sir Willoughby, then, Meredith reveals that Christian teaching is not always what motivates the behavior of some self-proclaimed Christians.

In *The Tragic Comedians* Meredith also reveals that Clotilda's Christian beliefs, like Sir Willoughby's and Sir Austin's beliefs, are in effect based upon her assumption that things must go her way; if not, God could not be very good. At the end of the novel Meredith creates critical laughter at Clotilda's expense in revealing that she hopes to elope with Alvan who must undoubtedly kill Marko in accordance with God's will to ensure Clotilda's happiness; to Clotilda's way of thinking, the purpose of God's will is to ensure her own happiness on her own terms. As Clotilda awaits the results of the duel that with good reason she does expect Alvan to win, Meredith uses his narrator to reveal Clotilda's thoughts about
Marko's apparently certain death; the narrator states, "It could not be her fault that he should die! it was the fatality. How strange it was! Providence, after bitterly misusing her, offered this reparation through the death of Marko" (150) and that, "Providence decreed that she must abide the result. Dread Power! To be dragged to her happiness through a river of blood was indeed dreadful, but the devotional sense of reliance upon hidden wisdom in the direction of human affairs when it appears considerate of our wishes, inspirited her to be ready for what Providence was about to do, mysterious in its beneficence that it was! It is the dark Fortune to the craven" (150). In describing Clotilda's anticipation of Marko's death on the morning of the duel, the narrator states, "This was the day of Providence. . . . In any case the instant of the arrival of the carriage was her opportunity marked by the finger of Providence rendered visible, and she sat rocking her parcel on her lap" (152). But when it is Marko who returns instead of Alvan, Clotilda suddenly finds the goodness of Providence suspect, as Meredith's narrator reveals; he states, "We can put it before Providence to cleanse itself of this thing, or suffer the consequence that we now and forever quit our worship, lose our faith in it and our secret respect" (153). In representing Clotilda as happy that Providence will in effect relieve her of her burden, Marko, Meredith is saying that people are willing to rationalize and to accept anything that happens as God's plan, no matter how detrimental the effects upon others, no matter that it be immoral, as long as the individual's self-interests are served. By means of Clotilda, as well as of Sir Willoughby and Sir Austin, Meredith reveals the human determination for gratification of self-interest, a condition that would
necessarily be in opposition to an individual's beliefs in a higher moral code.

The numerous biblical allusions that Meredith makes and the Christian concepts that he expounds upon in *The Egoist*, *Richard Feverel*, and *The Tragic Comedians*, would indicate that at the very least Meredith had a fascination with Christianity, as for example, in *The Egoist*, Meredith represents the intricate renderings of the Trinity to symbolize the egoist as the "son of himself," an allusion to Jesus, who is revealed as the Son of God, the Father, and also as the second person of the Trinity, the three parts of whom comprise one God. Also, in all three novels Meredith makes Providence an important theme; yet in spite of the multitude of Christian symbolism Meredith uses in his novels, many critics, such as T. H. S. Escott, G. K. Chesterton, and Priestley, have missed what Meredith is saying and have determined that Meredith was a non-Christian, in fact, a pagan. In 1898 T. H. S. Escott describes Meredith as agnostic; Escott states "Burial in the Abbey was refused by the Dean of Westminster, presumably on the grounds of Meredith's well-known agnosticism and perhaps particularly for his proposal about temporary marriages."\(^{33}\) But it was probably G. K. Chesterton's determination that Meredith came as close as any individual has ever come to being a pagan that strongly influenced the thinking of later critics, many of whom to various degrees also dismiss Meredith's Christian references in his novels and view him as having no religion; Chesterton claims, "But no man in our time ever came quite so near to this clean and well-poised Paganism as Meredith. He took the mystery of the universe lightly; and waited for the gods to show themselves in the forest."\(^{34}\) Priestley's assessment of Meredith amounts to a
dismissal of the Christian references in his novels and upholds Chesterton's position; Priestley states, "Meredith escapes the Science-religion, materialism trap because he is by temperament something different from all his contemporaries; he is a pure pagan. Other literary men of the century are often considered pagans when they are really nothing but occasional blasphemers, pretending to worship Lucifer or to celebrate the black mass on occasion. Poets like Byron and Swinburne, for example, are nothing but naughty little boys peeping round the church door and making faces at the parson" (67), and, "They still live in a Christian world, even though they may at times go swaggering through it as friends of the devil. But Meredith, from the first, does not seem to live at all in the universe of Christian theology. One feels with him that if Evolution had not been there he would have had to invent it. This marks the difference between him and his contemporaries" (67).

Priestley's dismissal of Meredith's Christian symbolism in his novels and his determination that paganism instructs Meredith's fiction is misguided because it fails to recognize what Meredith is saying about Providence. In The Egoist, Richard Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians, Meredith creates a fictive world that represents a well ordered universe over which a benign presence presides and that is understandable in Christian terms. In The Egoist, for example, Meredith satirizes Willoughby by representing him as divine, that is, by representing the essence of his egoism as part of a triune divinity. Meredith also discusses Providence as a very significant force throughout Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians. In fact in The Tragic Comedians Meredith spends a great deal of time satirizing Clotilda's conceptions of God and his Providence.
Knopflmacher is another critic who seems misguided in his determination that in *Richard Feverel* Meredith mocks Sir Austin's belief that "the world is well designed"; he states, "although Sir Austin is satirized for believing that the world is well designed, the novelist manages to suggest that a beneficent order does exist." While Knopflmacher is right in arguing that "the novelist" does show that "a beneficent order does exist," he is misguided in determining that "Sir Austin is satirized for believing that the world is well designed"; Meredith does not satirize Sir Austin for his belief in a beneficent higher power, but for his hypocrisy. Meredith reveals Sir Austin as believing only what is convenient for him to believe. Meredith mocks Sir Austin's prayers for God's help because he prays that God allow his misguided, if not, at times decidedly unchristian, schemes to perfect Richard to flourish; Sir Austin, however, never questions whether or not that for which he asks God is right or just. In fact, Sir Austin's prayers for Richard amount to prayers for his own success in effect in playing God to his son. But Sir Austin, who always presumes that his actions are right and just, expects that if, indeed, God himself is right and just, he must judge Sir Austin's actions in that light. Meredith guides the reader to see, then, that Sir Austin's prayers are really expectations that God will further his own self-interest. It would seem, then, that while Meredith may not have been orthodox in his Christian beliefs, at the very least Christianity did hold a fascination for him, as it did for Lawrence, as well. By means of Sir Austin, then, Meredith is mocking the hypocrisy that motivates the beliefs and practices of those self-proclaimed Christians whose beliefs are similarly motivated by self-interest. Meredith creates
characters who, like many people, believe that they are special favorites with God and who thereby assume that God will work his will in accordance with their own wishes. And as long as things do work out in accordance with their own wishes, individuals, like Sir Willoughby, Sir Austin, and Clotilda, are willing to believe in God and in his Providence. Meredith reveals that many people assume that God's purposes must be in accordance with their own, and that if God's purposes are not to further their own self-interests then, like Sir Austin, they either stop believing in God, or, like Sir Willoughby and Clotilda, they think that God must not be very wise, after all; and if not very wise, certainly not worthy of their worship. Meredith is saying that many people in effect expect that God should serve them, rather than that they should serve God and, thus, points to their hypocrisy.

I would argue that whether or not Meredith himself held orthodox Christian views, his novels, at least, reveal that he was certainly not hostile to Christianity, as Chesterton and Priestley indicate; in fact, Meredith shows that the defeat of his protagonists and of some of his other main characters results from their inherent human frailty. Alvan is ruled by his "animal side," as Clotilda is similarly ruled by her weaknesses, as manifested in her desire to gratify her own self-interest. All of Meredith's protagonists and his other main characters who are defeated are defeated precisely because of something in their "animal nature" that drives them to engage in behavior that is detrimental to themselves and, oftentimes, to others. Although Meredith, like Lawrence and Ford, does not attribute the motivation for an individual's behavior that is detrimental to others and/or to himself to the Christian concept of
Original Sin and fallen human nature, he spends a lot of time discussing Original Sin, Providence, the Trinity, and God, as well as discussing the "animal side" of an individual's nature. Meredith's characters, like Lawrence's and Ford's characters, are analyzable in terms of Hoy's theory of comedy, and Meredith's protagonists are also analyzable in terms of Hoy's theory of tragedy and of tragicomedy, all of which are based on the concept of Original Sin. In Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians Meredith shows that part of the reason people do not know themselves is that they do not consider that human nature is mixed; neither do they consider that they can be as strongly impelled by their emotions as they can by their intellect. Richard Feverel, for example, never considers that he might have failings, such as pride and anger, that could and in fact, do lead to his own defeat, as well as to the defeat of others. Although Sir Austin devises his "System" precisely to keep Richard free of Original Sin, his year-long affair with a prostitute, though married and unaware that he is a father, demonstrates that he is far from free of Original Sin. Like Richard, Sir Austin considers himself above ignoble behavior, and like Alvan, he considers himself invulnerable, but Meredith reveals that Sir Austin is neither above ignoble behavior, nor invulnerable. Although Sir Austin spends a lot of time in reflecting upon the perversity of human nature, in general, and on the failings of others, in particular, he is never able to see his own perverse tendencies and his own gross inadequacies. Predictably, the final result is that Sir Austin commits the greatest sin, as sins of pride must always be. In The Tragic Comedians Alvan misguidedly misjudges his greatest character flaw as a strength. Meredith represents his narrator as discussing
Alvan's mixed nature as the underlying reason that his life ends as a "derision"; the narrator states, "That mass of humanity profusely mixed of good and evil, of generous ire and mutinous, of the passion for the future of mankind and vanity of person, magnanimity and sensualism, high judgment, reckless discipline, chivalry, savagery, solidity, fragmentariness, was dust" (155). Alvan, however, never seemed to consider that he had faults; at the very least he felt that he was supremely in control of his nature, and it is precisely his misguided conviction that he could always control his anger that proves his undoing.

It may be that some critics' determinations, like those of Priestly and Chesterton, about Meredith's so-called Paganism, or at the very least, his supposed hostility toward Christianity, result from the fact that at different times throughout his life Meredith held ambivalent views on Christianity; there is an ambivalence in Meredith's attitude toward religion in that he sometimes praises "the pagan" and he sometimes extols what he discerns as the beauty of Christianity. As time went on, however, Meredith became more friendly toward Christianity, as his various personal letters indicate. For example, on January 7, 1863, Meredith writes a letter to the Rev. Augustus Jessopp about the virtues of paganism over Christianity; Meredith writes, "In the matter of Anchorites. Do you really believe them to have been men of thews and breadth of brow? Yes, if they have slaughtered their dozens and begin to think heaven a pleasant resting-place. As a rule, No. Endurance is not a test of the fact. The physically robust man would have wasted and succumbed" and, "Be not misled by this dirty piece of picturesque Religiosity, animated: my gorge rises! I hold my nostrils. I cry for a Southwest
wind to arise. Plunge them into the pit, O Lord! these worshippers of the pillar." It would appear that much of the tone of Meredith's letter is facetious, and that his main problem with Christianity in reference to "Anchorites" is that he really cannot fathom how they could live as they did; Meredith's skepticism about the desert Fathers is hardly new and is, in fact, quite understandable. It would seem that Meredith assumes that no individual who is fully alive could really live the anchorite's life, a standard of behavior that may well result from his own belief that he himself could not live that kind of life. Two years later Meredith wrote to Captain Maxse and to a high degree applauds the virtues of Christianity; Meredith states, "You must bear in mind that Christianity will always be one of the great chapters in the History of Humanity: that it fought down brutishness; that it has been the mother of our civilization: that it is tender to the poor, maternal to the suffering, and it has supplied for most, still supplies for many, nourishment that in a certain state of the intelligence is instinctively demanded. St. Bernard checked Abelard, it is true. But he also stood against the French Barons, rebuked and controlled them. The Church was then a light. Since it did such a service to men, men I think should not stand out against it without provocation," and, "From the Pagan divinity to the Christian, I see an advanced conception, and the nearer we get to a general belief in the abstract Deity--i.e. the more and more abstract, the nearer are men to a comprehension of the principles (morality, virtue, etc.) than which we require nothing further to govern us." Meredith seems opposed to the degree of self-sacrifice that those who have been determined to be saints demonstrate.
It seems to me, as well, that the judgments of Constantine Photiades and Robert Esmonde Sencourt accurately reflect Meredith's attitudes; in reference to Meredith's system of beliefs Photiades points out, "But he loves not Nature for the sake of idyll or eclogue . . . . Still less would he dream of substituting Nature for God, of humiliating Christianity by extolling Paganism. A George Meredith who sends us back to Earth, does not make a fetish of our planet, neither does he endow it with mystic personality: to remind us of our origin, to focus our egoism, then to demolish it utterly--this was his object."38 Certainly in The Egoist, Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians one of Meredith's chief methods is precisely that he does "focus our egoism" and then demolishes "it utterly." But Meredith does not demolish the egoism of his protagonists and some of his main characters by denigrating Christianity and by glorifying paganism. Sencourt's biography of Meredith, which appears three years after Priestley's, also seems accurate in its determination that Meredith's whole philosophy about life, at least as demonstrated in his novels, integrates earth and nature with Christianity and thereby extols Christian spirituality. Sencourt zealously argues, "So far was he before his time, that he not only foresaw and expressed in literature all that psychology now associates with the name of Freud, but that he counteracted the excess of that, and found it its proper place in the great spiritual humanism which is Christianity. Meredith is not only the poet of evolution, who sees that man has one origin in the developing material world: he is also the poet of sacramental truth, who sees that, through reorganizing his intimacy with matter, the man of spirit becomes more spiritual, because matter is no more the negation of life than spirit," and,
not only must body, brain and spirit work to complete each other in abundance of life, but one must see that they can only do so in the fulness of one individual personality meeting the fulness of others, in service, in thoughts, in love. Until this happens, the wondrous fabric of the world has no significance.  

Another point that Meredith reveals in The Egoist, Richard Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians is that following a course systematically designed to further an individual's self-interest, ironically, leads to an effect opposite to that which the individual intends. In The Egoist, for example, Willoughby constantly practices a "line of conduct suiting his appreciation of his duty to himself"; Meredith reveals, however, that Willoughby's slavish devotion to his own self-interest ultimately fails to bring him happiness. For in the final analysis none of Willoughby's schemes work out as he plans and expects that they should. It is only when Willoughby forgets about his appearance to the world, stops playing the hypocrite in behalf of service to himself and confronts his real feelings, determines to do what is right rather than what is self-serving, treats others with consideration, and confronts his own failings, that he finds happiness. For example, Meredith guides the reader to see that Willoughby has always loved Laetitia for her intellect and for her quiet beauty, though he has never paid much attention to his feelings for her; the only important thing for Willoughby is that the world loudly acclaim the wealth and striking beauty of his bride. Willoughby does understand on some level that Laetitia is the very one whom he has always loved and who will bring him true happiness, but he only aspires to win the world's approval on its own terms rather than in terms of what his heart tells him is right; the great
irony Meredith reveals is that while Willoughby consistently describes the world as tainted and as detestable, he is the very one who is a slave to the world's value system and to public opinion.

In The Tragic Comedians Meredith reveals that Clotilda's continual attempts to make life comfortable for herself at anyone's expense, like Marko's, ironically result in her misery rather than in her own self-comfort. Meredith reveals that Clotilda thinks that being comfortable in life necessarily means that someone must take care of her. Thus, rather than risking the displeasure of her parents to marry Alvan, she settles for a way of life that seems convenient and that she hopes will make her happy: after Alvan's death Clotilda marries Marko with the expectation that she will be happy because Marko loves her and because she is somehow doing something good. But in spite of all of Clotilda's duplicity and hypocrisy, in effect to guarantee what she assumes must be her future comfort, she is miserable ever after and lives a life of regret. In representing Clotilda's marriage to Marko as a great hypocrisy, Meredith is saying that an individual's plans and actions to ensure his own comfort that are not in accordance with what his heart tells him is right cannot bring happiness. And in Richard Feverel Meredith reveals that Sir Austin's demented plan to recreate and thereby to perfect human nature is precisely what brings about the dreaded "ordeal" he has talked about and forecast for Richard throughout the novel; ironically, or, perhaps, not so ironically, Sir Austin's demented efforts result only in Richard's "ordeal," as well as in his own.

Meredith uses a tragicomic medium in Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians and he also creates some mixed effects in his mostly
comic vision, *The Egoist*, because the complex emotional response that results from combining the disharmonious effects of comedy and tragedy represent the human dilemma; specifically, the mixed response that Meredith elicits in all three novels, but particularly in *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians*, represents what it means to be a human being, at the mercy of his mixed nature. The inherent frailties of all of Meredith's chief characters in both of his mixed visions impel them to behave as they little imagined they ever would behave, to the extent that they are impelled to take a course of action that eventually brings about their defeat. Willoughby also behaves as he little imagines he would ever behave, in sacrificing his pride for love. And it is precisely in his sacrifice of his own self-interest that he is redeemed. In creating protagonists and other main characters who are represented as basically good, but who end in defeat because they could not control their own weaknesses, or because they did not know themselves well enough to know their own weaknesses, Meredith investigates how well, if at all, people really know themselves.

Interpreting *The Egoist* as essentially comedy with some mixed moments and *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians* from a tragicomic perspective allows the reader to understand the connection that Meredith makes between egoism and human nature and the human dilemma. In all three of these novels Meredith reveals that ultimately the predicaments of his principal characters result precisely from their egoism, which derives from their inherent frailty, specifically, from their vanity as manifested in their selfishness and self-love. Meredith reveals that egoism is a condition that is out of balance with nature, in terms of human
nature, and, thus, is detrimental to the individual. While Meredith
is usually discussed in relation to his concern with the individual's
relationship with nature in its external sense, in terms of the
individual's relationship with earth, Meredith also reveals the
necessity for the individual to maintain a balance between his
emotions and his intellect, the inner forces that govern him.
Sencourt briefly points out the unnaturalness of the egoist in
relation to Meredith's concept of comedy.41 In The Egoist, Richard
Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians, Meredith represents the
devastating consequences of an unnatural imbalance within the
individual's heart and brain; for example, Meredith shows that when
an individual loses that tenuous balance between his intellect and
his emotions he can lose touch with his humanity: he can lose all
compassion for others, as Sir Austin demonstrates, or, he can lose
touch with his reason and thereby wallow in his feelings, as Sir
Willoughby demonstrates. Meredith represents both individuals as fit
subjects for the Comic Spirit. But Meredith also shows that
individuals like Richard Feverel and Alvan and Clotilda, who lose
that essential balance between their emotions and their feelings, can
elicit both laughter and sympathy: to different degrees Meredith
represents all three individuals as "tragic comedians." Meredith
complicates the reader's response toward these three protagonists to
represent the complexity of the human dilemma in which an
individual's potential for greatness can end in his defeat when he is
ruled by his weaknesses and by his passions.
Notes


2 A full account of Edith Wharton's discussion on James' views of Meredith follows: Wharton states, "It began, mildly enough, with a discussion of Meredith's importance as a novelist. . . James, deep-sunk in an armchair and in silence, sat listening, and weighing our views, till he suddenly pounced on my avowal that, much as I admired some of the novels, I had never been able to find out what any of them, except The Egoist and Harry Richmond, were about. I tried to temper this by adding that in many passages, and especially the descriptive ones, the author's style rose to a height of poetic imagery which--but here James broke in with the cry that I had put my finger on the central weakness of Meredith's art, its unconscious insincerity. Words--words--poetic imagery, metaphors, epigrams, descriptive passages! How much did any of them weigh in the baggage of the authentic novelist? (By this time he was on his feet, swaying agitatedly to and fro before the fire). Meredith, he continued, was a sentimental rhetorician, whose natural indolence or congenital insufficiency, or both, made him, in life as in his art, shirk every climax, dodge around it, and veil its absence in a fog of eloquence. Of course, he pursued, neither I nor any other reader could make out what Meredith's tales were about; and not only what they were about, but even in what country and what century they were situated, all these prosaic details being hopelessly befogged by the famous poetic imagery. He himself, James said, when he read Meredith, was always at a loss to know where he was, or what causes had led to which events, or even to discover by what form of conveyance the elusive characters he was struggling to identify moved from one point of the globe to another . . . till at last the practical exigencies of the subject forced the author to provide some specific means of transport, and suddenly, through the fog of his verbiage, the reader caught the far-off tinkle of a bell that (here there was a dramatic pause of suspense) that turned out be that of a mere vulgar hansom-cab: 'Into which,' James concluded with his wicked smile, 'I always manage to leap before the hero, and drive straight out of the story.' Such boutades implied no lack of appreciation of Meredith the poet, still less of regard for the man. James liked and admired Meredith, and esteemed him greatly for the courage and dignity with which he endured the trial of his long illness; but, when the sacred question of the craft was touched upon, all personal sympathies seemed irrelevant, and our friend pronounced his judgments without regard to them." (A Backward Glance [New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1934] 232-33).


5 Paul Elmer More is another critic displeased with Meredith's narrative techniques and also with his themes. In reference to *Richard Feverel* More argues, "So, in brief, Richard Feverel holds the mind from first to last on a single problem (and that, by the way, a fairly disagreeable one), and every incident is made to bear upon its development. There seems to be but one aspect—the sexual relation—to human life; and this is presented without any of the alleviating circumstances of genuine tragedy* (*The Novels of George Meredith, Shelburne Essays*, Second Series [1905; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930] 163). In reference to *The Egoist* More claims "The novel is unquestionably a most astounding piece of analytical cleverness, yet is it true to nature? Hardly, we think. The final impression is one of mental and emotional contraction; and however useful such an impression may be in a sermon, it is not altogether amusing in a work of art" (163). Pritchett explains Meredith's intrusiveness in terms of his biographical information; he argues, "In Meredith we are faced with the biographical necessity if we are to get to the heart of his very intrusive manner . . . . Meredith is enraptured by the question of persona; he is personal to the point of ornament. At one time in his life he liked to affect a Regency appearance and manner" (*George Meredith And English Comedy*, 33). In reference to *Richard Feverel* Pritchett explains Meredith's intrusive narrator: "Meredith intervened continuously in his novels by playing a sort of second lead as the Comic Spirit. The style is hortatory, buttonholing, and vocative; he pretty well tells us that without his dazzling presence as a conversationalist and essayist, there will be no novel" (*George Meredith And English Comedy*, 80-81).


12 One of Meredith's supporters anonymously argues, "We pay Mr. Meredith a high compliment when we say he enables the reader to understand what is meant by Comedy, in the best and fullest sense of the word." ("Unsigned review, New Quarterly Magazine," N. S., iii, January 1880, ed. Ioan Williams; *Meredith. The Critical Heritage* [N. Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1971) 235. Osbert Burdett, another critic, states of Meredith, "Being an imaginative artist, he necessarily invented a new manner to express his view of the world." Yet in pointing out Meredith's connection with Carlyle, Burdett criticizes Meredith; he argues, "But to accuse him of exceptional obscurity is to exaggerate. He and Carlyle retained a love of the crusty German that they both had studied in their youth. The effect on both was to make them write English as if they were foreigners." (*Critical Essays* [1925; Freeport: Book For Libraries P, 196] 29). Judith Wilt also views Meredith's narrative methods as innovations; Wilt points out that one can observe in *The Egoist*, "better than in any of Meredith's novels the nature of the new kind of action Meredith wanted to introduce into the novel, the action of the mind." (*The Readable People of George Meredith* [Princeton: Princeton UP, 1975) 147). Wilt also explains Meredith's intrusiveness; she states, "Meredith's excuse for stopping the action to highlight and explore the tableau is that, well handled, this method provides a lyric or poetic experience that is action of a vertical sort, as opposed to the narrative's horizontal activity" (245-46). Maaja Stewart, as well, considers Meredith's methods original; she states, "At his best Meredith is able to combine the old and the new, the modern and the classical, in a single creative vision" (*Techniques Of Intellectual Comedy In Meredith And Fielding," *Genre*, Vol. 8, [1975] 233).


14 In a letter to James Thomson, a reviewer of *The Egoist*, Meredith's frustration with the critics, particularly with W. E. Henley's critique of *The Egoist*, is apparent. Meredith writes, "I have not found the 'applause of the critics' very digestible. The writer in the *Athenaeum* is, I am told and can believe, an enthusiast on the subject of my works; but when I publish a book, I do not want my reviewer to be running over me in phosphorus, lighting me up bright and black, but that he should attend to the matter I commit to him. This has not been done either by the laudatory or the condemnatory. Criticism in England gets no farther in expression than the half-surfeited boy in a sock-shop: he likes this bun, he hates that tart. For an author to hear that he is wonderful, but a donkey, is not instructive to him. As to the abusive host, he who whistles loud on board so frail a vessel as fiction, must expect to raise a wind sufficiently violent to give him a dash of spray in his face. It is no worse to me. I have never paid much heed to the literary judgements of the English, but real criticism, though it should include reproof, and that mainly, I am very glad to have." *The*
And in a letter to a friend Meredith further reveals his disgust with his critics whom he feels do not understand his methods; he writes, "It is because I do not pass among reviewers that treat one who is little a favourite with the public, and who courts no favour, with this form of politeness. I am termed a harlequin, a performer of antics. I choose, when I write, the expression seeming to my imagination just, and as it is not conventional they denounce it. When there is a stress of emotion, my speech is necessarily simple, in harmony with the common element. They admit it, yet cannot allow that at other seasons the writer's fancy (if he have any) should be allowed to play. So they pursue their course, treating each new book of mine to blows, and me to a reluctantly lessening contempt confirmed in dislike, while gradually the submerged volume comes back to the surface, is demanded, and spoken of respectfully. . . . Believe me, it is only the bad manners which I complain of. I know my faults. I know too that all writers have some. The unfairness consists in reviewing favourites on the lines of their good things, and the unfavoured in examples of their weak or unappreciated. Forgive this tirade. I suppose I shall not publish very much more, and to be lashed up to the end is wearisome, if but for the monotony." (Letters Of George Meredith, ed. C. L. Cline, Letter no. 1059, written on June 28, 1887, vol. II, 872-873).

The narrator addresses Richard in relation to his impatience with Lucy, who is tearful because she is married in Mrs. Berry's wedding ring; he states, "Have patience, 0 impetuous young man! It is your profession to be a hero. This poor heart is new to it, and her duties involve such wild acts, such brigandage, such terrors and tasks, she is quite unnerved. She did you honour till now. Bear with her now. She does not cry the cry of ordinary maidens in like cases. While the struggle went on her tender face was brave; but alas! Omens are against her: she holds an ever-present dreadful one on that fatal fourth finger of hers, which has coiled itself round her dream of delight, and takes her in its clutch like a horrid serpent. And yet she must love it. She dares not part from it. She must love and hug it, and feed on its strange honey, and all the bliss it gives her casts all the deeper shadow on what is to come." George Meredith, The Ordeal Of Richard Feverel (1888; New York: Dover publications, 1983) 260. The narrator addresses Sir Austin, as well in relation to Richard's and Lucy's hearty breakfasting while on their honeymoon as they wait for a reply from Richard's father; he states, "Ah, wretched Scientific Humanist! not to be by and mark the admirable sight of these young creatures feeding. It would have been a spell to exorcise the Manichee, methinks" (308).

In The Tragic Comedians Count Kollin comments to Clotilda upon what he perceives as an uncanny similarity between the aphorisms that she and Alvan use since at the time they do not know each other. Meredith's narrator comments upon the Count's perception; he states, "It is here the place of the chorus to state that these ideas were in the air at the time." (1922; N. Y.: Arno P, 1975) 11.


19 George Meredith, An Essay On Comedy and the Uses Of the Comic Spirit ed. and notes Lane Cooper (1897; Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1956) 142.


23 Some critics contemporary with Meredith found fault with his narrative methods in relation to particular novels, like Richard Feverel, The Tragic Comedians, and The Egoist; G. E. Jewsbury, for example, writes in 1859 that "The Ordeal is about as painful a book as any reader ever felt himself inexorably compelled to read through, in spite of his own protests to the contrary . . . ," and that, "The only comfort the reader can find on closing the book is--that it is not true. We hope the author will use his great ability to produce something pleasanter next time." ("19. Athenaeum no. 1654," 9 July 1859, G. E. Jewsbury, ed. Ioan Williams, Meredith. The Critical Heritage [N. Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1971] 67). And in an unsigned review another critic argues in reference to The Egoist, "Nothing could be more appalling than the prelude, with its imitation of Carlyle, paradoxes meant for philosophy, and its obscure passages intended for deep wisdom. Obscurity, we can assure Mr. Meredith, is not necessarily interesting." ("56. Unsigned review, Examiner," no. 3744, 1 November 1879, ed. Ioan Williams, Meredith. The Critical Heritage [N. Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1971] 202.) While some of Meredith's twentieth-century critics share the views of their nineteenth-century predecessors in relation to Meredith's tragicomic methods, many try to account for them. V. S. Pritchett claims that in Richard Feverel Meredith represents "the tragedy in the setting of comic irony," and, "The novel does not end in tragedy, but in general bitterness unpurged. An ugly clownish grimace is left" (George Meredith and English Comedy, 71). U. C. Knopflmacher sees Richard Feverel as changing from comedy to tragedy. He states, "It's Meredith's ability to maintain both the refined stance of the sardonic ironist and the lyrical quality of the romancer that makes possible the movement from comedy to tragedy on which his book ultimately relies." (Laughter & Despair: Reading In Ten Novels Of The Victorian Era [Berkeley: U of C, 1971] 119). Knopflmacher adds, "The carefully built-up movement of the last third of Meredith's novel is thus destroyed by a quirk of fortune" (122). Also, H. Ramsey Fowler discusses Richard Feverel and The Tragic Comedians as
tragicomedies; he states that Meredithian tragicomedy represents a vision "in which the comic life is allowed to run its logical course to its necessary conclusion, emotional and spiritual debilitation, madness, and even death." Describing *The Tragic Comedians* as "the clearest example of Meredithian tragicomedy," Fowler discusses Alvan as mad. He states of him: "To keep facts from interfering with his vision, he is forced to plot more and more furiously to get Clotildaa back; and in this hopeless exercise of his will, he goes mad" ("The Tragicomic Spirit Of George Meredith," *Interpretations*, 6 [1974]: 47, 49). It seems to me, however, that Fowler's determination that Alvan "goes mad," and that [Meredithian tragicomedy's] "true end is madness" (49) is precisely the wrong view; see pages 230-232 for an explanation of my conclusion that Alvan is not mad. And Lionel Stevenson discusses what he describes as the "double vision" that Meredith uses to depict Willoughby, Clara, and Vernon in *The Egoist*; Stevenson states, "Meredith obviously approves of Clara and Vernon, and despises Willoughby, but his irrepressible sense of justice forces him to depict all of them with double vision. All three are figures as tragic as Hamlet in their struggle to survive a crisis and make a wise decision without benefit of external advice; but all three are as ludicrous as Malvolio in the misunderstandings and trivialities that betet them." (*The Egoist*, introduction, xv).

Donald David Stone argues that while in *The Egoist* Meredith had hinted at tragic possibilities within his comic theme, in his next novel *The Tragic Comedians* he chose to explore the interrelationship between comedy and tragedy," and, "In the figure of Alvan, Meredith found a case like his own, a victim of circumstances as well as of a tragicomic flaw, an insufficiently respected genius endowed with too many gifts and too little self-control" (Novelists in a Changing World. Meredith, James, and the Transformation of English Fiction in the 1880's. [Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1972] 138, 140). Stone says that *The Tragic Comedians* is a novel "about inextricably wasted lives" (143). Joseph Warren Beach discusses Meredith's narrative methods in general terms; he states, "It is the serious characters that are comic" and that while, "Meredith's comedy is not even incompatible with a tragic outcome . . . . Meredith does not write tragedy" (The Comic Spirit in George Meredith. An Interpretation [London: Longman's, 1911] 9, 18-19). Beach explains that Meredith "soon develops a more than usually serious conception of comedy, and a comic method that involves a searching study of motives, laying bare unsuspected and curious veins of self-deceit and affectation" (207). In discussing Meredith's comedies, Beach explains that he does not consider *Richard Feverel* among Meredith's other novels "in the comparison because it is hardly a comedy" (209). Osbert Burdett discusses what he terms a "dualism" in Meredith as "weakness" and as "confusion"; Burdette states "All acute readers of Meredith must have felt a dualism present in his work. The explanation of his weakness depends upon an understanding of it," and, "A sense of confusion at the dreadful change pervades many of his books, and there was somewhere in him a queer vein of Puritanism which, as always, demands sacrifice. Has anybody read *Richard Feverel* and doubted this? . . . . It is not the tragedy from which one revolts, but the improbability of it." (Critical Essays [1925; Freeport: Books For Libraries Press, 1969] 39, 40-41). While a few critics have acknowledged the presence of other non-comic
elements within *The Egoist*, others have argued that Meredith alternates comic and tragic effects in *Richard Feverel* and *The Tragic Comedians*. In reference to *Richard Feverel* David Lambuth argues, "Through the tragedy at the end it is not fanciful to say that Meredith, too, achieves his 'purgation,' and, like the reader, finds his faith in love and humanity renewed" (George Meredith, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, A History of a Father and Son*, "Introduction," David Lambuth [New York: Macmillan, 1926] xii). Gladys W. Ekeberg views Meredith's characters as tragic heroes who are comically depicted. In discussing *The Egoist, The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, and The Tragic Comedians*, Ekeberg argues, "Save for the light tone used in depicting the failings of his characters—a lightness very little in evidence in *The Tragic Comedians* but much so in the early portions of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*—there is no essential difference between the comic failings of Meredith's tragic heroes and the tragic flaws ascribed to the protagonists of Greek drama. Even in his purest comedies, such as *The Egoist*, folly is fraught with painful consequences, both to the comic hero and to those affected by his selfish blunders" (*The Ordeal of Richard Feverel as Tragedy,* CE, VII [1946] 388); Ekeberg concludes, "For the most part, the comedy of Meredith's tragic novels is of the type to further the end of tragedy, as it bears the human failings that gradually bring about, and at last precipitate, the tragic conclusion" (389). Gillian Beer argues that "the end of *Richard Feverel* teaches no clear lesson" (*Meredith: A Change Of Masks*, 15), and that "The unstable shifting between levity, fierce thought, high-spirited humour, garish drama, lyricism and integrity of insight makes *Richard Feverel* a troubling experience" (32). Beer also claims, "Meredith did not have the integral vision needed to sustain and fulfill tragedy in the novel" (110) and that "All Meredith's novels expressly exploit the relativity of comedy and tragedy" (112). Jascha Kessler approaches Meredith's novels as comedy, but does acknowledge the presence of other non-comic elements in *The Egoist*, in *Richard Feverel*, and in *The Tragic Comedians*; Kessler states, "Comedy may be a mixed mode, since in its exalted manifestations it comprehends tragic elements" (*Meredith's Spiritual Laughter,* Western Humanities Review, vol. 10 [1956] 68). Kessler concludes of *The Egoist* and of *The Tragic Comedians*, "Although we can follow the down-going of tragic heroes weltering in blood, Meredith's are comic heroes" (70). Kessler also accounts for what she terms Meredith's "monstrous plots" by in effect apologizing for Meredith, whom she perceives as "isolated" and as speaking "strange thoughts"; Kessler argues "Almost everyone who has written on him finds it necessary to apologize for the frequent intrusions of the philosopher who wags on, interpreting events to the reader, but no one has tried to see these blemishes as the efforts of an isolated man to speak strange thoughts, for indeed his monstrous plots are strange thoughts" (70). J.Gordon Eaker discusses *Richard Feverel* as comedy; he states, "Meredith's young heroes carry on a ceaseless struggle to defeat their lower natures and attain self-realisation. Though they may be defeated in the end like Richard . . . the struggle brings out all their heroism. Meredith always used comedy to depict conflict, which is the essence of drama ("Meredith's Human Comedy," NCF, vol. v, no.4, [1951] 261). Michael Sprinker argues that Meredith wanted to write comedy, but ended up writing
tragedy; he states "The spirit of Meredith's humor in *Richard Feverel* is self-destructive, an ironic commentary upon himself and his failed marriage, which he manages to turn into an elaborate joke. But in the end the joke gets out of hand," and that "One senses in the novel's final movements Meredith's wish to destroy all that is healthful and life-giving in the novel" ("The Hoax That Joke Bilked," *Mosaic*, vol. 10, no.1, [1976] 144). Robert S. Baker explains Meredith's mixed effects in psychological terms; he states, "Meredith's work is founded not on a comic, but rather on an essentially psychological apprehension of man in which the ethical aims and sunny clarity of the Comic Spirit are profoundly altered...". Meredith's novels are crowded with arbitrary death, suicides, attempted suicides, and profoundly wasted lives. The majority of his characters live in a state of bondage" ("Faun and Satyr: Meredith's Theory of Comedy and *The Egoist,*" *Mosaic*, vol. 9, no.4, [1976] 176).

Mohammed Shaheen interprets *Richard Feverel* primarily as tragedy with moments of comedy; he argues, "The book could have ended happily here, with the end of the ordeal. The tragic ending, undoubtedly painful, has its own artistic justification, despite the fact that its tragic sense has never been fully allowed by critics. A close examination of the ending shows that tragedy is not inconsistent with the total design of the book, for until the end the two impulses remain irreconcilable" (George Meredith: A Reappraisal of the Novels [Totowa: Barnes & Noble, 1981] 27).

24 See notes nos. 10, 11, and 12.

25 In his Essay Meredith defines the humourist as eliciting what is in effect a tragicomic response; he explains "the humorist of high [order] has an embrace of contrasts beyond the scope of the comic poet. Heart and mind laugh out at Don Quixote, and still you brood on him. The juxtaposition of the knight and squire is a comic conception, the opposition of their natures most humorous. They are as different as the two hemispheres in the time of Columbus, yet they touch, and are bound in one, by laughter. The knight's great aims and constant mishaps, his chivalrous valiancy exercised on absurd objects, his good sense along the high road of the craziest of expeditions, the compassion he plucks out of derision, and the admirable figure he preserves while stalking through the frantically grotesque and burlesque assailing him, are in the loftiest moods of humor, fusing the tragic sentiment with the comic narrative. The stroke of the great humorist is world-wide, with lights of tragedy in his laughter" (136-37).

26 Pirandello's conception of humor, what he calls the "feeling of the opposite," precisely explains the kind of mixed response that Meredith, as well, describes as humorous. Pirandello's theory is that an individual initially perceives a particular stimulus as comical, that is, as provoking laughter; after reflecting upon his initial perception, however, that individual considers the situation from an opposite point of view, that is sympathetically. And while the individual still retains his initial comic perception, he is now responding, as well, to the tragic element that he considers as motivating the comical image he perceives; thus, the individual has a
complex response to disharmonious elements. For a full discussion of Pirandello's theory of humor see pages 102-103 in the Introduction.


29 In the prelude to The Tragic Comedians Meredith's narrator indicates that the novel is based on an actual event; the narrator states of "The pair of tragic comedians of whom there will be no question" (1) "Their acts are incredible: they drank sunlight and drove their bark in a manner to eclipse historical couples upon our planet. Yet they do belong to history, they breathed the stouter air than fiction's, the last chapter of them is written in red blood . . " (1) and that "The bare railway-line of their story tells of a passion honest enough to entitle it to be related. Nor is there anything invented, because an addition of fictitious incidents could never tell us how she came to do this, he to do that . . .They are real creatures, exquisitely fantastical, strangely exposed to the world by a lurid catastrophe, who teach us that fiction, if it can imagine events and persons more agreeable to the taste it has educated, can read us no such furrowing lesson in life" (2). Although Meredith never uses the names of the persons he is representing in his novel, the critics discuss as common knowledge that The Tragic Comedians is based on the love story between Ferdinand Lassalle and Helene von Donniges. Also, the subtitle to The Tragic Comedians is A Study in a Well-Known Story.

30 Although Meredith represents his narrator as stating of Alvan, "We have not to plumb the depths; he was not heroic, but hugely man" (89), and that "If his end was unheroic," and also that "His end was a derision," Meredith takes care that his narrator represent Alvan precisely as heroic during his lifetime. For example, the narrator relates the history of Alvan's walking stick, a story that reveals Alvan as heroic; the narrator points out that his walking stick was "presented to Alvan by a famous doctor, who, hearing of his reputation of the duel, and of his gallant and triumphant defense of himself against a troop of ruffians, enemies or scum of their city, at night, by the aid of a common stout pedestrian stick, alone in a dark alley of the public park, sent him, duly mounted and engraved, an illustrious fellow to the weapon of defense, as a mode of commemorating his just abhorrence of bloodshed and his peaceful bravery" (135).

31 In light of the critics' determination that Meredith apparently does base his novel on a real couple, it seems that there is a hesitancy about discussing the novel's comical elements, many of which are comical in obvious ways, prescriptively adapted from Meredith's Essay on Comedy. The comments of Priestley and of Beer,
for example, may represent the resistance that most critics apparently feel in discussing the comic elements that Meredith takes care to create in his novel. Priestley does not consider *The Tragic Comedians* as a novel. He states, "But this curious novel, if it can be called a novel, for it follows the actual story of Ferdinand Lassalle and Helen von Donniges very closely and is perhaps best regarded as one of a new species, a cross between history or biography and fiction, has never found much favour even among Meredith's admirers" (*George Meredith*, 42). And Gillian Beer states of the novel, "Life and non-fictional literary sources become involved in a complicated interplay . . . The tragic strain is far more potent because the events really happened" (*Meredith: A Change Of Masks*, 138).

32 This concept was first introduced to me by Dr. Douglas White in his "Eighteenth Century Novel" class at Loyola University Chicago.


36 A complete account of Meredith's letter to the reverend Augustus Jessopp follows: Meredith writes, "In the matter of Anchorites. Do you really believe them to have been men of thews and breadth of brow? Yes, if they have slaughtered their dozens and begin to think heaven a pleasant resting-place. As a rule, No. Endurance is not a test of the fact. The physically robust man would have wasted and succumbed. The bilious and nervous man will last longer than the sanguine. Physiology will tell you much. Then again, can I morally admire, or reverence, or see positive virtue in, St. Simeon? Was he a hero, of his kind? Does the contemplation of him bring us nearer to God? To what a God! I turn aching in all my flesh to adore the Pagan, in preference. He smites kind nature in the face, to please his God!—St. Sim. may be a very strong man. Granting it, I shall think more of Milo. He tears up the groaning oak, which I hold better than to pluck with fanatic fingers at the roots of humanity.—Don't you see that it is not adoration that moves the stinking Saint, but, basest of prostrations, Terror. Terror, mighty to knit a man for endurance when allied to a cringing greed for a fair celestial seat.—The truth is, you sniff the sublime in this creature. Your secret passion is for sublimity. Beauty you love; but, by the way, under protest; and with the sense of being a sinner. Clerical training is to blame. But, change the system. Beauty is to be sought—let sublimity come. Both are rare: but the former is our portion—belongs to us. To deface it, is not sublime—villainous, rather! To outrage reason as well as beauty, shows the organisation of a ruffian. Be not misled by this dirty piece of picturesque Religiosity, animated: my gorge rises! I hold my nostrils. I cry for a Southwest wind to arise. Plunge them into the pit, O Lord! these worshippers of the pillar" (*Letters Of George
Meredith, collected and edited by His Son (N. Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912) Vol. I, 1844-1881, 97-99). It would appear that much of the tone of Meredith's letter is facetious, and that his main problem with Christianity in reference to "Anchorites" is that he really cannot fathom how they could live as they did; Meredith's skepticism about the desert Fathers is hardly new and is, in fact, quite understandable. I would argue that Meredith seems to be judging the ability of an individual to live the hermetic life by himself; that is, it would seem that Meredith assumes that no individual who is fully alive could really live the anchorite's life, a standard of behavior that may well result from his own belief that he could not live that kind of life.


40 Gillian Beer argues that Willoughby is not redeemed; she states, "He remains much the same man at the end as he was at the beginning. The comedy has corrected but not reclaimed him" ("Meredith's Idea of Comedy: 1876-1880," Nineteenth-Century Fiction 20 (1965): 171.

41 In his chapter "Criticism And Comedy" Sencourt discusses Meredith's philosophy about life in relation to nature; Sencourt states, "Courage, patience, passion, sanity, were all ingredients of a life that must be conscious of all its ranges, and of their indivisible unity in itself. And because nobleness was our end, life itself was a joke. There is an endless charming incongruity between the poetry of earth and the egoist's absurdities. We take leave of earth and treat ourselves as angels, only to find that we are crowned windbags. The comic spirit is always leering at our elbows, and pointing cheerfully to the absurdity of our not recognising every ingredient of our nature, as nobleness alone can do" (The Life Of George Meredith, 207).
CHAPTER 3
FORD MADOX FORD'S THE GOOD SOLDIER: A TRAGICOMEDY

Part I
Overview

Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier, subtitled A Tale of Passion, has for the most part been interpreted as either comedy or tragedy, though more recently a few critics have interpreted the novel as comic irony and a few others have interpreted it as tragic irony; critics have determined the genre of The Good Soldier as a means of interpreting Ford's meaning. That The Good Soldier has been interpreted so differently indicates that Ford's vision is of considerable complexity. A look at the interpretations of The Good Soldier reveals that most critics apparently hold two assumptions that govern their critical methods: that disharmonious elements, like comic and tragic elements, should not be combined, as initially maintained by Horace, and as accepted by mainline thinking in the neoclassical and Renaissance periods; and also that Ford has a unilinear purpose, which the critics have defined, each according to his own lights. Approaching The Good Soldier with the understanding that comic and tragic elements should not be combined would necessarily result in the determination that the novel belongs to one prescribed genre, and that its author's single purpose is to represent his world view as manifested within that prescribed genre.
But art and life show that things are not always one way or the other. The reader is aware, for example, of characters like Dickens' Magwitch, who elicits pity and ridicule as he finally represents the best side of human nature; the reader is aware, as well, of the almost successful first steps of a small child that elicit amusement and distress.

Rather than interpreting the novel as either essentially comedy or as essentially tragedy, or as essentially irony with either a comic or a tragic twist, I read *The Good Soldier* differently; I read it as a mixture of comedy and tragedy. I see Ford as creating a special intended effect in that he inextricably combines comic elements with tragic elements to create a mixed response. The complexity of the mixed response Ford creates places special demands upon the reader. That is, the reader cannot rely upon a pre-conceived set of expectations about the work, as he can with traditional works; for example, the effect of reading a traditional comedy is amusement and laughter, as the effect of reading a traditional tragedy is pity and fear for the plight of the protagonist. But the effect of reading a tragicomedy is reading with an awareness of a way of reading; that is, the effect of reading tragicomedy is that the reader is cognizant that his method of interpretation is based on his response to the antagonistic forces that he discerns as motivating the text. My method of reading *The Good Soldier* as tragicomedy leads to an analysis of Ford's meaning that focuses on the antagonistic relationship Ford does create between the narrative perspective he utilizes and the narrative itself.
The critics have not seen that Ford takes such care to create a conflict between Dowell's narrative technique and the situations and events he is narrating because Ford intends to create a mixed response. That is, in their attempts to reconcile the obvious disharmony that Ford creates mainly between his method of presentation and the story itself, critics have determined that Ford represents his meaning in the novel either by means of Dowell's storytelling techniques or by means of the actions and events themselves in Dowell's story. But the reader is aware that Ford could have written his novel in any number of ways, certainly in a way that does reconcile the presentation of the action of the plot with the action itself; Ford chooses, however, to represent Dowell as telling his story in a manner that stems from and which contrasts with the calamitous situation or event he is narrating. The resultant contrast forms Ford's specific purposes and intentions. Ford's method in *The Good Soldier* is to combine the disharmonious elements of comedy and of tragedy in both narrative and narration so that the reader is continually forced to contend with material with tragic potential in which characters never attain the tragic significance inherent in their situation. The result of Ford's combination of disharmonious elements is that he complicates the reader's ability to judge, particularly to judge Dowell. The comic effects that Ford creates in the novel variously elicit the reader's amused, benign, empathetic or critical laughter, as well as they sometimes critically distance the reader from him; the tragic effects that Ford creates in his novel elicit the reader's sympathy and result mainly from the actions and situations themselves within the
plot: deception, infidelity, suicides, madness, unattainable love, and isolation.

But Dowell has a very odd way of narrating these situations and events of the plot; the reader discerns that in spite of the tragic potential seemingly inherent in the situations and events in Dowell's narrative, Ford allows Dowell to deprive them of tragic force and to trivialize them. The response Ford creates in combining comic elements and tragic elements is complex; the reader finds himself in the curious predicament of feeling sympathy for Dowell because of the callous treatment he receives from Florence and from Edward, while at the same time the reader finds himself either critical of Dowell or amused by him for allowing that very treatment that does evoke pity for his plight as it is reflected, though perhaps unconsciously, in his narration. Ford draws the reader's attention to the peculiar fact that although Dowell narrates a story filled with the kind of action that usually marks tragedy, in Dowell's hands the material does not affect the reader with tragic force. Ford also complicates the reader's ability to judge Dowell in particular, in that he creates tension between what Dowell tells the reader is true, and what the reader and by inference Ford know is true; that is, Ford creates tension between the fictive world of the narrator and his own view of the objective truth of the fictive world.

The perspective from which Ford represents Dowell as speaking further complicates the reader's ability to judge him; Ford represents Dowell as speaking in retrospection, a perspective from which an individual usually reveals that he has attained wisdom, as, for example, Pip in *Great Expectations* demonstrates that he has attained wisdom as he speaks in retrospection. But Dowell has not
attained wisdom from the experience he narrated in the novel. The critics for the most part have not considered that Ford's whole pattern is something that will not allow the reader to have the single key; that is, Ford does not allow the reader to determine definitively and precisely where Dowell goes wrong. And while it might seem obvious to the reader that if Dowell had ever questioned Florence's aunts about their cryptic comments about Florence he might never have married her and, therefore, he might have avoided his whole ordeal, Ford guides the reader to see, as well, that Dowell does not listen to what he considers gossip and past history; in fact, Ford guides the reader to view Dowell's unquestioned defense of Florence's character as gallant and as praiseworthy, as well as naive. The critics have not considered that Ford's technique is that he purposefully combines comic and tragic elements because that medium allows him to ask the kinds of questions that require complex answers, like "How does an individual interpret reality?" Ford also asks moral questions, like "Is it best never to trust anyone"?; "Can an individual trust too much"?; "How does the world deal with people who are naive and vulnerable"?; and "What are 'good people' and how do they fare in the world?" Ford does not simplify morality by providing easy answers to his questions; rather, he underscores the complexity inherent in answering these questions by choosing a complex medium to address them. Ford utilizes the medium of tragicomedy in The Good Soldier because that medium effectively allows him to connect Dowell's predicament with laughter and sympathy. In representing Dowell's predicament, Ford points to the ambiguous context, and thus to the complexity, in making moral judgments.
That Ford does place special demands upon the reader in the discrepancy he creates between Dowell's narrative and his method of presentation is evident in two specific issues that have inspired critical debate; both issues result from the odd method Ford chooses for Dowell to tell his story. Critics have debated about whose "tale of passion" is represented in the novel and also about whether or not Dowell's description of his story, which he repeatedly claims is "sad" and not "tragic," is actually "sad" or "tragic." It would seem, however, that to attempt to determine whose "tale of passion" is represented in the novel would be pointless in that an author can make available the passion of ten people; it would also seem that to assume that a story necessarily elicits a particular response, such as "sad" or "tragic," only because a character in the story keeps telling the reader that his story is "sad" or tragic," would be a mistake. Both questions become issues, however, because of Ford's narrative perspective, which creates considerable complexity in determining meaning. Because Dowell narrates a story about his best friend, Edward Ashburnham, the ostensible "good soldier" and the proclaimed subject of Dowell's narration, and also because Dowell himself is seen as a "good soldier," the question of which "good soldier's" "tale of passion" Ford represents arises in determining his meaning.

Ford creates a first person narrator, Dowell, who is himself the protagonist of the story he tells; Ford represents him as telling a story about two couples, Edward Ashburnham, the ostensible "good soldier" for whom the novel is named, his wife Leonora, John Dowell, the narrator, and his wife Florence. Dowell tells of the passion of his wife Florence, and of his best friend, Ashburnham, who, together,
deceive Dowell. Ford also represents Dowell as claiming passions for all of the other women Ashburnham claimed he loved, as well; however, Ford reveals Dowell's claims as unsubstantiated either by his actions or by his natural proclivities. All except Dowell are aware of the deceit and treachery that mark all four of their lives because all except Dowell are to various degrees involved in it: the story centers around nine years of deception and marital infidelity, and includes blackmail, extreme mental anguish, madness, death, and two suicides. At the end of the novel Ashburnham and Florence commit suicide, and Nancy Rufford, Edward's ward and supposedly the great love of his life, goes mad with grief over Edward's suicide. The close of the novel leaves Dowell in a state of readiness one day to marry Nancy, who is currently mad and who is able only to utter a single word. Thus, Dowell, in effect ends up alone, living in isolation from human interaction. Ford's rendering of the relationship between both couples and among the four friends and his rendering of the situations and events of the plot by means of Dowell's odd method of narration have drawn the critics' attention to the subtitle of the novel and to Dowell's repeated claim that his story is "sad" and not "tragic."

In my approach to The Good Soldier as tragicomedy, I have divided this chapter into two parts: in the first part I review the critical history of the novel, discuss what is comic about the novel and what is tragic about it, and discuss, as well, the nature of tragicomedy; in the second part I present my analysis of the novel, discuss the techniques Ford uses to create his mixed effects, and discuss, as well, the significance of reading The Good Soldier from a tragicomic perspective.
Critics contemporary with this novel such as Rebecca West and Theodore Dreiser, writing in 1915, as well as many of its more recent critics view this work as a tragic story of death and misery. But even among those who view *The Good Soldier* as tragedy there are divisions: where West and Dreiser focus on the tragedy of Dowell's narrative about Ashburnham, the "good soldier," and, in effect, dismiss Dowell's character in his narrative as well as the rather extraordinary narrative style that colors all he says, more recent critics consider Dowell at least as important as Ashburnham. West describes *The Good Soldier* as a "beautiful and moving story." Like West, Theodore Dreiser applauds the story's serious element, arguing that it is "tragic in the best sense," which he explains as "that tragedy for which there is no solution." Apparently unaware of the integral relationship that Ford exploits in the discrepancy he creates between Dowell's narrative and his method of narration, West and Dreiser in effect dismiss Dowell as insignificant to the story he tells and focus instead on the story itself. Yet in dismissing Dowell's character, they dismiss his role as narrator, the chief means through which the novel's comical elements are represented; since the narrator guides the reader's response to his narrative, the novel's comical elements are lost if Dowell is disregarded. But Dreiser is unlike West in his view that the novel is flawed. Although he states that this novel "had the making of a fine story," Dreiser holds that its "failure" is due to Ford's "British leanings," a "leaning" that will not allow Dowell to "loosen up and sing" (43). Dreiser does not further explain this point.

More recently, writing in 1960 John Meixner also interprets this novel as tragedy, but as a modern tragedy that focuses on Dowell as
much as it does on the Ashburnhams. Although Meixner acknowledges that comedy exists within "one dimension" of this work, he considers this work essentially one of "deep, intensely tragic power" (72). He argues that Ford "has placed a context of comic irony" around this "awful core" (72). Meixner argues that this novel "epitomizes in a classical way the altered tragic vision of our modern sensibility" (72). For Meixner, one of the most tragical aspects of the story concerns Ashburnham, who "arouses in the reader the cathartic emotions of pity and awe" (92). That Meixner discusses the novel as tragic and concludes that the novel "does, indeed, tell 'the saddest story'" (96), shows his willingness to see as synonymous "tragic" and "saddest." But to see "tragic" and "saddest" as synonymous is a mistake, in that it is precisely the difference between them that Ford points to in this novel.

Meixner's acknowledgment of comical elements in this novel results in part from his response to Mark Schorer, who was the first to say in 1948 and again in 1951 that critics before him were wrong in their assessment of the novel as tragedy. Schorer claims *The Good Soldier* is a novel of comic irony. Schorer focuses not on Edward Ashburnham, as critics like West and Dreiser had done, but on Dowell, whom he views as an unreliable narrator. Schorer's interpretation, which ushers in a new school of thought on this novel, has been a touchstone for critics after him. Schorer explains irony as that "which makes no absolute commitments and can thus enjoy the absolute advantage of many ambiguities of meaning and endless complexities of situation," and "is at the same time an evaluative mood". For Schorer this technique culminates in Ford's "comic genius" (xv). Schorer explains that Ford's "grotesquely comic metaphors," such as a
description of a "girl in a white dress" likened to a "phosphorescent fish in a cupboard," represent "the main ingredient in Ford's tone" (xvi), and that such "wonderfully comic events" as the description of Maisie Maidan's death and Maisie's calling out "shuttlecocks" in her madness after Edward's death (xv), are all the "wittier" for their "deceptive clothing of pathos" (xvi). Schorer contends that it is ironic that Dowell narrates "A Tale of Passion," though he "is himself incapable of passion, sexual and moral alike" (ix).

Departing from those who concur with Dowell's description of his tale as "The Saddest Story," Schorer calls Dowell's description his "opening absurdity," arguing that throughout the novel we must conclude that his view "must be exactly the wrong view" (ix).

Although Schorer explains that there is a gap or "fracture" between the "event as we feel it to be" and the manner in which the narrator reports it to us, he qualifies this statement by adding that Dowell's view "is not so much the wrong view as a view, although a special one" (ix).

Other critics who have followed Schorer in viewing the novel as comedy are Richard Cassell and Avrom Fleishman, among others. For Cassell, writing in 1961, this novel is a work of comic irony in that Ford leaves us "bemused and suspended between pity, shock, and despair." Like Schorer, Cassell largely focuses on the novel's comical elements, the chief of which is Dowell's prose style; in accounting for our response to Dowell Cassell claims that because we feel superior to him, we are excited "to discover the truth" (166). But in 1987 Avrom Fleishman goes beyond Cassell to claim that The Good Soldier is highly comic; he shows impatience with those who discuss the book in terms of what he calls "such lame canards as
Complaining that recent discussions of this novel have departed from Schorer's comic view of it, Fleishman claims that Dowell "is one of the great comic characters of literature .. ." (47). Fleishman concludes that the novel not only anticipates "much of what passes for black humor these days," a point which he does not further explicate except to claim that it is the first novel of its kind "to display the modern comedy of infinitely questioning but inveterately self-defeating speculation" (52).

Alone in recognizing the comical and the tragical in this novel is David Eggenschwiler. Writing in 1979, Eggenschwiler sees the first half of The Good Soldier as sexual farce and the second half as romantic tragedy. Eggenschwiler maintains that this novel "is an artful mongrel, a delightful and subtle mixture of genres that is bound to perplex those who are looking hard for consistency." He explores the comical and tragical elements of this novel largely in a discussion of whether or not Dowell is "a fool and a eunuch or a good fellow" (401). Although Eggenschwiler describes this novel as an "artful mongrel, a delightful mixture of genres," where both "mongrel" and "mixture" result from the combination of comedy and tragedy inextricably combined into a third substance, he argues that the novel's genre alternates from comedy to tragedy. While he is right in noting the "Comical-Tragical illusions" in The Good Soldier, his discussion of the first half of the novel as sexual farce does not acknowledge the tragic elements within it, in that they elicit sympathy, nor does his description of the second half of the novel as romantic tragedy acknowledge the comic elements within it. The first half of the novel deals with the courtship and thirteen year marriage between Dowell and Florence, their nine year friendship with the
Ashburnhams, and Florence's suicide. The chief technique Ford uses in the first half of the novel to elicit sympathy for Dowell is that he represents him as totally devoted to Florence and to Ashburnham. The comic elements in the second half of the novel, which mainly point out Dowell's comic limitation, undermine the tragic elements of the second half of the novel; Ford creates comic effects in revealing how different from Edward Dowell really is, yet in representing Dowell as claiming that "Edward was just myself." Ford also creates comic effects in representing Dowell's description of Edward's suicide with a penknife, in representing Dowell's jealousy of Leonora's finally marrying Rodney Bayham and settling down to have a "quiet comfortable good time," and in representing Dowell's well-rehearsed situation with the girl wherein he once again finds himself male nurse to another woman who ignores him. Certainly the bedroom antics of Florence during her thirteen year marriage to Dowell are often highly entertaining, as we see Dowell duped into sitting downstairs armed with an axe in case of burglars while Florence entertains men in her locked bedroom. But one must simultaneously acknowledge that Dowell is extremely devoted to her in the role he styles as "male nurse," and that he truly believes he is helping to prolong her life by abstaining from any physical contact with her and by going along with whatever whimsical notions she has. In addition, Florence is Ashburnham's mistress and Ashburnham is supposedly Dowell's best friend. And though Ford represents Dowell as a bit of a fool here, Ford also agitates the reader in representing Edward as knowingly humiliating and deceiving Dowell, who looks up to Edward, who respects him, and who completely trusts him with Florence. The comical aspect of Dowell's blindness, of what is so apparent to
everyone but to him, is lessened by the disquieting fact that Dowell is the victim of Florence's treachery and of Ashburnham's deceit only because he believes his wife and trusts an individual whom he believes to be his best friend. Thus, in his representation of Dowell, Ford elicits the reader's criticism and his amused laughter toward Dowell, as well as his sympathy toward him.

That critics have responded differently to *The Good Soldier* indicates the complexity of Ford's vision; Ford's method for creating his vision is to combine elements that create disharmony. Some critics have responded to the kind of action, which traditionally represents tragedy, that Ford does create in the novel, rather than to Dowell's method of presenting that action, which generally elicits a comic response. The reader discerns that in his novel Ford does create various kinds of comic effects, some of which are obviously comic and some of which are subtly comic to elicit laughter, as Ford also does create tragic effects to elicit sympathy.

Ford's chief method throughout the novel for creating sympathy for Dowell is that he underscores Dowell's devotion to those, like Florence and like Ashburnham, who consistently conspire to deceive him, and, thus, who of all people are the least deserving of his devotion. In representing Dowell as silently acquiescing to Florence and to the Ashburnhams about things that incense the reader, who understands that Dowell is being taken advantage of, Ford creates sympathy for Dowell. And it is probably Dowell's absolute devotion to Florence and to Edward, who, ironically, are the last two people in the world who deserve it, that accounts for those critics, like West and Dreiser, who in effect disregard the mainly comic form of the novel and validate the inherently tragic nature of the events
themselves that comprise the novel's contents. For in representing Dowell's deception by Florence and by Ashburnham, Ford reveals goodness as abused by evil, a situation that the reader is meant to find repugnant; the sympathy that Ford does take care to elicit for Dowell apparently motivates Dreiser's and West's determinations that Ford represents a tragic vision in *The Good soldier*.

Representing Dowell as deceived is another way that Ford creates sympathy for him; the reader sympathizes with a character who is in a particular situation because he has been deceived. Ford's method is that he surrounds Dowell by deceivers of all sorts, by those who deceive others and by self-deceivers. Ford thereby guides the reader to conclude that Dowell could not have known what was going on around him. Ford guides the reader to see that for the entire thirteen years of Dowell's marriage he is the subject of plots and deceptions by those with whom he is most intimate and against whom he is no match; Florence, for example, is in effect a heartless mastermind in her deception of Dowell and Edward is flawless in his performance as Dowell's best friend. Ashburnham is so successful in deceiving Dowell because he is able to delude himself with notions of his gallantry about what the reader knows and by inference what Ford knows are really only his tawdry affairs. In orchestrating situations and events to guide the reader to conclude that initially, at least, Dowell could not have known what was going on around him, Ford represents Dowell as blameless for his situation and thus arouses the reader's pity.

The tragic effects that Ford creates in his novel can be described in the general terms Schopenhauer uses to represent tragedy; also, some of Ford's tragic effects are analyzable in terms
of Arthur Miller's theory of tragedy. Dowell's conception of his own predicament, as well as his conception of Edward's and of Leonora's predicaments, can be described in the manner proposed by Schopenhauer; Schopenhauer describes tragedy as "The unspeakable pain, the wail of humanity, the triumph of evil, the scornful mastery of chance, and the irretrievable fall of the just and the innocent." But Ford reveals that Dowell is as much mastered by his own limitations as he is mastered by chance. Schopenhauer claims that "The representation of a great misfortune is alone essential to tragedy" (328); Schopenhauer's conception of tragedy is demonstrated in Ford in that all of the characters for whom Ford creates sympathy experience a great misfortune. Dowell's representation of events can also be interpreted in terms of Schopenhauer's theory of tragedy; Schopenhauer states, "What gives to all our tragedy, in whatever form it may appear, the peculiar tendency towards the sublime is the awakening of the knowledge that the world, life, can afford us no true pleasure, and consequently is not worthy of our attachment. In this consists the tragic spirit: it therefore leads to resignation" (213). A spirit of "resignation" resulting from "the knowledge that the world . . . life can afford us no true pleasure . . ." characterizes Dowell's attitude toward his own fate, as he ends up living with Nancy, the girl who is mad and who does not know who he is. Dowell himself tells us that in effect he resigns from the world and that life affords him no "true pleasure"; he states, "No one visits me, for I visit no one. No one is interested in me, for I have no interests" (275). Yet Dowell's "resignation" from the world may not seem tragic, since Dowell does not seem consciously to decide to resign from the world out of a sense of defeat; rather, Dowell's
isolation from the world mainly results from his being too lazy to make the effort to go out into the world. Still, Dowell’s matter-of-fact statement that he has “no interests” and that in effect no one cares about him precisely reflects the “resignation” that Schopenhauer claims to be the “tragic spirit.”

Some of the sympathetic effects that Ford creates mainly for Dowell, but also for Ashburnham and for Leonora, are analyzable in terms of Arthur Miller’s theory of tragedy. Miller’s theory of tragedy and his model of the tragic hero is in part helpful to the reader’s understanding of Ford’s characters. For Miller “Tragedy arises when we are in the presence of a man who has missed accomplishing his joy. . . . In a word, tragedy is the most accurately balanced portrayal of the human being in his struggle for happiness. That is why we revere our tragedies in the highest, because they most truly portray us.” 12 The Good Soldier is particularly analyzable in terms of Miller’s discussion of tragedy in that Ford represents four individuals who, for various reasons, have “missed accomplishing” their “joy” as Dowell, the narrator, points out. In fact, Dowell tells the reader: “Well, it is all over. Not one of us has got what he really wanted . . . . It is a queer and fantastic world. Why can’t people have what they want? The things were all there to content everybody; yet everybody has the wrong thing . . . ” (257-258). For Miller tragedy exists “when the characters before you are wholly and intensely realized, to the degree that your belief in their reality is all but complete” (11); Miller adds “The story in which they are involved is such as to force their complete personalities to be brought to bear upon the problem, to the degree that you are able to understand not only why they are
ending in sadness, but how they might have avoided their end. The
demeanor, so to speak, of the story is most serious--so serious that
you have been brought to the state of outright fear for the people
involved, as though for yourself" (11). While Ford does guide the
reader constantly to question why Dowell and Ashburnham could not
have avoided their ends, Ford does not allow the reader to make easy
judgments about where Dowell goes wrong. In assessing Dowell's final
dilemma, although the reader constantly ponders the reason why Dowell
could not see what is so blatantly obvious to the reader, that
Florence's actions almost never exactly coincide with the appearance
she creates, Ford represents Dowell as noble and generous in trusting
Florence enough to give her the benefit of the doubt. The reader
similarly questions why Ashburnham could not have found some other
way to deal with his feelings for Nancy.

One critical difference between Miller and Ford, however, is
that Miller equates "sad" and "tragic." Ford takes care to create
comic effects to undermine material that could impact the reader with
the force of tragedy; Ford thus achieves a work that is, in fact,
"sad," but is not "tragic," as Dowell time and again points out to
the reader. Another critical difference between Miller and Ford is
that Miller considers the "intensity" with which an individual
desires something as significant to tragedy; Ford, however,
represents all of his main characters except for Dowell as intensely
desiring things that lack substance and which they finally come to
understand are a sham. Miller states: "It matters not at all whether
a modern play concerns itself with a grocer or a president if the
intensity of the hero's commitment to his course is less than the
maximum possible"; he adds "It matters not at all whether the hero
falls from a great height or a small one, whether highly conscious or only dimly aware of what is happening, whether his pride brings the fall or an unseen pattern written behind clouds; if the intensity, the human passion to surpass his given bounds, the fanatic insistence upon his self-conceived role—if these are not present there can only be an outline of tragedy but no living thing. Ford, however, represents his characters as desiring things that he guides the reader to see as insubstantial, and thus diminishes Ashburnham's, Leonora's, and Florence's emotional impact upon the reader. For example, Ashburnham wants to run around and just spend a lot of money without Leonora knowing about it and without her constantly going to his bankers to cut off his funds; Leonora's great desire is to have a marriage that appears solid, even though she understands that she cannot actually to have a good marriage with Ashburnham. And Florence only wants to spend Dowell's money and to live without accountability to anyone; she is much like Edward in that respect.

Yet in conjunction with the sympathetic effects Ford creates for Dowell, Ford also creates comic effects to elicit empathetic, amused, or critical laughter toward him, as well as to create critical distance from him; the two chief ways that Ford creates comedy in the novel are by means of Dowell's method of narration and by means of the context in which he represents the action of Dowell's story. Dowell's odd method of narration is that he represents the situations and the events he is discussing in a manner that is inconsistent with the actions and events themselves. For example, in discussing something sad or emotionally moving, Dowell will either make an inappropriate quip which trivializes what he has just said, or will digress from his narrative, question his digressions and thus
further digress, or he will try to negate something he tells the reader and then apologize for perhaps creating the wrong impression, qualify the denial, and then deny and again qualify the same statement. The effect that Ford creates by means of Dowell's method is that the reader is as interested in Dowell's own idiosyncrasies as in the events themselves that Dowell is relating; also, in telling his story Dowell frequently draws bizarre analogies that the reader presupposes Dowell uses to promote clarity. One example that captivates the reader's attention as well as it best demonstrates the frustrating yet comical style of Dowell's narration is that one so often quoted by the critics where Dowell compares their lives to a minuet. He states: "No, by God it is false! It wasn't a minuet that one stepped; it was a prison--a prison full of screaming hysterics. . . And yet I swear by the sacred name of my creator that it was true. It was true sunshine . . ." (9). Thus, by means of Dowell Ford draws the reader's attention to Dowell's dilemma; Ford guides the reader to respond to Dowell's lived experience at the time it occurred and also to Dowell's manner of describing that experience at the time he is writing about it. The reader observes that Dowell's predicament in his retrospective assessment of his situation is that he cannot reconcile the conflict between what he knows to be true as he writes his story, and what he felt at the time when the incident actually occurred. That is, Dowell cannot understand, even after the fact, how he could ever have felt that in the company of the Ashburnhams his life proceeded with the ease and regularity of a slow patterned dance, like a "minuet," when, in fact, it was really a hell, like "a prison full of screaming hysterics."
Another example of the way Ford creates comic effects by means of Dowell's odd method of narration is his discussion of Florence's suicide note; in relating to the reader what Leonora told him about Florence's suicide, Dowell states, "on Florence's dressing-table, beside her dead body there had lain a letter to Miss Hurlbird--a letter which Leonora posted without telling me. I don't know how Florence had time to write to her aunt; but I can quite understand that she would not like to go out of the world without making some comments" (216-217). The sarcastic and humorous quip Ford writes for Dowell about Florence's finding the time to write to her aunts in the midst of killing herself, and his implication that Florence had a natural proclivity to talk, create a comic response in that they elicit the reader's laughter toward what Dowell represents as Florence's silly ways; Ford thus trivializes the suicide itself. While Ford could have chosen other words for Dowell to describe his wife's suicide that would have impacted the reader with tragic force, he takes care to represent Dowell's description of Florence's suicide in a way that diminishes the significance of the death itself: Ford guides the reader to respond to Dowell and to his little jokes, as well as to Florence's death; Ford represents Dowell as being deliberately funny himself in his narration of Florence's suicide.

Another way Ford creates comic effects is that he represents Dowell as turning to the reader on various occasions to discuss his inadequacy as storyteller. For example, Dowell tells the reader, "You may take my generalizations or leave them. But I am pretty certain that I am right in the case of Nancy Rufford--that she had loved Edward Ashburnham very deeply and tenderly" (265); five sentences later Dowell states, "Anyhow, I don't know whether at this
point, Nancy Rufford loved Edward Ashburnham. . . . I don't know. I
know nothing. I am very tired" (266). Ford's method is that he
represents Dowell as throwing off his responsibility for marshaling
the facts for the reader and providing him with an accurate and
reliable interpretation of those facts. Thus, by means of Dowell's
tactics, Ford forces the reader to distinguish the facts from the
fictions or from the distortions of the facts that Dowell's inability
and/or refusal to assess those facts creates. Ford's method, then,
places the responsibility for getting at the truth upon the reader in
that the narrator is the only means the reader has of obtaining
information. And if the narrator tells the reader that he is not
really suited to tell his own story, then the reader either pieces
things together and tries to figure out for himself where the truth
lies, or he assumes the narrator is being ironic and forges ahead
with the story.

Another way Ford creates comic effects by means of Dowell is
that he often represents him as drawing weird analogies to incidents
like death that if represented in a different context or by means of
a different narrator could be seen as tragic. For example, in
Dowell's description of Maisie Maidan's death he likens the teeth of
the suitcase where she had "died in the effort to strap up a great
portmanteau" (81) to an alligator: "She had died so grotesquely," he
states, "that her little body had fallen forward into the trunk, and
it had closed up upon her, like the jaws of a gigantic alligator"
(81). The reader is continually faced with Dowell's strange
assessment of situations like Maisie's death, which could elicit only
pity if Dowell had presented it differently; that is, Dowell could
have elicited a strong emotional response from the reader if he had
represented Maisie's death in a manner that focused on the solemnity of her death, as well as on the fact that she was a naive and lovely young woman in the bloom of life, rather than on her grotesque death pose. But Ford chooses to deprive the event of tragic force by representing Dowell as creating comic effects to distract the reader's attention from Maisie's death and to refocus it onto superfluous details surrounding the death.

Although Ford's purpose in representing Dowell as creating comedy while telling a story whose plotline consists of situations and events that the reader usually encounters in tragedy seems puzzling, as the polemical debate about Ford's meaning in the novel demonstrates, his method may be better understood in terms of Booth's explanation of the reliability of the narrator; the reader recalls that Booth's point is particularly helpful in relation to Lawrence's narrative method. Booth states "Whenever the demands of concision or clarity or dramatic irony of the most emphatic kind are more important than making the story seem to be telling itself, or giving an air of the puzzling ambiguities of life, the author will seek those devices which can maintain facts as facts and reliable judgments as reliable judgment." Booth is saying that whenever an author considers it important that the reader understand what is fact and what is not fact, he will take care to guide the reader accordingly. But implicit in Booth's argument is the opposite idea: Booth implies that whenever an author considers it important that the reader feel as if there is no influence outside of the story guiding his response, or that the reader feel perplexed by life's uncertainties, he will not utilize means to guide the reader to understand what is factual information and what is not. Ford's
technique is precisely to emphasize "the puzzling ambiguities of life." Guthke's point about the role of the narrator in narrative fiction is worth recalling here, as well; in discussing tragicomedy in particular in the novel Guthke states that "the realization of the tragicomic is primarily a matter of the attitude and perspective of the narrator" and that "it is easy to see that such a narrator . . . will have no difficulty in predisposing the reader towards a tragicomic vision of the narrated subject matter, if the author so desires."15 Booth and Guthke are saying that in effect events are what the narrator makes of them. In the interest of understanding the effects Ford creates by means of the techniques he chooses to represent his meaning, then, it is not possible to separate the story from the storyteller; that is, separating the action of Dowell's story from Dowell's method of presenting his story is not conducive to an accurate reading of *The Good Soldier* in that it does not get at Ford's meaning. Ford represents his meaning in the complexity that results precisely from the disharmony he does create between the narrative he writes for Dowell and the method of presentation he creates for him, as well.

Another way Ford creates comic effects by means of Dowell's method of telling his story is that he represents him as telling the reader about the weaknesses of Ashburnham, of Leonora, and of Florence; yet Ford does not represent Dowell as telling the reader anything about his own weaknesses, which Ford makes so apparent to the reader. For example, Dowell talks about Leonora's desire to keep up appearances at all costs, and about Florence's desire for wealth regardless of the lengths to which she must go to gain it and then to maintain it. And Ford guides the reader to see, as well, that one of
Dowell's chief weaknesses is his inability accurately to assess himself and his own actions. For example, it is comical that Dowell, who for the entire novel reveals himself as opposite to Ashburnham, should suddenly claim that he wants and loves all of the women Edward wanted and loved; claim that he really loved Leonora, after telling us he really hated her; and finally claim that he wants to marry Nancy Rufford, the "real" love of his life, as she was of Edward's. Dowell's claims are comical as they shock and surprise the reader. An author can create a comic response by means of shock and surprise; while shock and surprise are not necessarily comic responses, Ford creates comic effects in his representation of Dowell, whose unexpected claims about himself and about his passions shock and surprise the reader, as they are not substantiated either by Dowell's own story or by the actions of others in relation to Dowell. The reader is amused by Dowell's discussion of himself as a great lover and cannot reconcile his image of himself with the image of himself that Dowell reveals; thus, the reader's shock and surprise result in his amusement because what Dowell says about himself here is not true. For example, the reader has all along been aware of Dowell's complacency in his platonic relationship with Florence and with all of her antics that keep her in the company of any man but her husband, as he has all along been aware of Dowell's friendship with Leonora and his acquaintance with Nancy. Thus, Dowell's sudden confession of repressed passion for these women cannot be taken seriously. Then, too, there has been no clue from Dowell or from anyone else that he could possibly love Leonora and the girl. Dowell's claims create a comic effect because they have no basis in fact and are, therefore, completely unexpected. Dowell's conclusions
lead the reader to consider what character could, in fact, be more opposite to Ashburnham than Dowell, and to wonder why Dowell himself cannot see that. Dowell's pointing out the similarities between himself and Ashburnham is comic, as well, in that it underscores the differences rather than the similarities between Ashburnham and himself.

Ford also creates comic effects in representing Dowell as telling the reader many times throughout the novel that he knows "nothing," as the reader will recall he claims in relation to Nancy Rufford's loving Edward; Ford guides the reader to balance Dowell's claim that he knows "nothing" against his final conclusion that he loves all of the women Edward loved, and that he "loved Edward Ashburnham" and still does "love him because he was just myself" (275). Dowell's attempt to represent himself as charismatic and seductive in the manner of Ashburnham can only be comical. That is, Dowell's attempt to play Edward, the libertine who romantically dies for love at the end of the novel, does not work in that it strikes the reader as silly. What Ford does reveal, however, in Dowell's attempt to play Edward is his comic limitation; the reader has a comic response to Dowell's self-delusion that there is even a hint of similarity between himself and Ashburnham, much less that Dowell was, in fact, Edward.

Another way Ford creates a comic effect in the novel is that he represents Dowell as learning virtually nothing from his experience; in representing Dowell as finding himself in exactly the same position at the end of his story as he is in at its beginning, Ford guides the reader to criticize him. For the chief thing experience demands is that the individual learn something from it; if not, the
experience has been wasted. The reader is critical of Dowell because he learns nothing from his experience with Florence that would enable him better to cope with similar situations in the future, like the one he is now in with Nancy. Thus, Ford reveals that Dowell does not grow spiritually from his lived experience; Dowell, however, thinks that simply because he has lived through a harrowing experience with Florence and Ashburnham that he has grown. And since Dowell is writing his story retrospectively, Ford guides the reader to feel that he should certainly know more about himself and about the people who deceive him at the conclusion of his narrative than he does at its beginning.

Ford creates comic effects, as well, in emphasizing Dowell's egoism, vanity, and self-centeredness, which continually lead him erroneously to conclude that he is central to all that goes on around him, when, in fact, he is superfluous to it. Dowell's position as outsider to the group is apparent in that Ford guides the reader to see of what little value he is to the others. For example, the reader observes that Leonora and Edward care nothing for Dowell's own comfort or convenience as they urgently summon him from Connecticut to England ultimately to serve no real purpose. Upon his arrival Dowell describes his reception by Leonora: "'So glad you've come,' as if I'd run down to lunch from a town ten miles away, instead of having come half the world over at the call of two urgent telegrams" (23). And though it seems that Dowell is right to conclude that Edward and Leonora cannot do without him, in light of the fact that they do send him two urgent telegrams, Dowell himself does recognize that they do not even acknowledge the inconvenience to which they subject him when he does return to them, as he also seems to
recognize that they do not demonstrate any extraordinary need for his presence. The reader expects Dowell to be able to reach a conclusion about this state of affairs; the reader feels that Dowell should be able to see, as the reader does see, that once he arrives he is, in effect, ignored. That is, Dowell should be able to see that the urgency of Leonora's and of Edward's rhetoric is belied by the lack of urgency demonstrated in their actions.

Another example of the comic effects that Ford creates in representing Dowell as unable to discern that what Leonora and Edward say is not substantiated by what they do is the role they assign to Dowell in the arrangements they make for Nancy to return to India. Dowell explains that Edward and Leonora, "called me half the world over in order to sit on the backseat of a dog-cart whilst Edward drove the girl to the railway station from which she was to take her departure to India" (269). Ford's representation of Dowell as outsider to the group shows him to be misguided in his attempt to evaluate his position in it; the reader has a comical response to Dowell, in that he laughs critically at Dowell's grotesque limitation, here expressed in his mistaken self-assessment of his importance to Leonora, to Edward, and to Nancy. Dowell tells the reader: "So here I am very much where I started thirteen years ago, I am the attendant, not the husband, of a beautiful girl, who pays no attention to me" (257). From Dowell's own admission it would appear that he is aware that he is superfluous rather than central to all that goes on around him, though he does not see himself as blameworthy for his own predicament. After revealing Dowell's egoism, vanity, and self-centeredness, Ford represents Dowell as rather silly and as almost in the way; Ford creates a comic effect in
that he guides the reader to contrast the image of himself that Dowell reveals as rather foolish and almost as a nuisance to Dowell's self-portrait as central to the group. And two pages after Dowell presents himself seated "on the backseat of a dog-cart," he tells the reader that Ashburnham confided to him his love for Nancy. Dowell explains that Edward so confided in him because "he just had to speak to somebody and I appeared to be like a woman or a solicitor" (271). It is obviously comic that Dowell says that he "appeared to be like a woman" to Ashburnham because the comparison emasculates him. The deeper implications of Dowell's claim that Edward confides in him because he appears "to be like a woman or a solicitor" are that Edward expects that Dowell would be understanding and sentimental about love, traits conventionally attributed to women, and also that Dowell could keep a confidence, like an attorney; except for the fact that Ashburnham represents Dowell in feminine terms, Ashburnham's deeper implications about Dowell are not comic.

In relation to Dowell's odd method of narration, the other chief means Ford uses to create comic effects is the context within which he represents the actions of his characters in Dowell's story. An author guides the reader's response by the context in which he represents the words, thoughts, and deeds of his characters; in a comedy, for example, the author generally guides the reader's attitude toward particular characters to elicit laughter, as in a tragedy the author guides the reader's attitude toward particular characters to elicit sympathy. Ford elicits a comic response, for example, in representing Dowell as telling the reader that after Edward's death Leonora marries Rodney Bayham and has a "quiet comfortable good time"; Ford's choice of words for Dowell in
describing Leonora's marriage to Rodney Bayham represents her as frivolous and to some degree trivializes her marriage. If Ford had allowed Dowell to say something to the effect that after she and Rodney got married Leonora enjoyed the happy peaceful life that she had always supposed that marriage was meant to be, the reader would not be amused. But Dowell's representation of Leonora in her second marriage creates the impression that she was in effect looking for some fun, which though not wrong, is not the reason to get married. Ford further creates a comic effect by representing Dowell as informing the reader that Rodney is not so terribly different from Edward in his habit of philandering, as he is discreet about it; Dowell states of Leonora, "She was made for normal circumstances--for Mr. Rodney Bayham, who will keep a separate establishment, secretly, in Portsmouth, and make occasional trips to Paris and to Budapest" (260-61). Dowell's irony is apparent, since in a marriage it is hardly "normal" for a husband to maintain a "secret" establishment; Dowell's irony is apparent, as well, in his description of Leonora as being "made for normal circumstances," which include her husband's discreet infidelity. The reader finds it rather amusing and certainly ironic that after living through her ordeal with Edward and his flagrant infidelity, Leonora herself should choose a husband not so different from Edward in his habits of philandering, just discreet about it; thus, the reader is critical of Leonora, who is like Dowell in terms of not having learned from her lived experience. The reader sees Leonora's choice of Rodney Bayham as foolish, and concludes, as well, that Leonora's strenuous objections to Edward's flagrant infidelity must have been mainly for appearance's sake, and throughout the novel Dowell does guide the reader to see the
importance of appearances to Leonora, rather than for its immorality. In her choice of a second husband, then, Leonora elicits a comic response, as she trivializes her stature in the reader's eyes and elicits his derision. The reader can recall that at one point in the novel when Leonora can no longer bear Edward's infidelity, she tries to initiate her own affair with Rodney Bayham; she could go no farther, however, than allowing him to kiss her. Ford guides the reader to conclude, as Leonora apparently chooses not to conclude, or, more likely, seems uninterested in concluding so long as discretion is exercised, that if Rodney Bayham was unhampered in expressing his affections for Leonora while she was married to Edward, then he would probably remain unhampered from expressing affections for anyone else while married to Leonora.

Ford creates comedy, as well, in the context within which he represents Nancy Rufford, who has lost her reason over Edward's death; she is able to utter only the single word "shuttlecocks!" (274), an apparent reference to her treatment at the hands of Edward and of Leonora. Nancy's sole utterance of "shuttlecocks" in her madness is comical in that it surprises the reader, who expects a far more meaningful and serious utterance from an individual who has gone mad over losing the one man she loves. The strange utterance Ford creates for Nancy distracts the reader's attention from her madness and refocuses it onto the farcical atmosphere in which it is depicted; thus, Ford trivializes Nancy's insanity. Nancy's madness could have had a strong emotional impact upon the reader if Ford had chosen to represent the event differently, that is, if Ford had chosen to represent Nancy's insanity by means of Dowell or another narrator in a way that would elicit the reader's sympathy for her.
The context in which Ford represents Ashburnham's death is another way that Ford deprives an event of tragic force. Dowell's representation of Edward's death by his own penknife reduces the significance of the death itself; in fact, Ford represents Dowell as so preoccupied with the effect Ashburnham's suicide has on himself that he nearly concludes his narrative without mentioning Edward's suicide. Recalling the episode, Dowell tells the reader that Edward "came out with a little neat penknife--quite a small penknife" (277). Dowell says he did not stop Edward from killing himself because he "didn't think he was wanted in the world, let his confounded tenants, his rifle-associations, his drunkards, reclaimed and unreclaimed, get on as they liked" (277); although Dowell's statement here sounds rather bitter, his description of Edward's tenants as "confounded," his "drunkards" as "reclaimed and unreclaimed," and what is in effect his dismissal of the whole group as having finally to take care of themselves, is comic. Ford's comic technique here is first to allow Dowell to divert the reader's attention from Edward's death and to refocus it onto Edward's suicide weapon, which in effect is that it is "no big deal"; also, in telling the reader that the penknife was "quite small," Dowell implies that Edward should have used a larger knife, implying that somehow Edward's killing himself would have been best accomplished by means of a more imposing instrument. After surprising the reader by his lack of emotion toward his best friend's suicide and by the oddness of his concern with the size of the knife Edward used, Dowell again refocuses the reader's attention from the death itself by recalling the kinds of people who depended on Edward and then describing them in a pejorative manner. The effect is that the reader is critical of Dowell's apparent insensitivity toward
Ashburnham, but amused by his descriptions of the penknife and of Edward's dependents. The reader is also critical of Dowell's explanation of Ashburnham's suicide, as of his rationalization for it, as he is critical of Dowell's odd conclusion that Ashburnham was not wanted in the world and that therefore, he should kill himself. Also, Dowell's conclusion is not that of a best friend.

Ford creates laughter, as well, toward Dowell's description of Ashburnham's suicide, as the main thrust of his comment concerns the effect of Ashburnham's death on the various groups with which he was associated; Dowell's adjectives "confounded" and "unreclaimed" reveal that he is mainly focused on criticizing these groups, rather than on reacting to the fact that Edward is dead. After Ashburnham says goodbye to Dowell, Dowell tells the reader that he didn't "know what to say" (278) but did say, "'God bless you,' for I also am a sentimentalist. But I thought that perhaps that would not be quite English good form, so I trotted off with the telegram to Leonora. She was quite pleased with it" (278). Dowell's tacit endorsement of Ashburnham's suicide, which he discusses as a token of Ashburnham's sentimentalism, as well as Dowell's references to the stylized manners of "English good form" and to his pointing out that he "trotted off with the telegram to Leonora," do not represent actions that elicit sympathy; rather, they undermine and trivialize the emotional impact of the death itself. Dowell's descriptions distract the reader's attention from the suicide and simultaneously refocus it onto the images he creates. Ford represents Dowell's lack of emotion at the loss of his best friend by representing Dowell as narrating his story without emotion, as well chitchatting about superfluous things surrounding the suicide itself; Ford also guides the reader to
respond to the fact that Dowell understood that Ashburnham was going to kill himself and did nothing to stop him. Ford takes care to show that neither Dowell's description of the knife Ashburnham uses, nor Dowell's reaction to the suicide, nor Dowell's narration of it is represented in a manner consistent with the fact that Dowell's best friend has just killed himself practically before his eyes. In describing Leonora's response to the telegram, Dowell states: "She was quite pleased with it" (278); that is the final statement of the novel. By representing Dowell as taking leave of his reader in this manner, Ford further trivializes Edward's suicide, as the final impression the reader is left with is of Leonora's pleasure at a telegram. By means of Dowell's comic style of narration, then, Ford prevents the action of the plot, which, if presented differently could have resulted in a "romantic tragedy," as Eggenschwiler terms it, from attaining tragic force.

Ford also provides clues that Dowell's story does stop short of tragedy, as Dowell has all along claimed. In combining disharmonious elements to create tension between Dowell's narrative method and his narrative, Ford guides the reader to reflect on Dowell's three claims that his story is "sad," but not "tragic." Dowell's opening statement to the reader is "THIS IS THE SADDEST STORY I have ever heard" (179); Ford again guides the reader to reflect on Dowell's discussion of the term "sad," as little more than half-way through the novel Dowell tells the reader, "I CALL THIS the Saddest Story rather than the 'Ashburnham Tragedy,' just because it is so sad, just because there was no current to draw things along to a swift and inevitable end" (179); and finally, in questioning what they all should have done, Dowell states: "IT IS THIS PART OF THE STORY that
makes me saddest of all" (253). Dowell's own awareness that his story stops short of tragedy can be interpreted as one clue that Ford provides to guide the reader to question the meaning of Dowell's method of narration, which is usually in contrast to the material he is narrating. That is, Ford guides the reader to question how it is that Dowell's discussion of events like despair, madness, suicide, unrequited and unobtainable love, and what is probably most unendurable, isolation from other people, which theoretically seem like they ought to be tragedy, feel like something less than tragedy. At the end of the novel, as well, Dowell states for a fourth time, though in a less obvious manner than before, why his story is not tragic as he refers to the "great deal of imbecility about the closing scenes of the Ashburnham tragedy" (258). "Imbecility" is not an idea usually associated with tragedy, as Dowell himself seems aware.

Although some critics have argued that Dowell's story is tragic, it seems to me that Ford is being purposefully ironic and that he has his narrator bring up the terms "sad story" and "tragedy" and then deny the tragic element of the story to get the reader to think about the distinctions between "sad" and "tragic." "Sad" usually connotes a temporary feeling that an individual can transcend; that is, "sad," is essentially a mood, a concept that itself implies a temporary state of affairs, though it can be a prolonged state of affairs. "Tragic," however, does not imply a temporary condition and thus does not connote a mood; rather, "tragic" connotes usually insurmountable and certainly lasting grief. Dowell's efforts throughout the novel to convince the reader that his story is "sad," rather than "tragic," are especially important in
light of the fact that Edward commits suicide, as does Dowell's wife, Florence, and also in light of the fact that Ashburnham's and Florence's suicides trigger a chain of events that wreaks havoc in Dowell's life. Ford confronts the reader with a discrepancy between events that usually are presented in a way that moves the reader with tragic force and Dowell's method of narration, which does not allow the events to affect the reader with tragic force. Thus, the method Ford chooses for Dowell to tell his story corroborates his repeated claims that the events of his story are not tragic.

But tragedy is like comedy in that it is not the acts that make tragedy, but the context of the acts; it is not necessarily the action of the plot that determines its emotional impact upon the reader, but the way an author represents that action. Not only does Ford utilize Dowell as storyteller to undermine the tragic force of the situations and events in his story, Ford also creates specific contexts for the actions and situations of his characters to undermine what could be seen as tragic potential. Thus, the reader cannot conclude, as many critics have concluded, that because some of the characters in The Good Soldier are treated cruelly, commit suicide, and die, that they are necessarily tragic. Ford guides the reader to ponder the integrity of Leonora, Florence, and Ashburnham, as well as the type of situations into which they fall, and the way they respond to their situations. In each case Ford does not allow tragic potential to fulfill itself in that he deprives their actions of tragic force. The manner in which Ford represents Dowell as representing events frustrates the critics, whose arguments about Dowell range from those who claim that he has a "disturbed mind," to those who conclude that he is "the eunuch, who is the lover."
Thus, the reader discerns that it is of critical importance in understanding Ford's meaning to consider the context in which he represents suffering and dying, rather than to presuppose that the nature of events like suffering and dying necessitate a tragic effect.

Critical methods of interpreting The Good Soldier reveal, as well, that most critics extract the content from the form and then validate either the one or the other; while that strategy is theoretically possible, the manner in which an author chooses to represent his subject, which in the novel is determined by its narrator, is left out of the analysis. In effect events are what the narrator makes of them, or, possibly, the narrator is what he makes of the events; in either case, the reader's information is filtered through a narrative consciousness whose handling of the material affects the reader's response. For example, in Richard Feverel Meredith creates a high degree of sympathy for Lucy's death by means of the narrator he creates to represent her death; Ford, however, does not create a high degree of sympathy for Ashburnham's death in that the narrator Ford creates to represent his death does not focus on those aspects of the death that would have a strong emotional impact on the reader. Although Ford's reader, as a reader of any novel, can read beyond what the narrator wants him to respond to, he is the only character in the novel who can talk directly to the reader; therefore, he strongly influences the reader's response. Ford creates a narrator who distracts the reader's attention from the death with chit chat, superfluous details, and humorous editorial comments. Thus, while death is the end result for Lucy and for Edward, Meredith's and Ford's narrators have painted different
pictures of death, each designed to effect a different emotional response from the reader.

While in some kinds of tragic works like King Lear, for example, the occasionally comic moment, such as that between Lear and his jester, works to heighten the tragedy of the play, in The Good Soldier Ford purposefully creates a narrator whose style with its digressions, asides, faulty logic, lack of insight, and erroneous conclusions defuses the possibility of the reader's responding only to the events themselves. That is, Dowell's style of narration precludes the reader's response to the emotional urgency of the situation because in Dowell's hands there is nothing emotionally urgent about events like suffering, madness, suicide, and unobtainable love. While the reader can see that there is a discrepancy between Dowell's version of events and the actual events themselves, his method of presentation makes the events seem as something less than they inherently are. In his novel Ford creates a situation in which the reader cannot separate Dowell, the only character in the novel to whom he has access, since he is the only character directly to relate to the reader his own version of events, from Dowell's narrative; rather, Ford's narrative technique, which is tightly controlled and highly structured, demands that the reader respond to the style he creates for his narrator to tell his story, as well as to the narrative itself that Ford creates for Dowell. But in addition to the fact that separating form and content does not represent the author's meaning in the format he created, a distinction between form and content does not work in The Good Soldier because there are some comic elements within Dowell's narrative that elicit laughter and also some tragic elements in
Dowell's manner of presentation that elicit sympathy. For example, the trunk in which Maisie Maidan dies and the "small penknife" with which Edward commits suicide are comically trivialized, respectively, as death associated and as death dealing instruments in the narrative; similarly, Dowell's occasional moments of deep reflection on his own blindness move the reader with pity, so that the reader does experience some moments of sympathy toward Dowell's usually comic method of narration.

The only work I know of that even describes The Good Soldier as a mixture of comedy and of tragedy, though it does not discuss it at all, is Randall Craig's The Tragicomic Novel. Discussing the nature of the tragicomic response Craig argues: "Consistently dualistic, tragicomic fiction both originates in and evokes a contradictory aesthetic emotion. A trenchant perception of human limitation and suffering, combined with an empathic and amused acceptance of them, is the form of humor characteristic of tragicomedy." Although Craig uses the term "dualistic," a term that would indicate two responses to describe the tragicomic response, his explanation of that response ultimately recognizes one mixed response of a complex nature. Norman Leer, as well, discusses the reader's dual response to the novel, though he does not discuss comedy as the means Ford uses to defuse what he calls Dowell's "partial tragic dignity"; Leer argues, "The dual nature of Dowell's response complicates our attitude toward him, for it evokes our simultaneous sympathy and condemnation." Leer concludes of Dowell, "He is marked throughout by a partial tragic dignity, but he is also debased by an adherence to false and conventional illusions, by an inability to cope with passion, and by a failure to confront specific situations with a
concrete and active assertion of a moral, though not necessarily heroic, self" (102-103). Although Leer does not interpret *The Good Soldier* as a mixed vision, his determination that in effect the novel is about Dowell and, especially, about his inability to deal with the full sensitivity of the story he tells, is accurate.

I would argue, however, that Ford represents his subject in the medium of tragicomedy. The nature of tragicomedy is that it elicits one single mixed response to dual or multiple stimuli, such as a mixed response which incorporates both comic response and tragic elements. The reader's comic response is expressed either in his amused, empathetic, or critical laughter toward the individual, or in his mocking him; also, Ford, as well as Meredith and Lawrence, oftentimes creates critical distance as a preliminary to eliciting derisive laughter. The reader's tragic response is expressed in his sympathy for that individual. Although two such disharmonious emotions simultaneously demand the reader's response, there are not two distinct and separate parallel responses elicited by that reader or viewer; disharmonious feelings, like scorn and pity, modify or impede one another so that the reader's response is a mixture or a synthesis of both emotions. That is, because neither a comical nor a tragical response is fully developed, the reader's response is somewhere in between laughter and tears. An example of the complexity of emotions that Ford elicits is his representation of the multiplicity of feelings that he creates for Leonora in relation to her husband's love for Nancy Rufford. Dowell informs the reader of Leonora: "She was divided between an intense disgust for Edward's weakness in conceiving this passion, an intense pity for the miseries that he was enduring, and a feeling equally intense, but one that she
hid from herself—a feeling of respect for Edward's determination to keep himself, in this particular affair, unspotted" (222). The reader understands the complexity of Leonora's feelings for Edward in that he shares, as well, Leonora's "disgust" and some degree of "pity" for Edward; and reluctantly, though the reader does find Edward's affairs repugnant, he also does "respect" Ashburnham's "determination to keep himself, in this particular affair, unspotted."

Ford provides another clue about the complex nature of the response he elicits by representing Dowell as stating that the concern of a novelist is to make the reader see life as it is. In one of his countless asides to the reader, Dowell talks about the "business of a novelist" as he reminisces about Edward. Dowell claims that Edward "talked like a cheap novelist.--Or like a very good novelist . . . if it is the business of a novelist to make you see things clearly" (122). "If" indeed, "it is the business of a novelist to make you see things clearly," then the reader discerns that Ford guides him to see clearly that things are not always clear. Ford uses a mixed medium to make his points because the complexity of tragicomedy blurs the distinctions between right and wrong by creating an ambiguous context in which the reader must make judgments about moral action. The kinds of questions that Ford asks, those pertaining to the way an individual understands things and interprets reality, and especially to the way he interprets questions of morality, require a special method of representation adequately to depict the difficulty in making moral judgments. Reading *The Good Soldier* as a synthesis of comedy and of tragedy allows the reader to get beyond the puzzlement of terrible things narrated in an odd and
comical manner, and to understand Ford's novel as a meditation on the human condition and on the way an individual responds to its challenges.
Part II

Analysis

The presence of comic elements in a work that deals with situations and events that the reader usually encounters in a tragic context can cause considerable problems in interpretation, as the largely polemical debate surrounding The Good Soldier demonstrates. For example, Dowell's comical representation of Ashburnham's suicide does not nullify the reader's sympathy for Ashburnham, but it does considerably lessen the impact of the death upon the reader so that he experiences the event as something less than tragedy; similarly, Dowell's pleading with the reader for understanding because for all thirteen years of his marriage he was deceived, initially by Florence and her various lovers and later by Florence and Ashburnham, does not nullify the reader's critical response to Dowell. For it is his own blindness that allows the situation to perpetuate itself for all of that time.

It seems to me that in using comedy to represent a serious subject, Ford is showing that moral action often takes place in an ambiguous context, and to take account of the moral action, an individual has to take account of the context; if the individual does not take account of the context within which the moral action is represented, he can mix up virtue and vice. In Richard Feverel, for example, Meredith's representation of Sir Austin's love for his son, Richard, reveals the necessity of understanding the context of a
situation within which moral action takes place to evaluate it accurately; for in spite of the great love that Meredith guides the reader to see that Sir Austin does feel for his son, Meredith also guides the reader to see that Sir Austin's actions toward Richard are ultimately based on selfish, misguided, and egotistical concerns, rather than on what is really best for Richard. Like the effects that Meredith creates in his representation of Sir Austin, which require the reader's understanding of the context in which his actions take place, the effects that Ford creates in using comedy to illustrate a serious subject also necessitate the reader's understanding of the context he creates to understand Dowell's moral predicament and to judge him accurately.

Ford does not use tragedy to make his points because the motivations traditionally attributed to the tragic hero would not represent the motivations of the vast majority of people; Ford is writing about the human predicament, which reveals most individuals as both laughable and pitiable, in their attempts to satisfy their own self-interests. In fact, the intentions and motivations of many of the people in the world would be based on self-interest, as Florence, Ashburnham, and Leonora demonstrate, rather than on selfless and noble ideals.

Another reason Ford uses comedy rather than tragedy to demonstrate a serious subject is that comedy best expresses the human determination for self-deception, which is at the heart of Ford's comic method, as of Lawrence's and Meredith's comic methods. Ford creates comic effects in making his serious points because comedy best represents the human resolution to believe what is convenient to believe, that is, what is conducive to furthering self-interest.
Like Meredith, who sees self-deception as man's basic character flaw, Ford is particularly interested in that point at which deception is self-deception. Ford asks whether or not an individual who remains deceived for a long period of time is unable or unwilling to encounter reality; that is, Ford asks at what point, if any, the deceived individual is in effect complicit with those who deceive him. In using comic elements to represent the point at which deception is self-deception, Ford also shows how an individual interprets reality and reveals, as well, the degree to which an individual is responsible for his own situation in relation to others and in relation to Providence.

Another reason Ford uses comedy to represent a serious subject is that comedy lightens what he is saying; that is, Ford takes care to use comic elements to help make his points so that he does not place the emotional demands upon the reader that the full power and intensity of tragedy necessitates. Tragedy causes a powerful moving of the reader's sympathy for an individual; oftentimes, the reader identifies with that individual, an effect which heightens his emotional response. But Ford chooses not to represent Ashburnham's needless death, which results in Nancy's madness, for example, in a manner that would powerfully move the reader's sympathy, as he also chooses not to represent Dowell's final isolation from other people with the full impact of tragedy.

Although Ford does create tragic effects to elicit sympathy for Dowell, he also takes care to prevent Dowell's impact upon the reader from attaining tragic power; that is, Ford balances Dowell's comic limitation against his noble qualities. Thus, Ford represents Dowell as deserving of the reader's pity and of his ridicule. For
example, left to figure things out for himself, that is, without benefit of Leonora's enlightening him about Edward and Florence, Dowell can neither see the truth, nor do anything to change the direction of his life. In representing Dowell as caught between his inability to interpret the situation correctly, as well as what amounts to his unwillingness to effect change in his life when he does finally interpret the situation correctly, Ford reveals him as tragic and as comic. Another way that Ford represents Dowell as both tragic and comic is that he that he does nothing about his situation and assumes that he will be comfortable because he is not inconvenienced; for example, it is convenient for Dowell to accept appearance as reality, and so he spends a good part of the novel first trying to convince himself that they are identical, and then trying to convince the reader that he cannot be blamed for assuming they must be identical. Ford, however, guides the reader to see that Dowell's thinking is false in revealing the disastrous consequences that can befall those, like Dowell, who do assume that appearance is reality.

Ford also precludes his characters from attaining tragic stature by pointing to the error in Dowell's claim that everyone had to behave as he did, as part of the natural order of things. Although Ford represents Dowell as claiming that "God" and "Providence" are the explanations for the things that happen to him and to the other main characters, Ford reveals Dowell, as well as Ashburnham, Leonora, and Florence as comically limited; Ford reveals their shortcomings in that they allow themselves to be swept up in events that Ford guides the reader to conclude could have been prevented if any of them had been honest with himself and with
others, rather than preoccupied with keeping up appearances. Yet the complexity for the reader results from the fact that Ford does not represent Dowell in particular, as well as Ashburnham and Leonora, as purely comic characters. In spite of Dowell's, as well as Leonora's and Ashburnham's comic limitations, Ford also elicits sympathy for them; thus, traditional generalizations about comedy and tragedy, like those of David L. Hirst, for example, who sees comedy as creating critical distance and tragedy as creating sympathy, do not always hold true in *The Good Soldier*, nor do they always hold true in other works; Hirst explains, "Tragedy plays on our emotions, it involves us and demands our sympathy for the protagonist; comedy appeals to our intellect, we observe critically and laugh at the victim." 21 While there are moments in *The Good Soldier* when the reader observes "critically" and laughs "at the victim," there are also moments in the novel when the reader's comic response, mainly toward Dowell, does not entail his criticism. Ford's method is to elicit both laughter and pity toward Dowell, as well as toward Leonora and Ashburnham, by representing them as subject to their various human frailties; the reader understands their failings because to various degrees he shares them.

I approach *The Good Soldier* as "tragicomedy" to help facilitate an adequate explanation of Ford's careful method of combining the comic with the tragic to produce a work with great emotional potential that is diminished by narrative restraint. Reading the novel as a mixture of comic and tragic effects will help to elucidate the disharmony in the novel and the special demands placed upon the reader. The complex combination of elements that Ford creates in his novel is so integrated in the experience of the work that the reader
cannot separate them, but must incorporate them in his response. Thus, Ford prevents the full power of tragedy from fulfilling itself, as he prevents the full power of comedy from fulfilling itself. Ford guides the reader to recognize the comic limitation of the narrator and the tragedy of the material and to discern that in Dowell's hands the distinctions between the comic elements and the tragic elements disappear, as the discordant elements merge.

The theories of Castelvetro, Pirandello, and Hoy are important to my analysis of The Good Soldier: Castelvetro's theory of comedy, which is based on deceit, adequately accounts for the chief means by which Ford creates his comic effects; Pirandello's theory of humour, which incorporates conflicting emotions in the individual's response, adequately explains the mechanics of the reader's mixed response to Ford's tragicomic effects; and Hoy's theories of comedy and tragicomedy, which are based on the Christian concept of Original Sin and man's dual nature, adequately explain the motivations for Ford's main characters and also the consequences they face. The Good Soldier is analyzable in terms of Castelvetro's theory of comedy in that the basis of the comic in Ford centers around deception, as well. Ford focuses on the deception of others, and particularly on the point at which deception is self-deception. Ford creates main characters who need to deceive themselves and others to live with the truth, and he creates a protagonist who finally reaches a point at which his deception by others becomes self-deception. Pirandello is important to my analysis, as well, because he explains the effect of the individual's simultaneous response to disharmonious stimuli. In my analysis I will look at three of the four major parts of the novel, as Dowell divides it in his narration, to demonstrate what
Ford is saying and to show the method he uses to make his points; my analysis will show, as well, that Ford uses a mixed genre to represent Dowell's confrontation with the social, psychological, and moral dilemmas that he faces.

Part One of the novel concerns Dowell's, the narrator's, attempt to present an overview of his story, which is represented in a Tristram Shandy-like fashion in that it contains more digression and commentary than actual plotline; like the narrator of *Tristram Shandy*, Dowell reveals more about his own character than about that of anyone else. Ford sketches Dowell's character here as naive, blind, foolish, and unmanly, yet kind, gentle and extremely devoted and accommodating. My focus is on Parts Two, Three, and Four of the novel in which Ford conveys his ideas about life, the questions it provokes, the judgments it forces the individual to make, and the lessons it teaches.

"Part Two" of *The Good Soldier* represents Dowell's account of how he came to marry Florence, of his thirteen year marriage to her, and of her suicide. Critics who view *The Good Soldier* as tragedy would probably summarize Part Two of the novel by stating that Florence perpetuates thirteen years of lies, treachery, and blackmail upon Dowell, and that finally upon learning that Ashburnham is in love with Nancy, and correctly surmising, as well, that Dowell has learned the truth about one of her past affairs, Florence commits suicide; other critics, who view the novel as comedy would probably summarize this second part of the novel by stating that the marriage between Florence and Dowell constitutes nothing less than a thirteen year spiritual, emotional, and sexual farce, the likes of which are beyond the belief of any rational person, let alone a man in his
thirties who has seen something of the world, and that because of his incredible blindness Dowell deserves what he gets. But Ford does not allow the reader to make such easy judgments about Dowell because of the intricacy with which he presents the marriage between Dowell and Florence, replete with lies, treachery, blackmail, and suicide, as well as trust, loyalty, and charity. It is paradoxical that the reader can see Dowell as both foolish and noble; it would seem that the two are mutually exclusive, but they are not. Ford represents Dowell both ways.

While the marriage between Dowell and Florence is the main focus of "Part Two," their courtship warrants some attention in that it reveals the standard of behavior that characterizes their marriage and their lives. At the very beginning of the courtship between Dowell and Florence, Ford guides the reader to pick up on the subtle clues that he provides by means of Florence's aunts, as Dowell relates them to the reader, that Florence is not a suitable mate for him. Dowell tells the reader that Florence's aunts "even, almost, said that marriage was a sacrament... And they almost brought themselves to say that Florence's early life had been characterized by flirtations--something of that sort" (90). But Dowell thinks nothing of these rather strange comments from the bride's own aunts and responds: "I don't care. If Florence has robbed a bank I am going to marry her and take her to Europe" (90). But Miss Florence, one of the aunts, "threw herself on my neck and cried out: 'Don't do it, John. Don't do it. You're a good young man... We ought to tell you more. But she's our dear sister's child" (90). From these curiously cryptic comments the reader senses as Dowell does not sense that Florence has some secret, that she is not all she represents.
herself to Dowell to be, and that something disastrous is going to happen if he marries her. And the reader is right; something does happen. Dowell races off to Florence's at one o'clock in the morning with a rope ladder so that they can elope; Dowell waits for about two hours for Florence to descend the ladder and then they arrive at the minister's at three o'clock, and from there they spend their wedding night sitting in the woods "listening to a mocking-bird imitate an old tom cat" (94). The next morning the couple board the "Pocahontas" on their honeymoon to England. There is a tempest at sea and somehow Florence is able to convince the doctor that her heart is bad and could stop beating at any moment; the doctor, in turn, suggests to Dowell that he "had better refrain from manifestations of affection," to which Dowell informs the reader, "I was ready enough" (94). After this "honeymoon" the reader's expectation of both Florence's capacity for treachery and of Dowell's propensity for gullibility is fulfilled; the reader now understands those cryptic clues that Ford provides by means of Florence's aunts during Dowell's courtship of Florence. The reader discerns, as well, that deceiving Dowell will be an integral part of all of Florence's interactions with him. Ford also guides the reader to detect the tragic nature of the situation in which Dowell finds himself, though he is oblivious to what is going on around him.

Pirandello's theory of humor is very important in understanding the complexity of the reader's response that Ford elicits in his combination of comic and of tragic elements because it explains what triggers the mixed response and how it works: Pirandello's theory of humor is based on the opposition between one's initial perception and the feeling that arises after reflection upon that perception.
Ford's representation of the apparently comic deception that marks the early part of Dowell's marriage can be analyzed in terms of Pirandello's theory; in analyzing Florence's seemingly hilarious antics of masterfully juggling men in and out of her bedroom for the duration of their marriage, the reader finds it particularly disquieting that Dowell considers Florence a paragon of integrity and of virtue and that he really and truly believes that she could die at any moment because of her supposedly severe heart condition. It is not wonderful that Dowell does take most seriously his role, which he styles a "male nurse." Thus, although Ford creates comic effects in obvious ways here, the reader's reflection on the actual circumstances of the situation guide him to respond, as well, to the terrible advantage Florence takes of Dowell's goodness and to sympathize with him. And while Florence's juggling of lovers practically before Dowell's eyes does not lose its comic effect on the reader, the added dimension of sympathy the reader feels for Dowell after reflecting on the reality of the situation rather than only on its appearance, complicates his response in that it impedes his laughter at Dowell.

Another example of the complex response Ford elicits toward Dowell that can be analyzed in terms of Pirandello's theory is the evening routine that Florence establishes for Dowell. Evenings at the Dowells' are spent with Florence in her locked bedroom with her lover with "an electric contrivance on a cord" that was "understood to be attached to her little wrist. She had only to press a bulb to raise the house" (97-98). Dowell, meanwhile, sits downstairs, "provided with an axe . . . with which to break down her door in case she ever failed to answer my knock, after I knocked really loud
several times" (98). Ford guides the reader simultaneously to respond to both the farcical aspect of Florence's astonishing behavior and to her unconscionable treatment of Dowell. Such a trick, albeit one that lasts thirteen years, played upon an individual as blind as Dowell, guides the reader to a mixed response to him. Dowell's situation elicits a response that tugs the reader in different directions so that each response in effect modifies the other; that is, the reader feels pity for Dowell because he is being treated so shamefully even while he laughs at the foolishness in which he engages to satisfy Florence. Because Ford represents the situation in a way that deprives either response of its full potential, the reader is suspended somewhere between sympathy and ridicule toward Dowell. It may seem irresistible, however, to argue, as some critics have argued, that Florence really knows a fool when she sees one and that if Dowell is really so blind to what is so obvious to the reader, to the other characters in the novel, and by inference to Ford, then he obviously deserves his lot; it is certainly an unceasing source of astonishment that Dowell never once questions why he should knock "really loud several times," since he is supposedly coming to apprehend a burglar, and presumably, the sooner he could get into Florence's room the better. But Ford guides the reader to acknowledge Dowell's role in this marriage and his extraordinary degree of commitment to it. And in reflecting upon Dowell's role and also upon his degree of commitment to his marriage, the reader becomes uncomfortable in his laughter toward Dowell, who never once thinks of dishonoring his responsibility to Florence. Ford's method is that he does not let the reader forget that Dowell has complete faith and trust in Florence and that he considers his
role as her guardian as a calling of the highest order; thus, Ford keeps Dowell's nobility constantly before the reader.

If, however, Dowell were himself engaged in other liaisons all the while thinking he were the one duping Florence, whom he believed to be sick and frail, then the scene would be comic because the reader would feel some sense that both characters behave abominably to one another; that both deserve to be lied to in their treachery to one another; that both characters merit our disgust rather than our sympathy. But Ford does not represent the situation in that way; he does not create only comic effects in relation to a situation that appears highly comic; instead, Ford takes care to create sympathy for Dowell. In fact, Ford represents Dowell as doing the only right thing in honoring his wife's wishes that there be no physical relationship between them because of her supposedly bad heart. Yet Ford elicits a comic response toward Dowell, as well, in that he does guide the reader to question why it is that Dowell never questions why other men can keep close company with Florence and why he almost never sees her alone. Still, Dowell perseveres in his abstinence and with his tasks as guardian because he believes that he is helping to prolong Florence's life. In representing Dowell as charitable and as trusting because he is honest, Ford's elicits the reader's admiration of him. Thus, Dowell's relationship with Florence can be analyzed in terms of Pirandello's theory in that the reader discerns that while Ford guides him to criticize Dowell for his inability to interpret Florence's behavior, he simultaneously guides him to admire Dowell for his own unselfish behavior toward her.

Ford diminishes the emotional impact of Florence's suicide upon the reader by means of Dowell's representation of the event; Dowell
is neither aware that he has been living through anything out of the
ordinary, nor is he even aware that Florence commits suicide.
Florence commits suicide when, according to Dowell, she correctly
surmises that Bagshaw reveals to Dowell: "The last time I saw that
girl she was coming out of the bedroom of a young man called Jimmy at
five o'clock in the morning. In my house at Ledbury. You saw her
recognize me" (111). Ford detracts from a fully sympathetic response
to Florence's death in the way that he represents Dowell as
representing the death to the reader. Once Dowell gets over the
shock of what Bagshaw reveals to him and then takes into account the
horrified look on Florence's face, Dowell follows Florence up to her
bedroom. But the reader knows, as Dowell does not know, that just
previous to her running into Bagshaw and Dowell Florence had been
extremely upset upon eavesdropping on a conversation between Edward
and Nancy and discerning that Edward loves Nancy. Dowell tells the
reader of Florence: "She had not locked the door--for the first night
of our married life. She was lying, quite respectably arranged,
unlike Mrs. Maidan, on her bed. She had a little phial that rightly
should have contained nitrate of amyl, in her right hand. That was
on the 4th of August 1913" (112). Dowell provides an unemotional,
matter-of-fact, detailed description of his wife's death, as well as
touching the comic in the comparison he makes between Florence's
death and that of Mrs. Maidan; the reader recalls Dowell's
description of Maisie Maidan's death: "Maisie had died in an effort
to strap up a great portmanteau. She had died so grotesquely that
her little body had fallen forward into the trunk, and it had closed
upon her, like the jaws of a gigantic alligator.... She was
smiling, as if she had just scored a goal in a hockey match. You
understand she had not committed suicide. Her heart had just stopped" (81). There is little in Dowell's description of Maisie's death in a suitcase that elicits a sympathetic response from the reader in that the death itself is of far less significance than the way she looked in the suitcase. Thus, in juxtaposing the comical image of Maisie's undignified death pose to Florence's fully dignified death pose, Ford creates a comic effect in that he distracts the reader's attention from the fact that they are dead and refocuses it onto the way that Maisie looked.

Ford further diminishes the sympathy the reader feels for Florence in that he guides him to feel more surprise and shock at her death than sympathy for her. Although Dowell tells the reader early on in the novel that after seeing him beat his "dark servant," Julius, Florence was afraid of him and became desperate to keep her secret that she was not "a pure woman," the reader does not really believe that Florence was ever afraid of Dowell, nor does he believe that she kills herself out of fear of Dowell's learning the truth about her lack of purity. The reader is, in fact, highly skeptical that such a mastermind as Florence, who has successfully orchestrated all of her schemes to sneak men into her bedroom for thirteen years, all the while maintaining a celibate marriage, could not have talked her way out of her predicament. Florence's death, in fact, seems a bit disappointing, as the reader is certainly ready to hear her next fantastic excuse that he fully expects Dowell to believe. Although the reader suspects that Florence must finally have felt some degree of remorse for her behavior toward Dowell, he is focused on the pointlessness of her death and is compelled to wonder "Why now?" Also, because Ford represents Florence as insidious in her endeavors
and as heartless in her treatment of Dowell in that she uses him solely for his wealth, she cannot become a great favorite with the reader. Thus, in the description of Florence's suicide that Ford writes for Dowell, and also in Ford's representation of Florence as motivated solely by self-interest, Ford greatly diminishes the reader's sympathetic response to Florence.

Later in "Part Three" of the novel, Dowell discusses Florence's suicide with Leonora, a conversation which further diminishes its tragic impact upon the reader. In discussing Florence's suicide with Leonora, Dowell is startled into the truth of Florence's death as Leonora blurts out: "I think it was stupid of Florence to commit suicide" (117). After Leonora's impertinent outburst Dowell says to the reader: "I cannot tell you the extraordinary sense of leisure that we two seemed to have at that moment. It wasn't as if we were waiting for a train, it wasn't as if we were waiting for a meal--it was just that there was nothing to wait for. Nothing" (117). In representing Leonora as calling Florence's suicide "stupid," with Dowell's telling the reader how relaxed he felt at Leonora's words, Ford diminishes the impact of the suicide upon the reader. After responding to Leonora with, "Did Florence commit suicide? I didn't know," Dowell turns to the reader and says, "You may think that I had been singularly lacking in suspiciousness; you may consider me even to have been an imbecile" (118). Ford creates a comic effect here in representing Dowell as making two statements about himself which go some way toward explaining why he is in the situation in which he finds himself.

Other examples that reveal the complexity of Ford's method and that are analyzable in terms of Pirandello's theory, are Ford's
representation of Dowell's interactions with Edward, Leonora, and Nancy. Ford guides the reader to a comic response to Dowell in his relationship with Ashburnham, Leonora, and Nancy, as he also guides the reader to respond sympathetically to the lack of purpose that Dowell feels about himself and about his whole life. For example, in the midst of Dowell's delusions about his self-importance, which arise because Leonora and Edward urgently summon him to their side, and also because Edward confides in him about his love for Nancy, Dowell is also aware in some part of himself that his life or death is of little consequence to his wife, to his "best friend," and to the world. Thus, the reader's feelings of laughter toward Dowell are impeded by his feelings of pity for Dowell's isolation from those to whom he is closest and whom he thinks he knows best. Ford makes clear Dowell's isolation from the world in representing Dowell as saying: "I am that absurd figure, an American millionaire... I sit here, in Edward's gun-room, all day and all day in a house that is absolutely quiet. No one visits me, for I visit no one. No one is interested in me, for I have no interests" (275).

Another example of the complex response Ford creates in "Part Three" of the novel concerns Dowell's feelings about love, about Florence's affair with Edward, and about Nancy's madness; Dowell's conclusions about these situations and events most often prove to be erroneous and elicit a mixed response to him and to his story. Dowell's musings about these events lead him to attempt logically to account for the behavior of Florence, of Edward, of Leonora, and of the girl. Dowell begins this section almost immediately by informing the reader: "I don't know that analysis of my own psychology matters at all to this story. I should say that it didn't or, at any rate,
that I had given enough of it" (115). Yet only two hours after Florence's death and at Leonora's provocation Dowell concludes, "Now I can marry the girl" (116). Dowell's announcement of his intention of marrying Nancy comes as a complete surprise to the reader. Although Dowell does inform the reader that Leonora had talked to Nancy about marrying Dowell, Nancy's response is of such a reluctant nature that the reader hardly considers the suggestion plausible and responds to its comic effects. In relating Leonora's discussion with Nancy about the possibility of marrying him, Dowell tells the reader, "I believe that she then asked the girl if she would not like to marry me, and that Nancy answered that she would marry me if she were told to . . . She added 'If I married anyone I should want him to be like Edward'" (241). Thus, Ford creates a comic effect in representing Dowell as telling the reader, "Now I can marry the girl" (121), in that it leads the reader to recall Nancy's complete lack of interest in Dowell; it also leads the reader to question why in the world Dowell would want to marry someone who in effect has said that she has no interest in marrying him. The reader can recall, as well, Dowell's earlier claim that his "own psychology" is irrelevant to the story and discerns that Dowell's "own psychology" is, in fact, particularly "relevant to the story."

Ford also creates a mixed response in his representation of Dowell as making some interesting and thought provoking statements about the relationship between men and women. After casually dismissing Florence's death and amazingly excusing Edward's affair with Florence on the grounds that, "He was such a fine fellow" (126), Dowell surprises the reader with some insightful observations and conclusions. Dowell says, for example, that the "real fierceness of
desire, the real heat of a passion long continued, and withering up the soul of a man, is the craving for identity with the woman that he loves" (127). Continuing in this patently Lawrentian fashion Dowell adds: "For whatever may be said of the relation of the sexes, there is no man who loves a woman that does not desire to come to her for the renewal of his courage, for the cutting asunder of his difficulties" (127). Dowell claims that such "will be the mainspring of his desire for her" (127). Dowell concludes: "We are all so afraid, we are all so alone, we all so need from the outside the assurance of our own worthiness to exist" (127). Ford's juxtaposing Dowell's interesting and thought provoking conclusions on the "relation of the sexes" with his fairly accurate previous statement, "You may consider me even to have been an imbecile," causes the reader to wonder what to make of him. The reader asks how it is that an individual who can reason as astutely as Dowell has shown he can reason about the relations between men and women can also be gullible into sitting in his living room armed with a wrist cord and an axe ready to defend his wife from burglars all the while she entertains men in her bedroom. That on occasion Dowell is so philosophical and at other times so gullible about what Ford guides the reader clearly to see as nonsense is the chief technique Ford uses to weave together the elements of comedy and tragedy.

Dowell's description of Nancy's madness in "Part Four" of the novel is another example of the way Ford diminishes the impact of Nancy's condition upon the reader, and thus creates a mixed response. Ford represents Dowell as stating, "Of course you have the makings of a situation here, but it is all very humdrum as far as I am concerned. I should marry Nancy if her reason were ever sufficiently
restored to let her appreciate the meaning of the Anglican marriage service. But it is probable that her reason will never be sufficiently restored to let her appreciate the meaning of the Anglican marriage service" (256-57). Ford guides the reader to question why Dowell refers to Nancy's madness as a "situation" and also to question why in the world he should refer to it as "humdrum." Ford's technique in creating tragicomedy here is that he represents Dowell as trivializing Nancy's madness by first describing it as a "situation," and he then represents Dowell as in effect telling the reader that he is bored by her "situation" which he calls "humdrum." After representing Dowell as trivializing and dismissing Nancy's madness, Ford represents Dowell as making the startling announcement that he wants to marry Nancy. That Dowell should want to marry Nancy, who has already made it clear that she does not love him, completely surprises the reader. And Dowell's further comment that his marrying Nancy is predicated on her "appreciation of the Anglican marriage service," rather than on the meaning of marriage itself, creates comedy; that is, Dowell's statement implies that Nancy's understanding of the marriage service is sufficient to her understanding of marriage itself. And while an understanding of the marriage vows may cover the substance of marriage, Dowell has consistently revealed in his own marriage that he does not understand the emotional intimacy represented in marriage vows. Although Dowell believes that Florence is severely ill, he never questions or expects that, at least, she might like to spend some time with him because he has no level of expectation from a spouse; Dowell does not really understand what marriage is, or should be about. Throughout the novel Ford has guided the reader to see that for Dowell appearance is
the same as reality; at this point in the novel Ford reinforces that point. Dowell's comment, as well, further reveals that he has learned nothing from his experience with Florence and thus creates a comic effect, as well.

In "Part Four" of *The Good Soldier* Dowell attempts to account for all of the main characters' actions as well as for his own; in this section of his novel Ford creates a mixed response by representing the self-perpetuating misery that his main characters cannot seem to avoid bringing upon themselves. By means of his main characters, Ford guides the reader to see that sometimes an individual's motivations are not readily explained and that his own nature often leads him to be self-serving rather than to follow what that individual knows to be morally right. Ford emphasizes this point in the affair he represents between Florence and Edward, in Florence's suicide, and also in the deterioration of Leonora's high moral standards, as she tells Nancy Rufford that she must commit adultery with Edward to "pay the price so as to save the man she had wronged" (251). Dowell's novel length attempt to excuse his own behavior in particular, as well as Florence's, Leonora's, and Edward's behavior, as part of the natural order of things is another technique Ford uses to create a mixed response. As Dowell reflects on the whole situation he asks the reader in his often highly dramatic fashion, "What, in the name of God, should they have done?" (253) Dowell answers that things had to turn out as they did because nature had taken its course; Dowell explains, "It worked out in the extinction of two very splendid personalities . . . in order that a third personality, more normal, should have, after a long period of trouble, a quiet, comfortable, good time" (253). It is, of course,
preposterous seriously to conclude as Dowell concludes, since everyone, oftentimes including Dowell himself, does exactly the wrong thing; some of the time Dowell, as well as Ashburnham and Leonora, do precisely the wrong thing knowing it is wrong. Dowell's conclusion is also ridiculous since it is by means of no natural law that two people should die to ensure the "good time" of a "third personality." Thus, Dowell's determination that as a matter of course people must go mad and die so that Leonora might enjoy herself creates a comic effect and detracts from the nature of the incidents themselves. The reader tends to respond with some degree of cynicism, if not distanced critical laughter, toward those, like Florence and like Edward, who get themselves into desperate situations because they knowingly behave foolishly and selfishly; the reader, then, feels that to different degrees individuals, like Florence and Edward, get what they deserve.

Another way Ford creates a complex response to Dowell is Dowell's conclusion that he does not get what he's most wanted, but has got instead what Edward most wanted; after declaring that he loved all of the women Edward wanted and loved, Dowell surprises the reader in a demonstration of mental acumen that he does not often reveal, much like he surprises the reader in his philosophical discussion on "the relation of the sexes." Dowell tells the reader, "[W]hat I wanted mostly was to cease being a nurse-attendant. Well, I am a nurse-attendant. Edward wanted Nancy Rufford and I have got her. Only she is mad" (257-258). While Dowell's rendition of these events is comical, he again waxes philosophical and states: "It is a queer and fantastic world. Why can't people have what they want? the things were all there to content everybody; yet everybody has the
wrong thing" (257-258). Ford represents Dowell as jumping from his complaints about being a "nurse-attendant" to a thought provoking and insightful observation about the vicissitudes of life. Ford's technique of juxtaposing something comical with something serious, creates a mixed response to Dowell and is analyzable in terms of Pirandello's theory of humor; that is, the reader's initially comic response to Dowell's complaints about being a "nurse-attendant" is moderated by his serious response to Dowell's insights about life. But before the reader can consider exactly why it is that in Ford's novel people cannot "have what they want," Dowell again diverts the reader's attention stating: "It was a most amazing business, and I think that it would have been better in the eyes of God if they had all attempted to gouge out each other's eyes with carving knives. But they were 'good people'" (270). Ford has Dowell comically capture the spirit of the hypocrisy that marks the lives of Edward, Leonora, and Florence. The reader very well knows as Dowell seems to know that there was nothing "good" about their behavior, though he can never bring himself to blame Edward for deceiving him as he does.

Ford blends the laughable with the pitiable to represent the sometimes not so quiet desperation that marks the lives of his four characters. That is, Ford uses a mixed genre to present the main subject of his novel: that Ashburnham, Leonora, and Florence, and to some degree, Dowell, as well, fall prey to their human weaknesses or "sinful nature" to use Hoy's words, and engage in behavior that brings about their predicaments. And while Ford, like Lawrence and Meredith, does not ostensibly attribute motivation for an individual's behavior to his fallen human nature, the reader concludes that Ford, like Meredith and Lawrence, had at the very
least an interest in Christianity, since he does devote a lot of
discussion to Ashburnham's Anglicanism and to Leonora's Roman
Catholicism; in fact, so much time does Dowell spend in discussing
Leonora's religion that Schorer claims he is "obsessed" with Roman
Catholicism (xii). Schorer is right in pointing out that Ford
represents Dowell as preoccupied with religion, particularly with
Catholicism, as Dowell's numerous references to Ashburnham as an
Anglican, to himself as a Quaker, and particularly to Leonora as a
Catholic, make clear; Ford also represents Dowell as claiming that
only God can know a human heart. The motivations and actions of
Ford's main characters are analyzable in terms of Hoy's theory of
comedy; for Hoy comedy reveals "the equivocal nature of truth, the
deceptive quality of appearances, the irresolution of the human
will"; the predicaments of Ashburnham, Leonora, Florence, and Dowell
are also analyzable in terms of Hoy's discussion of tragicomedy,
which Hoy claims makes "vivid "the contradictions that confront
mankind on every level of experience" (7). By means of Dowell, Ford
illustrates two important points that Hoy makes about comedy: that
there are "irreconcilable claims" between the spirit and the flesh
and that there is a "daily consciousness that life as it is lived
affords but a dim approximation to life as, ideally conceived, it
ought to be lived" (7). For example, the reader can discern that
Ashburnham and Leonora behave as they do because they cannot control
their inherent weaknesses; Ashburnham's lust causes him to deceive
his wife and his best friend, though he does not want to deceive
them. Finally, in fact, Ashburnham's feelings for Nancy drive him to
suicide rather than to a relationship with Nancy that he feels would
compromise her. And Leonora, as well, who has patiently endured all
of Edward's infidelities, is finally unable to overcome her evil impulse to try and pressure Nancy into sleeping with Edward; Leonora comes to delude herself that Nancy is at fault because Edward loves her, and thus eventually convinces Nancy, as well, that she is at fault.

Florence, Ashburnham, and Leonora are driven by their own internal forces to engage in behavior that to different degrees each understands as harmful to himself, and which finally brings about his ruin; in representing the actions of Edward, Leonora, and Florence, Ford focuses on potential and limitation and also on the degree to which an individual can control his destiny. Ford reveals that Ashburnham, Leonora, and Florence are dedicated to personal gratification, as they delude themselves about the consequences of their actions to others. That is, each character succumbs to his personal weakness in the relentless pursuit of personal gratification. The sins of Florence, Edward, and Leonora are obvious. Florence's greed is evident as the reader learns from Dowell that before their marriage she made clear her wants: "She wanted to marry a gentleman of leisure; she wanted a European establishment, an income of fifty thousand dollars a year from real estate and no ambitions to increase that income. And--she fairly hinted--she did not want much physical passion in the affair" (87). It is clear that what Florence really wants is pleasure, rather than marriage; her claim that she does not want "much physical passion in the affair" is given the lie by her bedroom antics, which, the reader is told, began before her marriage to Dowell. Ford represents the consequences of Florence's, Edward's, Leonora's and Dowell's actions, as well as he represents the motivation for their behavior. For
example, Florence's self-centered pursuit of wealth and sexual
gratification outside of her marriage, however comically her
determined and methodical pursuit and achievement of them are
attained, culminate in her suicide rather than in her happiness.
Like Florence, Ashburnham is also profoundly unhappy and commits
suicide. Although Ashburnham's life appears to be one of pomp and
elegance, it is really all a facade masking a life of unhappiness,
marital infidelity, drunkenness, and near bankruptcy, and also ends
in suicide. While Edward, who is comically portrayed in his serious
and determined effort to reclaim drunks, is much like Richard
Feverel, who is similarly portrayed in his serious and determined
efforts to reclaim prostitutes, the depression Edward feels finally
overcomes him; Edward's near slavish attention to his appearance in
the community as a beneficent and magnanimous man of means finally
requires too much effort to maintain in light of the desperation he
feels every day.

And Leonora, whose life is most unhappy because of her troubled
marriage to Edward, and who knows about Edward and Florence, as well
as about all of Edward's other philanderings, seems most pitiable of
the four; on closer inspection, however, Ford guides the reader to
see that Leonora is less enamoured with her marriage to Edward than
she is dedicated to keeping up its appearance at whatever cost to
anyone else. Leonora becomes far more concerned that she and Edward
appear the "right" sort of people, that is "good" people, than she is
concerned that she and Edward really have a good marriage. Leonora
elicits the reader's criticism when she says to Nancy of Edward: "You
can't let that man go on to ruin for want of you. You must belong to
him" (235). In Leonora's desperation to hang onto Edward she
suggests that Nancy behave in a way that Leonora, a devout Catholic, understands as immoral. Yet Leonora cannot help herself; she is driven by pride to maintain what she now understands to be only the semblance of a marriage for appearance's sake. In representing Leonora as encouraging Nancy to sleep with Edward because she believes that will remove his desire for Nancy, Ford significantly lessens Leonora's dignity in the reader's eyes. Up until this point, however, Ford has represented Leonora differently from Florence and from Edward, as her religion has meant something to her and as she followed its moral code to the best of her understanding; at this point, however, the shocking immorality of Leonora's suggestion in effect makes her much more like Edward and Florence. In representing Leonora as attempting to use ignoble means to achieve a noble end, that is, to save her marriage, Ford guides the reader to lose respect for Leonora, and therefore to respond critically to her. Although the reader is not amused by Leonora's behavior here, he has a comic response toward her because he considers her solution to her problem ridiculous, as well as shocking. And, ironically, although Leonora is not aware that her supposed remedy for Edward's desire for Nancy can probably only have its opposite effect, the reader is aware of it, as by inference Ford must have been aware of it. By means of Leonora's attempt to do whatever is necessary to look "good," Ford prevents Leonora from eliciting a tragic response.

Ford especially complicates the reader's ability to judge Dowell, however. While Ford reveals Dowell's comic limitation as represented in the obvious and specific flaws in his character that make him responsible for his own predicament, Ford also represents him as the victim of circumstances; thus, Ford makes it very
difficult for the reader to assess exactly how much control Dowell
has over his own destiny. And though Dowell represents somewhat of
an extreme in his naiveté and in his gullibility, it seems to me that
Ford is saying that Dowell is not really so different from other
people in that he, like most everyone else, is caught up in his own
world. But Dowell's world is all a sham. Dowell's world of "good
people" is all appearance with no substance; it is a world in which
people merely play roles for the sake of appearances. In The Good
Soldier Ford shows that life can become a series of episodes, all
designed to preserve a comfortable illusion that replaces an
uncomfortable reality. Ford is saying that sometimes what
masquerades as reality may really be nothing more than an act staged
for the benefit of the world, and that sooner or later the veneer of
appearances that are insubstantial reveals itself as illusory; to a
fair extent, however, Dowell chooses not to accept what he finally
discerns as fact. But the three key people in Dowell's world
perpetuate his deception, and his wife and best friend manipulate
him, as well, for their own ends. Immersed in such a world, Dowell
predictably loses sight of the truth. Thus, Ford creates a complex
response to Dowell in representing him as blind, yet as deceived.
While Dowell certainly is not guilty of the same sorts of failings or
sins as are the other three, his chief failing is his proclivity for
self-deception, which leads to what are in effect his sins of
"omission"; that is, Dowell is guilty of systematically justifying
his responses, in that he does not initiate action to alleviate his
situation. For example, Dowell often feigns ignorance of situations
that Ford guides the reader to see that Dowell intuitively
understands as foul play, like his response to Florence's and
Edward's affair. Although the reader can understand that Dowell wants to protect himself from the pain that will necessarily result when he faces the fact that his "best friend" is no friend, as his wife is no wife, and that Leonora has all along known what has been going on between Edward and Florence, Dowell goes so far as to insist that the appearance of a thing and the actual thing are one and the same if the perceiver knows not the difference. The reader can recall that at the beginning of Dowell's story Ford represents him as telling the reader, "If for nine years I have possessed a goodly apple that is rotten at the core and discover its rottenness only in nine years and six months less four days, isn't it true to say that for nine years I possessed a goodly apple" (9).

By means of Dowell Ford represents the extent to which some people are able to delude themselves that the appearance of something is the way it actually is; the central focus of The Good Soldier, in fact, concerns precisely that relationship between illusion and fact. Throughout the novel Ford guides the reader to question whether or not the appearance of a thing, like the apparent solidity of the Ashburnhams' marriage, is also the reality. By means of Dowell Ford represents the discrepancy between appearance and reality in pointing out that a main part of Dowell's difficulties arise precisely because he does not question whether or not the appearance of a given situation is an accurate representation of the facts of that situation. Eventually, however, Dowell realizes that appearances of goodliness only mask but cannot alter the rottenness that may exist and in his case does exist, beneath the surface of a thing. In fact, this "rottenness" at the "core" of Dowell's life gradually contaminates the whole of it as he is forced to confront the truth
about his wife and his best friend, though he chooses to rationalize their behavior, particularly Edward's behavior. Dowell is now painfully aware of the fact that appearance does not necessarily represent reality; he is forced to see that just because something looks good to the world does not mean that it is at all good. And while Ford provides no assurance that some other set of circumstances would have turned out better for Dowell, it is difficult to see how they could have turned out any worse for him; Ford guides the reader to feel that if Dowell had been able to see what is obvious to all of the other main characters in the novel, as well as to the reader, he might well have been able to improve his own situation, if only by removing himself from it.

One of the chief techniques Ford uses to create his tragicomic effects in this final section of the novel is that he represents Dowell as engaging in self-indulgent reflection to prevent the events of his narrative from moving the reader with the full power of tragedy. After Dowell's famous blindness, perhaps his next most exasperating trait is his tendency to discuss things that happen to others in terms of their effects on himself; for example, in discussing Nancy's state of madness after Edward's death, he matter-of-factly states, "It would to-day be much better for Nancy Rufford if she were dead. Perhaps all these reflections are a nuisance; but they crowd on me. I will try to tell the story" (225). By representing Dowell as initially telling the reader that Nancy's condition is such that death would be preferable to it, and then telling him what a "nuisance" it is to have to discuss her ordeal, which he terms, "all these reflections," Ford undercuts the tragic element of Nancy's madness. The reader is distracted from the
seriousness of Nancy's condition by Dowell's complaining that he is being inconvenienced by his "reflections" on it. Also, in representing Dowell as stating that he "will try to tell the story" Ford creates the impression that the effort is burdensome to him. The argument can also be made that Ford's technique is to guide the reader to see through his narrator's rendition of events to the "real tragedy," which is Nancy's madness. But even in getting past Dowell's comic presentation of inherently tragic situations, the reader has an initially comic response to Dowell's manner of narrating these events; thus, the reader's response to the material Dowell presents to him is mixed. Another example of Ford's method of representing Dowell as engaging in self-indulgent reflection to create a mixed response to the event Dowell is narrating, is Dowell's telling the reader a few pages later: "I have been casting back again; but I cannot help it. It is so difficult to keep all these people going" (241). Dowell again lets the reader know that it is a chore for him to tell his story. And in representing Dowell as next stating that Nancy "knew nothing--nothing of life, except that one must live sadly" (245), Ford guides the reader to recall that Dowell has told him on three different occasions that his story is "sad" or is the "saddest story," and on a fourth occasion Dowell has told him about the "imbecility" associated with the "Ashburnham tragedy"; the terms "sad" and "imbecility" are not usually identified with tragedy. At this point in the novel, then, by means of Dowell Ford provides a fifth clue that Dowell's narrative is, in fact, "sad" rather than "tragic."

Ford further creates tragicomic effects by means of Dowell's discussion of Leonora's response to Edward and Florence's affair;
after listening to Leonora discuss Ashburnham's affair with Florence and his love for Nancy, Dowell says of Leonora: "She went, for the moment, mad . . . . I guess she did not go mad enough. She ought to have said: 'Your wife is a harlot who is going to be my husband's mistress . . . .' That might have done the trick. But she was afraid they'd run off. She acted very badly to me" (209). Ford structures Dowell's comment in a very specific way initially to draw the reader's attention to the seriousness of Leonora's response; then, however, Ford diminishes the seriousness of her response by representing Dowell as stating, "That might have done the trick." Finally, Dowell in effect dismisses Leonora's emotional response to Edward's infidelity with Florence and to his love for Nancy, and transforms it into his own personal ordeal; the final impression Dowell creates is that he is the injured party as a result of Leonora's behavior toward him as he complains, "She acted very badly to me." It takes Dowell only a moment to represent the situation in a way that refocuses the reader's attention from Leonora's emotional ordeal with Edward onto himself. Ford represents Dowell as revealing that he does not ever want to be inconvenienced and made uncomfortable about anything, like dealing with his wife's infidelity, like acknowledging that his best friend lacked character and integrity; like admitting that Leonora attempts to use immoral means to achieve moral ends; and like conceding that to a fair extent he is responsible for the fact that others manipulate him. In representing Dowell as never wanting to be inconvenienced by facing ugly truths, Ford shows that in life the individual grapples with choices about what is good, bad, right, or wrong. Ford is saying, as well, that sometimes the choices that an individual has to make may
be difficult, but he must make them all the same. Michael Levenson calls Dowell "the true man without qualities," who "can choose any qualities"; actually, Dowell is the "true man" with no motivation to "choose" anything, because in large part it is too much bother for him to take action. Dowell is a perfect example of the passive individual who is always acted upon, rather than who initiates action. Thus, Dowell is not fully alive because he does not live life in a way that is either meaningful or satisfying; Dowell is not able to live a meaningful and satisfying life because he never learns and, consequently, never matures spiritually. But neither is Dowell dead.

The significance of my interpretation of The Good Soldier as tragicomedy among other interpretations of the novel is that it allows the reader to understand better what Ford is saying about the moral and psychological aspects of Dowell's predicament. Ford uses a mixed genre to make two important and timeless points: that though an individual hardly ever sees his own failings, he easily sees those of others. Although Dowell does not see the failings of the others for a long time, he comes to see their weaknesses in retrospection; in his narration of the experience Dowell often indicates that there were, in fact, signs that things were not exactly as Florence and Ashburnham represented them. Dowell chooses, however, to ignore those signs. Ford guides the reader to conclude that at a certain point an individual, like Dowell, who has been deceived for long periods of time, tacitly allows his deception to continue. Thus, that individual's deception is self-deception.

That point at which deception is self-deception is a main focus of the novel, a concept that Ford demonstrates in relation to the
There is, however, one particular aspect of Dowell's behavior that Ford guides the reader to criticize and which results from his comic limitation: Dowell does not learn from his lived experience. Ford guides the reader to discern that Dowell does not learn from his
past experiences because he chooses to accept appearances as real; that is, even though sometimes on some level of consciousness Dowell feels that things are really not exactly as they appear to be, Dowell deludes himself with the notion that since things seem all right, they must be all right. Ford uses a mixed medium to address what is probably the key question in his novel: "How does an individual interpret reality?" The way an individual interprets reality depends upon what he has learned; that is, it depends upon what he has been taught and upon his own practical experience. The reader finds it strange that Ford represents Dowell as a fairly intelligent man in that he has written a book, and as a millionaire, whom the reader must presuppose has had some experience with various kinds of people, as with the world at large. But Ford does not provide clues about Dowell's relationship with the world previous to his meeting Florence. The reader can only presuppose that Dowell either inherited his wealth; that he remained unscathed as a result of some kinds of treachery that at some point he must have encountered in his business dealings and in the world at large; or that Dowell learned nothing from whatever experiences he did have in his business dealings and in the world at large. That Dowell could be as naive as he is and have as much money as he has, even if he did inherit his wealth, and never have become even aware that dishonesty exists in the world or have been swindled himself is one of the ironies of the novel. Whatever the case, Ford represents a fairly intelligent and a highly successful man in his thirties who has seen something of the world, who is, in effect, as naive as a baby. Ford creates the perfect character that certain elements in the world, like Florence and Edward, have been waiting for in that he can be manipulated and
duped into anything. Thus, by means of Dowell Ford shows how the world treats people who are vulnerable. Although it would seem that individuals like Dowell who are vulnerable would be protected, Ford guides the reader to conclude that some people in the world do not respond in that way; in light of the fact that all of the main characters in *The Good Soldier* to different degrees take advantage of Dowell, it would appear that Ford is saying that, in fact, many people advantage of those who are unsophisticated about the ways of the world. Ford shows that people like Dowell, who are not worldly wise, are taken advantage of at every opportunity.

In demonstrating the way a vulnerable individual fares in the world, Ford also asks, "What are 'good people' and how do they fare in the world? Ford has Dowell reveal his comic limitation in part in his inability to discern fact from truth, as, for example, he constantly repeats that the Ashburnhams are "good people." Also, Dowell continually tells the reader that Ashburnham was not a "promiscuous libertine," but "was a sentimentalist" (62), when, by Dowell's own rendition of Ashburnham's escapades, the reader can only conclude that Ashburnham was precisely a "promiscuous libertine." But while Ford expects the reader to read against Dowell's acceptance of all that he sees and of all that everybody tells him, Ford also expects the reader to see that the common thread running through every incident in which Dowell is deceived is his trust in those who do not deserve his trust. Thus, in revealing the nobility of Dowell's natural inclination to trust, Ford guides the reader to admire his trusting nature and to feel sympathy for him; Ford, therefore, makes it difficult to judge Dowell.
Ford's method is that he guides the reader to discern the tension between what Dowell thinks is true and what the reader and by inference what Ford knows is true: that the Ashburnhams are not "good people." Whether or not an individual is "good" is dependent upon his actions; that is, a good person engages in good behavior. The test, then, of an individual's goodness is the actions he commits. Ford provides a variety of tests for all of his main characters to reveal who is "good"; Edward, Florence, and Leonora fail those tests. Ford reveals that the Ashburnhams only look "good," but they are not really "good." For example, Edward is unfaithful to his wife and deceives his best friend in one of the worst possible ways; Florence deceives Dowell from the first moment of their courtship and continues to deceive him throughout their marriage; and Leonora really has no use for Dowell, but has only tolerated him because he was Florence's husband and part of their foursome. After Edward's suicide, Leonora marries Rodney Bayham and has a child. Dowell tells the reader that he hardly ever sees Leonora; the reader detects the reason Dowell hardly ever sees Leonora is that she cannot be bothered with him. What is in effect Leonora's abandonment of Dowell creates sympathy for him. Early in the novel it appeared that she had some compassion for Dowell's blindness about Florence and Edward and that she might be a friend to Dowell; in the final analysis, however, Leonora is not Dowell's friend. The reason that Ashburnham, Florence, and Leonora fail Ford's test to determine goodness is that they care nothing about anything or anyone but their own self-interests.

In his representation of Dowell, who is naive and trusting, and Florence and Ashburnham, who are similarly deceitful and treacherous,
it would seem that Florence and Ashburnham would fare far better than Dowell precisely because they are worldly wise and precisely because nearly all of their actions are calculatedly designed to further their own self-interest. But they do not fare better than Dowell; they both commit suicide. Ford is saying that an individual's slavish devotion to his own self-interest does not necessarily mean that things will work out as he plans and expects that they should; Ford shows, in fact, that complete devotion to self-interest oftentimes brings about results opposite to what the individual expects, a point that Meredith makes, as well, by means of Sir Austin and Clotilda. Yet, it would seem that Dowell, who is the only truly "good" person in the novel, would be able to distinguish between what is truly "good," and what only appears to be "good," he cannot. But in representing Dowell's difficulty in determining what is genuinely "good," Ford reveals the complexity in making moral judgments. Ford creates a tragicomic medium in which he represents his tests to determine goodness because that medium mimics the ambiguous context in which moral action takes place, as well as the difficulties that confront the individual who makes judgments about moral action.

Another key point Ford makes in his novel is that a critical responsibility of all human beings is to know themselves; Ford reveals that no one in the novel knows himself. Ford shows that a chief reason why Dowell does not know that the Ashburnhams are not really all that "good" is because he does not know himself; although Dowell himself is "good," he does not know himself, and, therefore, he cannot know anyone else. Ashburnham, Leonora, and Florence, as well, do not know themselves, and, like Dowell, as well, they do not know what they want, much less what they need to make themselves
happy. For example, Ashburnham makes all of the wrong choices, even though ironically, his actions are nearly always motivated by self-interest. Yet his acting only upon a motivation for immediate gratification finally results in his misery, and ultimately he kills himself. Florence, as well, does not know herself, though she appears to know exactly what she wants: the respectability of marriage and the comfort of millions of dollars. Yet Florence's self-centered and blatant disregard for others, like Dowell and Leonora, reflects back upon her in her relationship with Edward, who is himself like Florence. The result, predictably, of two self-centered and self-gratifying individuals who become involved with each other can only be disastrous, for one if not for both individuals. Ford guides the reader to see that in spite of all of the rhetoric and all of the shows of bravado from Florence and from Edward, they are finally defeated because their emotional needs are not met. In representing the ruin of Florence and Edward, Ford is saying that to achieve lasting happiness an individual needs to understand himself to be able to determine what is important for him, rather than to indulge in behavior that appears glamorous and seems satisfying, but which offers only transitory pleasure.

Another question Ford asks is whether or not an individual can trust too much and whether or not it is better never to trust anyone. Although it might appear that Dowell's real problem is that he trusts too much or that he should not have trusted at all and, thereby, have avoided his predicament, Ford is not saying that an individual should not trust or that an individual can trust too much. Ford is not saying that because that position can be proven false. The test to determine validity is whether or not a thing is true in
terms of what the reader understands as true in relation to the author's view of objective truth as he represents it in the fictive world. Ford guides the reader to admire Dowell's ability to trust, but eventually to criticize Dowell because he trusts the wrong people. Ford guides the reader to criticize Dowell because he does have moments of intuitive understanding, of discerning that appearances do not add up to the facts; Ford does not guide the reader to criticize Dowell because of his capacity to trust and because of his giving nature. If Ford had represented Dowell as never gleaning the strong possibility that there may be a discrepancy between the way things seem and the way they really are, the reader could not criticize Dowell because it is difficult to criticize someone who is honestly unaware of the facts of a situation. But in revealing Dowell as occasionally detecting that there is something wrong between the way Florence and Ashburnham represent the situation, and the way things may really be, Ford points to Dowell's comic limitation and guides the reader to criticize him because at the time he chooses to accept that things are all right, but then later complains about his situation. Thus, Ford represents Dowell's chief problem as his refusal to take action when he understands that he should take some kind of action, first and foremost is Dowell's refusal even to admit to himself that a problem even exists. Ford is also saying that there is finally no comfort in an individual's deluding himself that if he pretends that there is nothing wrong, then everything will be fine; Dowell proves the opposite is true. That is, Ford shows that an individual's belief that he can be comfortable if he does what is convenient, as Dowell finds it convenient to accept that things are as Florence, Ashburnham, and
Leonora represent them to him, may finally result in his unhappiness; Meredith makes that point, as well, by means of Clotilda in The Tragic Comedians.

Two other important questions that Ford asks in his novel are "What is the meaning of life" and "What is my place in the universe?" Ford represents Dowell as saying, "I know nothing--nothing in the world of the hearts of men. I only know that I am alone--horribly alone" (9). While critics rightly point out that Ford is saying that one human being can never really know another, Ford is also saying that like Dowell, each of us is ultimately alone. Dowell is not the only character in this novel who is "horribly alone"; Ford represents all of his main characters as "alone." For example, although Edward and Florence are together in the secret knowledge of their deception of Dowell, Ford represents Florence and Dowell as ultimately alone: Edward becomes so entangled in his numerous infidelities, particularly in his tryst with La Dolciquita, whose demands for jewels nearly bankrupt him, that he eventually succumbs to a continual state of drunkenness as a means of dealing with his secrets. No longer able to bear the reality of his loveless marriage, numerous infidelities, near financial ruin, and finally, hopeless love for Nancy Rufford, Ashburnham commits suicide. And, Florence, who at first seems so decidedly cool in her actions and so in control of everything she does, eventually comes to realize that not only is Edward not going to leave Leonora for her, but that he loves Nancy Rufford. And Florence, too, commits suicide. Like Edward and like Florence, Leonora is "horribly alone," as well. It is clear that she is alone throughout the novel; as Ashburnham has
yet another affair, this time with Florence, Leonora admits to no
knowledge, neither to the parties themselves, nor to Dowell.

Ford's whole pattern in representing the relationship between
the two couples and among the four friends, which he demonstrates by
means of his mixed effects, shows that lying leads to hypocrisy, and
hypocrisy, leads to self-deceit. The main thing Ford is saying is
that as long as a person rationalizes his behavior and thus plays the
hypocrite, he never has to face up to who he is. For example, when
Ashburnham and Florence can no longer take the stress from the roles
they are playing, they commit suicide. Leonora, however, is more
pragmatic than Edward, the "sentimentalist," as Dowell styles him, as
she is more pragmatic than Florence. But Leonora's pragmatism causes
her to become a slave to convention; she marries another man, not
really different from Edward except in his discretion, and she has a
child. Thus, Leonora lives what might be called a good looking life;
that is, she achieves with Rodney Bayham what she finally realizes
she can never achieve with Edward, the appearance of respectability.
And to the appearance of respectability the world awards the title of
"good people." Dowell, however, who has none of the passion and
yearnings of Edward, though he claims that he has, is simply left by
the others to shift for himself as best he can. The best that Dowell
reveals that he is able to do for himself is that he waits for a mad
girl, who has never loved him and who now does even not know who he
is, to regain her sanity so that he can marry her. Throughout the
novel Dowell rationalizes everyone's behavior and now he rationalizes
his own. Thus, in representing Dowell as hiding behind his excuses
that things are the way they are, and as concluding that there is
nothing to be done but to accept all of the craziness to which he has
been subjected, Ford shows that Dowell never has to face up to the role he himself has played in his own deception.

By means of Dowell's predicament Ford reveals, as well, what hypocrisy does to other people; Ford reveals how the hypocrisy of some people, such as Florence and Ashburnham and to a certain extent Leonora, can be detrimental to others, such as Dowell, who trust that an individual really is what he represents himself to be. In representing the full complexity of Dowell's moral dilemma, that is, in representing his inability to see the treachery in other people because he himself is good, Ford guides the reader simultaneously to laugh at him and finally to blame him for his blindness, while admiring him for his devotion and for his goodness. The difficulty Ford creates in his representation of Dowell's predicament is that he guides the reader to censure Dowell for behavior that is motivated by a noble intention. But since intention is the chief basis upon which moral judgments are determined, the reader's criticism of Dowell is moderated by his admiration for him, since he behaves in the only possible way that he believes is right. Thus, Ford creates a tragicomic medium to represent his reflection on what it means to be a human being, whom he represents as deceived by others, as well as self-deceived; Dowell's self-deception and his deception by others is exacerbated because he does not want to confront the fact that those closest to him are not "good people." The complexity of the mixed medium Ford uses evokes a complex response, and thereby demonstrates the ambiguous context in which an individual makes judgments about moral action.
Notes

1 Todd Bender argues that "the tragic dilemma of modern man is defined so that every reader—even perhaps unwittingly—feels the great tragic power of The Good Soldier." (Todd K. Bender, "The Sad Tale of Dowell: Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier," Criticism, 4 [Fall, 1962] 368). Sr. Veronica McLaughlin takes issue with Mark Schorer and argues: "Rather than comic, considering the essential elements which constitute a tragedy, Ford's novel can be classified rightly as such." ("Dowell's Doubt--The Tragic Flaw In The Good Soldier," Horizontes 35 [1974] 18). H. Wayne Schow asks the crucial question: "For how is tragedy to be recognized if it must be filtered through a medium patently untragic?"; he decides, however, that the novel must be tragedy as he concludes of Edward, whom he considers the main character: "But he is not defeated ignobly. Not on the grand scale, of course, but in a modest way he achieves tragic stature." (H. Wayne Schow, "Ironic Structure In The Good Soldier," English Literature in Transition 18: 208, 209). Lawrence Thornton takes very strong issue with Schorer's interpretation of the novel. Thornton argues that Schorer's interpretation of The Good Soldier results from the format of the novel that the Knopf editors created, rather than from the format that Ford himself intended; Thornton claims that in changing the format, the Knopf editors have changed the meaning of the novel as Ford intended it, and also that critics since Scherer have "felt obliged" to respond to the Knopf edition of the novel, rather than to its original version. Thornton states: "When the novel is read in the format intended by Ford, rather than that created by the Knopf editors to which critics since 1951 have felt obliged to respond, a much different reading suggests itself, one which supports Meixner's view of it as a tale of passion and suffering . . . ". ("Escaping the Impasse: Criticism and the Mitosis of The Good Soldier," 1975, Critical Essays on Ford Madox Ford, ed. Richard A. Cassell [Boston: Hall, 1987] 65). John Meixner's views are cited in the text. The original version of The Good Soldier was published in 1915 in New York by John Lane Company, and in London by John Lane, The Bodleyhead. A page by page comparison of the Lane format with the Knopf format indicates that there are no changes in content; in relation to form, both formats divide The Good Soldier into four parts and the paragraphing is the same; insignificant differences in form between the two formats are that Knopf usually capitalizes one, two, or three more words than Lane in the first sentence of a new chapter and also that on two or three occasions Knopf uses block style paragraphs, rather than indentation style paragraphs, as Lane uses. But the notable difference between the Knopf and Lane formats of the novel is that after providing Schorer's "An Interpretation," Knopf prefaces the novel with Ford's "DEDICATORY LETTER to Stella Ford, written by Ford.
on January 9, 1927; Ford begins this letter claiming, "I have always regarded this as my best book," and later discusses "the work that I must have put into the construction of the book" (xxii). The variations in the format of The Good Soldier that Knopf "created," to use Thornton's terms, hardly warrant his attack either on Schorer or especially on the Knopf editors. It would appear, rather, that Thornton is upset that in placing Schorer's "An Interpretation" in their edition of The Good Soldier, the Knopf editors have supported a view that Thornton feels Ford did not intend: a comic response to the novel. Thornton apparently holds Schorer and especially the Knopf editors responsible for promulgating the view among later critics that The Good Soldier is comic. Another critic, Gordon Hartford, claims: "Now Dowell, like any intelligent delineator of tragedy, is on interesting though controversial ground." He later adds: "Antony's and Othello's weapon has shrunk but the blood-letting is the same, its impulse stemming from a heroic line of death for love." (*Ford And The Good Soldier: A Bid For Tragedy,* English Studies in Africa 23 (1980) 99, 102).


6 Paul L. Wiley states that the novel's "thematic and structural tensions . . . give rise to the comic ironies so well illustrated in Mark Schorer's interpretation." (Novelist of Three Worlds: Ford Madox Ford [Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1962] 173-174). And Barry D. Bort argues: The Good Soldier is not a tragedy, but a savage comedy of manners (its material is suicide, madness, and unrealized happiness) in which people are unable to cope with the world because they have never learned to understand it." (*The Good Soldier: Comedy Or Tragedy?*, Twentieth Century Literature [1969] 12: 210). Duncan Aswell states: "Dowell's narrative of passion-driven, unreflecting creatures has, for all its somber misery and pain, something of the quality of a barnyard story told by a small child." Of what is sad in this novel he concludes: "Our inability to do any better at evaluating events than the ridiculous Dowell is the real measure of the sadness of the story." (*The Saddest Storyteller In Ford's The Good Soldier,* College Language Association Journal 14 [1970] 191, 195-96). Stuart Y. McDougal seems to be saying that after having written down his story and thus gaining a new perspective on it, Dowell creates a comedy from the "sad events of his married life."
He argues: "Through his writing, he has achieved a perspective on the sordid events he has been chronicling and a concomitant understanding of them which he totally lacked at the outset. By this understanding, and by the craft he has struggled to master, he is able to transform the 'sad' events of his married life into a 'gay' work of art." ("Where Even The Saddest Stories Are Gay: Provence and The Good Soldier," Journal of Modern Literature [1979] 7: 554).

Charles Daughaday explains: "The comic vision of the novelist encompasses a wide range of the meaning of 'comic', ranging from burlesque to wit and high humor." ("Cubist Viewing with the Comic Spirit in Ford's The Good Soldier," Kentucky Philological Association Bulletin [(1984) 14]. And Dewey Ganzel speaks of "two mutually exclusive interpretations" of the novel, one tragic and one "serio-comic." He explains that "the book is either a tragic revelation of Dowell's discovery of 'the truth' . . . or an ironic, serio-comical revelation of his ignorant misapprehension." But Ganzel's argument is that the novel is a story of the "tragedy of Edward Ashburnham." Ganzel claims that from the letter Nancy receives from her mother, the reader should infer that she is Ashburnham's daughter; thus, it is Edward's love for Nancy, complicated by incest, that constitute tragedy. ("What the Letter Said: Fact and Inference in The Good Soldier," Journal of Modern Literature July [1984]; 11 [2] : 277, 279).

7 Richard A. Cassell, Ford Madox Ford, A Study Of His Novels (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1961) 162.


21 Castelvetro's theory of comedy is based on deception, which is precisely the basis of the comic in Ford; see pages 6-7 and 46-47 in my "Introduction" for a full account of Castelvetro's theory of comedy.

22 See pages 95-96 in my "Introduction" for a full account of Pirandello's theory of humor.

23 See pages 17 and 46-48 in my "Introduction" for a full account of Hoy's theory of comedy; pages 81-82 and 99-100 for Hoy's theory of tragedy; and pages 99-100 for Hoy's theory of tragicomedy.

D. H. Lawrence is best known as a serious writer; his novels are traditionally interpreted as sincere and mirthless assessments of his politics. Lawrence is noted for his intense opposition to industrialism and for his probing interest in the ways men and women relate to each other. In interpreting what Lawrence is saying about men and women in Sons and Lovers and in Women in Love, many critics have erroneously concluded that Lawrence is anti-feminist. They have misunderstood and misinterpreted Lawrence because they have concluded that he is read best as a polemical writer; that is, they have concluded that he writes as a propagandist rather than as an artist. It is clear to me that the mimetic aspect of what Lawrence does in Sons And Lovers and in Women in Love is sufficiently important to warrant a lot of attention. One of Lawrence's strong points is that he retains firm control of his work so that the didactic aspects of these novels do not take over the mimetic aspects. In representing the interactions between men and women, Lawrence creates comic effects to create a balance between what his anti-feminist male protagonists propose as true and what the reader knows to be true. In fact, in his essay, "The Novel," Lawrence points out, "There you have the greatness of the novel itself. It won't let you tell didactic lies, and put them over."¹ My approach, which focuses on comic and ironic elements in Sons And Lovers and in Women in Love,
entails understanding things from a different point of view. Key to my analysis of Lawrence is his female protagonists, as well as some of his other female characters, who criticize what Lawrence's male protagonists and what some of his other main male characters say. In their criticism, these female characters represent the voice of reason and speak the truth, as the reader understands it to be; that Lawrence has his narrators reinforce what his female protagonists and what some of his other female characters say is also a critical part of my analysis. The reader thus concludes that there is a discrepancy between what Lawrence's male protagonists believe and what the reader, and by inference, the author, knows to be true; rather than glorifying male dominance, Lawrence diminishes the stature of his chief male characters in both novels by revealing their comic limitation, which is mainly demonstrated in their capacity for self-deception. In this chapter I will analyze Lawrence's treatment of interactions between men and women; Lawrence shows that the behavior of his male characters results from their conventional ideas about women's place in society, and from their expectations, which are based on stereotypical behavior. In Sons And Lovers and in Women in Love Lawrence shows that mistaken assumptions about women are ultimately responsible for what goes wrong in the relations between men and women.

Both novels are analyzable in terms of Castelvetro's theory of comedy, which focuses on self-deceit as the basis of the comic; Lawrence creates comic effects by revealing that his anti-feminist male protagonists are self-deceived about their own importance, about women, and about women's place in society. Sons And Lovers and Women in Love are also analyzable in terms of Cyrus Hoy's theory of comedy
in that Lawrence reveals that Paul Morel's and Birkin's self-centered actions result from their innate weaknesses which are inherent in human nature. These anti-feminist males are egotistical in their thinking about male dominance and about women's place in society; these characters attempt to convince others, mostly the women whom they wish to dominate, that their views are right. Also, Bakhtin's concept of polyphony is important to our understanding of how Lawrence creates comic effects in these novels. Bakhtin explains polyphony in relation to Dostoevsky's novels as "The plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses and the genuine polyphony of full-valued voices... It is not a multitude of characters and fates within a unified objective world, illuminated by the author's unified consciousness that unfolds in his works, but precisely the plurality of equal consciousnesses and their worlds, which are combined into the unity of a given event, at the same time retaining their unmergedness." In a non-dialogical novel, in which there is no multiplicity of voices with which the reader must contend, it is often the voice of the protagonist that is taken to represent the novel's truth, an approach that those who misunderstand or misinterpret Lawrence apparently adopt. In Lawrence, however, the reader is presented with voices other than those of his male protagonists. These voices are often competitive and contradictory; they also speak authoritatively, usually claiming to have in effect the clearest understanding of the facts of a particular situation. The reader's job, then, is to balance all of these ideas against what is true, which is always the basis for determining validity, to reach a judgment of what the novel, and thus, Lawrence, is saying; that is, the reader must balance what the narrator and his main characters
determine to be true in relation to Lawrence's views on the objective truth in the textual world he creates, and also to his own views on what is true.

It has become a critical commonplace to equate Paul Morel in *Sons And Lovers* with Lawrence and also to associate Birkin in *Women in Love* with him; that association results from an apparently close connection between some aspects of Lawrence's life and both these characters. Many critics have made that connection between Lawrence and Paul and Lawrence and Birkin to show that Lawrence intends that Paul Morel and Birkin glorify his own supposed anti-feminism. But relying primarily on any author's biography, rather than on the novel itself as the chief means of interpreting his fiction, results in an interpretation that discounts elements in the text that may work against the "facts" of the author's life; that is especially the case with Lawrence. Whatever Lawrence's views may have been, and like many writers, if not most people, Lawrence held different views at different times, he does not advocate anti-feminism in *Sons And Lovers* and *Women in Love*. But even if an author can be shown to have held anti-feminist views, that does not mean that he has to write an anti-feminist novel; various critics have pointed out the danger in relying exclusively on an author's biography as the only key to interpret his fiction.

My approach, like that of Laurence Lerner, is informed by Lawrence's now famous statement "never trust the artist, trust the tale." Lerner makes the salient point: "If a novel is completely successful in its representation of politics, then it does not matter which side the author is on: what matters is how he perceives--and represents --the total situation" (80). Lerner is saying that it is
not so important what an author's politics are, as it is that he represent all sides of the situation; in presenting "the total situation," the author allows the reader objectively to determine what is right and what is not. While an author's personal limitation in terms of his own political biases, may prevent him from knowing "the total situation," whatever political biases Lawrence may or may not have held do not prevent him from presenting the facts in a way that allows the reader to make his own judgements about what is right and what is not right. The reader can conclude, then, that whatever Lawrence's views about women, Lawrence the artist was able to conquer Lawrence the man; the proof of Lawrence's fair-mindedness about women is represented in Sons And Lovers and Women in Love. And Lawrence himself does say in his essay "The Novel," "Oh, give me the novel! Let me hear what the novel says. As for the novelist, he is usually a dribbling liar" (202). Mark Kinkead-Weekes points out, as well, "Yet it is not Lawrence's ideas that are important, but their exploration and testing out in the fictive processes of his novels." 7 The work is always greater than the author, a point which Avrom Fleishman makes in stating of Lawrence: "D. H. Lawrence's Sons And Lovers is so much an autobiographical novel that our knowledge of its roots in the author's life threatens to overwhelm our critical appreciation of the book." 8 And Northrop Frye makes a salient point, particularly appropriate to Lawrence criticism, though he is discussing Carlyle, when he states, "Of course no one denies the relevance of the poet's life to his work: doubts arise only when that relevance is carried to uncritical extremes." 9 By "uncritical extremes" it would appear that Frye means inappropriate purposes, such as those demonstrated by critics who use Lawrence's biography to
create a one-to-one relationship with his work, by interpreting his fiction to produce only and exactly those views that they attribute to Lawrence personally. But Frye qualifies his statement, particularly referring to Lawrence, and points out that "there are variations in the degree" of the biography's "relevance," noting that it is "more important for D. H. Lawrence than for T. S. Eliot" (96).

A survey of the Lawrence criticism shows that discussions of Lawrence have been mostly polemical since the famous controversy between Kate Millett, whose denunciation of Lawrence in Sexual politics led to a school of thought on Lawrence as anti-feminist, and Norman Mailer, whose sharp response to Millett distinguishes him as probably Lawrence's greatest, or, at least, most enthusiastic advocate. Although John Middleton Murry was the first to condemn Lawrence as anti-feminist, and Simone de Beauvoir's assessment of Lawrence as anti-feminist precedes Millett's assessment of Lawrence by nearly twenty years,¹⁰ it is Millett's criticism of Lawrence that inspired the negative feminist response to him. Since Millett's critique of Lawrence has become the cornerstone of critical discussion on Lawrence, I will discuss her views in some detail.

In one example of many like it concerning Sons And Lovers, Millett claims that "Paul Morel is of course Lawrence himself, treated with a self-regarding irony which is often adulation: 'He was solitary and strong and his eyes had a beautiful light,' 'She saw him, slender and firm, as if the setting sun had given him to her. A deep pain took hold of her, and she knew she must love him'--and so forth."¹¹ But in the interest of accuracy, the reader must concede that he does not really know whether or not "Paul Morel is of course Lawrence himself." While it is common knowledge that there are
certain distinct similarities between Lawrence and Paul, such as Lawrence's close and ambivalent relationship with his mother, his conflict with his father, and his unsuccessful relationship with Jessie Chambers, the prototype for Miriam in *Sons And Lovers*, no one really knows how much of himself Lawrence projects onto Paul Morel and how much of Paul is an artistic creation. But even if it were possible to know that Paul Morel is Lawrence, the important thing in interpreting *Sons And Lovers* is what Lawrence is saying about men and women, not that at some point in his life Lawrence himself may have held mistaken assumptions about men and women or even that he may have made inappropriate comments about them. Jessie Chambers, the woman who provided the real-life model for Miriam, became angry about her character as Lawrence represents her in *Sons And Lovers*;¹² Chambers' anger over Lawrence's representation of her character can be seen as an indication that Lawrence consciously chose not to duplicate reality in that novel. But it is not a rule that in creating a character based on a real person an author must represent that character exactly as that person is in life; an author's job is to create verisimilitude in his characters, and thus to present his interpretation of reality, not necessarily to represent reality exactly as it is. Millett's interpretation of Miriam's description of Paul as Lawrence's "self-regarding irony, which is often adulation" does not consider that Miriam is seeing Paul through the eyes of first love; in light of Miriam's feelings for Paul there is nothing particularly extraordinary in her comments and observations about him. In fact, Miriam's description of Paul is typical and conventional, as lovers of both genders are described in like terms in other genres, and Millett acknowledges as much in her denunciation
of Lawrence; Millett states, "It would seem that for reasons of his own, Lawrence has chosen to confuse the sensitive and intelligent young woman who is Jessie Chambers with the tired old lily of another age's literary convention" (254). But "tired old lily" or no, Lawrence represents Miriam's response to Paul in terms that have literary precedent in genres such as medieval romances, which represent the tradition of courtly love, in most kinds of love poetry, such as Petrarchan or Shakespearean sonnets, and in most any eighteenth-century, nineteenth-century, or twentieth-century novel, in which there is a love interest. Oftentimes, lovers of both genders describe the beloved in the same terms Miriam uses to describe Paul. It would appear that in representing Miriam in terms of what Millett describes as "another age's literary convention," Lawrence is decidedly using mimesis in his representation of a real individual, much like Meredith, who represents an actual event within the fictive world of The Tragic Comedians. Also, Millett never quotes those lines or scenes which render ironic Paul's "self-adulation" and reveal his comic limitation. For example, in breaking up with Miriam, Paul tells her that he will not be coming over very often; the narrator states of Paul, "He was telling her he did not love her, and so ought to leave her a chance with another man. How foolish and blind and shamefully clumsy he was! What were other men to her! What were men to her at all! But he, ah! she loved his soul. Was he deficient in something? Perhaps he was."13 If Lawrence has Paul sing his author's praises through Miriam's descriptions of him, as Millett claims he does, how much more does Lawrence undercut those praises with his narrator's commentary on Paul's comic limitation: here Lawrence reveals Paul's inability to
see what is obvious to the reader, and later is obvious to Clara, as well, that Miriam loves only Paul.

In *Women in Love* Millett finds the same anti-feminist bias that she finds in *Sons And Lovers*. Millett's assessment of the novel can be represented in her argument that "*Women in Love* presents us with the new man arrived just in time to give Ursula her comeuppance and demote her back to wifely subjection. It is important to understand how pressing a mission Lawrence conceived this to be, for he came himself upon the errand" (262), and also that "Birkin is full of opinions and ideas and holds forth all through the book while Ursula puts docile leading questions to him. Though she requires some effort to tame, she comes to follow him in apostolic faith" (264). But it is not true that Ursula asks "docile leading questions"; she trivializes all of Birkin's ideas about the stars that she rightly interprets as implicitly legitimizing male dominance. Nor is true that Ursula "comes to follow" Birkin "in apostolic faith"; Birkin comes to follow Ursula in that he is the one who capitulates his political position on all three of the most critical points in his world-view: he finally does admit to Ursula that he loves her, in spite of his railing that the idea is worn out and disgusting to him; he finally does marry Ursula, in spite of his passionate rhetoric about the "repulsive" nature of love; and he finally throws Marxism to the wind and actually buys a chair for the home he practically swore he would never own.

But Millett's indictment of what she views as Lawrence's anti-feminism wins strong approval among many feminist critics. In attempting to prove Millett's assertions about Lawrence's attitude toward women, some critics have made specific correlations between
particular events in Lawrence's life and specific incidents in his novels. There are also other critics who start out apologetically supporting Lawrence, but who finally condemn what they view as his anti-feminism.

One year after Millett's *Sexual politics*, Norman Mailer responds with what can be called a counter-attack in *The Prisoner of Sex*; in his zealous reply to Millett, Mailer is probably most noted for his startling claim that "Lawrence understood women as they had never been understood before, understood them with all the tortured fever of a man who had the soul of a beautiful, imperious, and passionate woman, yet he was locked into the body of a middling male physique, not physically strong, of reasonable good looks, a pleasant to somewhat seedy-looking man, no stud." Mailer's statement is particularly surprising in that he makes it clear in the preceding sentences that Lawrence understood women better than a woman could understand women. Mailer has become as famous in his defense of Lawrence as Millett has become in her indictment of him; those critics who have defended Lawrence against Millett's charges of anti-feminism have generally referred to Norman Mailer's critique of Millett's questionable methods of analyzing Lawrence's fiction.

There are also critics like Laurence Lerner, Mark Kinkead-Weekes, and Peter Balbert, who have perceived what Lawrence's opponents, as well as some of his advocates, have not perceived: that Birkin, the male protagonist of the novel, should not be considered Lawrence's spokesman. Lerner points out that "Critic after critic (including Kate Millett) has told us that Birkin 'is' Lawrence..." ("Lawrence and The Feminists," 85), to which he adds that "the woman's sensible voice interrogate[s] the masculine rhetoric..."
And while Mark Kinkead-Weekes does see Birkin as Lawrence, Weekes also sees the negative side of Birkin and in his conclusion points out, "And in *Women in Love*, Lawrence is able to replace a representative of himself in the fiction, in the person of Birkin, but in a fashion which encourages critical response. He pins down in Birkin his own tendencies to see himself as a saviour of the world, to priggishness, to fruitiness, and pretentiousness of language, to kinds of deathliness and destruction. The effect is distinctly refreshing" ("Eros and Metaphor," 114). Another critic, Peter Balbert, argues "It is my contention, that neglected aspects of *Women in Love* are not only the important strengths of Ursula's character, but also how she is used skillfully by Lawrence to fashion a sustained and effective critique of Birkin's most cherished theories . . . ." , and, "I suspect, unfortunately, we have been softer on Birkin than a discriminating reading of *Women in Love* requires." I would agree with Balbert's "contention" that "neglected aspects of *Women in Love* are, in fact, "the strengths of Ursula's character" and that "she is used skillfully by Lawrence to fashion a sustained and effective critique of Birkin's most cherished theories. My analysis shows that Lawrence creates comic effects to reveal the limitations of his male characters, that Lawrence's method is that he creates rational female protagonists who represent the voice of reason and who speak the truth, as the reader perceives it, and that he reinforces what his females say through his narrator. Thus, my conclusion coincides with Bal bert's "contention" that "we have been softer on Birkin than a discriminating reading of *Women in Love* requires." Mark Kinkead-Weekes, however, objects to paying too close attention to Lawrence's narrator; he maintains that "'D. H.
Lawrence, because he is dramatist, symbolist and narrative ironist, as well as commentator, must never be reduced to the narrator's commentary" ("Eros and Metaphor," 105). I would argue however, that if what the narrator states is true, in terms of what the reader perceives as true, in *Sons And Lovers* and *Women in Love*, and if truth, as the reader perceives it, is the means by which he determines validity, then the reader must take very seriously what the narrator says. I would also point out that in a source external to his fiction Lawrence talks of the importance of the narrator's speaking the truth. And although Harold Bloom's observation that "In the endless war between men and women, Lawrence fights on both sides" seems a positive description of Lawrence's method in *Sons and Lovers* and in *Women in Love*, in that it would preclude charges of Lawrence's anti-feminism, I would further suggest that an analysis of both novels shows that Lawrence does guide the reader to determine which "side" is right.

No other critic has argued as I do, that Lawrence creates comic effects by means of his female characters and his narrators to reveal the limitation of his anti-feminist males. And though Daniel A. Weiss does use the term "comedy" to describe *Sons And Lovers*, he does so in a different context from the one I am using. Weiss views the novel as "a comedy of the Oedipus ". By "comedy" Weiss apparently means that no one dies; he points out that in effect the ending is happy for Paul in that he rejects death, as well as Miriam and Clara, and thus is free to pursue a new life. And in *The Deed Of Life* Julian Moynahan vaguely describes the comic atmosphere that Lawrence creates in *Women in Love* in stating that Birkin, who is "deeply
injured by his experiences with people when the novel opens... needs time to recover health, to work out an adequate theory of relationship, and to train Ursula in the principles of 'star-equilibrium' which will determine the relation. There are elements of comedy implicit in this situation of which Lawrence is perfectly well aware, but the problems both people face are serious enough."21 Also, by means of her heroine, Frederica, another critic and novelist, A. S. Byatt, states in Babel Tower that "we experience Birkin, if not as Lawrence's alter ego, (though he is best when most absurdly insisting on his maleness, for which Lawrence intelligently and complicitly mocks him)--if Birkin is not Lawrence's alter ego, he is the presence of the author of the book."22 But the critic who does come closest to my interpretation of Lawrence is Lydia Blanchard, who sees Lawrence as negatively depicting male domination, as does Harry T. Moore before her.23 Blanchard argues that Lawrence's "work, in fact, is at least in part an attempt to describe the crippling results of male domination, and his descriptions of the economic and social handicaps under which women labor, almost completely ignored in the Millett-Mailer furor, are, quite simply, brilliant"24; she also argues that "although Lawrence is not known for his sense of humor, there is always a touch of the absurd about the more didactic Lawrentian heroes, the ones who argue the desirability of male domination" (439). Blanchard also observes that "Ursula often finds Birkin ridiculous" (439). But there is much more than "a touch of the absurd" about the "Lawrentian heroes" who "argue the desirability of male domination"; it is very important for the reader to see that Ursula's judgments about Birkin are passed on to
the reader by Lawrence's narrator, who confirms her judgments. These
characters, like Paul Morel in *Sons And Lovers* and Birkin in *Women in
Love*, are systematically and consistently ridiculed by Lawrence's
female protagonists, by other female characters, and also by the
narrator, to show that they are wrong.

I use the term "comic" in reference to the amused, empathetic,
or critical laughter that mainly Paul Morel, Birkin, and Ursula,
elicit; I also use the term "comic" in reference to the
predisposition to which the reader is inclined as a result of the
critical distance that Lawrence systematically creates from Paul
Morel and Birkin. After Paul repeats the same old tired, misguided,
and egocentric notions about women as inferior to men, or about their
place in society as something less than that of men, the reader loses
patience with his self-delusions about male dominance and about what
he believes women want. The reader is thus inclined to feel superior
to Paul when he reveals him as selfish or egotistical; thus, Paul
invites the reader's ridicule. Birkin, as well, invites the reader's
ridicule in his stubborn persistence in claiming that his theory of
"star equilibrium" has nothing to do with his desire to dominate
Ursula.

The context in which Lawrence presents Birkin's desire to
dominate Ursula, and Ursula's handling of Birkin's attempt to
dominate her, is of key importance in determining the novel's, and,
by inference, Lawrence's meaning; Lawrence presents Ursula as usually
responding to Birkin with a laugh. Criticism that Lawrence creates
anti-feminist males in *Sons And Lovers* and *Women in Love* to represent
his own call to male dominance and to female submission misses the
point that these males are revealed as self-deceived in their
mistaken assumptions about themselves and about women; Lionel Stevenson criticizing Meredith in *Richard Feverel* for causing Richard to leave his wife for over a year similarly misses the point that Meredith orchestrates situations and events to guide the reader to lose "too much sympathy for Richard" to create a mixed response to him. Similarly, Lawrence orchestrates situations and events so that the reader will see that his males are comically limited in their self-delusions and in their self-deceit, and that they are also the objects of the novels' female protagonists' and some of the other female main characters' ironic observation, just as they are the object of the reader's ironic observation. Thus, the reader must consider the context in which Lawrence presents male dominance in order accurately to assess what he is saying in *Sons And Lovers* and *Women in Love*, rather than the fact that male dominance in relation to the views of the male and female protagonists, is the central issue in both novels. In defending Lawrence against charges of anti-feminism, Blanchard explains the need for keeping a balance between the text and Lawrence's life, stating "Whatever half-crazy ideas Lawrence might have personally entertained at different times during his life, his art always contains a sensible counter-balance" (439). Michael Levenson's observation about *Women in Love* is important, as well, in that it speaks to the polyphony of voices within the novel that the reader must disentangle to arrive at truth and to understand what Lawrence is saying; Levenson points out "*Women in Love*, it should be plain, does not progress through a series of phases or stages; it does not transcend or overcome its contradictions, but presents contradictions alongside resolutions. To make matters more difficult, the two cannot always be distinguished." However, I
would argue that the reader can distinguish what "resolutions" are meant to be taken as correct by discerning whether or not they are true in terms of the reader's perception of what is true; Lawrence makes it possible for his readers to determine who is misguided and who is not and, therefore, to determine what is to be accepted as true and what as false.

A close reading of *Sons And Lovers* and of *Women in Love* reveals many oppositional elements in the text: the seemingly domineering anti-feminism of Paul Morel is opposed to the reader's ironic assessment of Paul's self-assessment. Paul's self-deception about his own superiority and his presumptions about what women want and about their place in society are two of the chief means Lawrence uses to ridicule rather than to glorify him. The reader interprets Paul's self-assessment as ironic because he is evaluating what Paul says about himself in conjunction with Paul's actions and also with the narrator's negative comments about him; Lawrence's method is that he draws the reader's attention to Paul's often pompous and absurd notions about himself and others, and then he undermines Paul's credibility. In Paul's relationship with Miriam, for example, Lawrence guides the reader to see the deficiencies in Paul's thinking about men and women. Reflecting angrily on Miriam while riding his bicycle, Paul nearly collides with an oncoming wagon; the narrator says, "Recklessness is almost a man's revenge on his woman. He feels he is not valued, so he will risk destroying himself to deprive her altogether" (188). The narrator is clearly ridiculing rather than applauding certain male behavior; Lawrence guides the reader to question what sense it makes for a man to kill himself so that "his woman" will never see him again. The reader can hardly fail to see
that the brand of logic Lawrence attributes to Paul recognizes the merits in an individual's "cutting off his nose to spite his face." Later, the reader sees Paul's judgments of himself questioned by Miriam and by the narrator: attempting to tell Miriam that he wishes to leave her, but lacking the "courage" (216) to do so, Paul sits there brooding until Miriam asks, "Why are you sad?" He responds, "I'm not sad; why should I be. I'm only normal" (216). The narrator says that Miriam "wondered why he always claimed to be normal when he was disagreeable" (216). Subtly, the narrator makes the reader aware that for Paul to be disagreeable is to be normal; Lawrence guides the reader to respond to Paul's tendency to rationalize his behavior, rather than to tell Miriam the truth.

Another example of the way the narrator pokes fun at Paul is in his presentation of the scene where Paul tells his mother that he is going to break off his relationship with Miriam. After saying, "On Sunday I break off," all the while smelling a pink (286), we are told, "He put the flower in his mouth. Unthinking, he bared his teeth, closed them on the blossom slowly, and had a mouthful of petals. These he spat into the fire, kissed his mother, and went to bed" (286). There is something patently absurd in Paul's action; Lawrence must have known that having Paul bite off a "mouthful of petals" and then continue in his activities as if he had done nothing out of the ordinary would startle the reader because it is such an odd thing to do. A few critics have pointed out the significance of flower imagery in Lawrence, and Frieda Lawrence, as well, has acknowledged the importance of flowers to Lawrence.26 Paul's out of the ordinary action of biting off a blossom and consequently having to spit a mouthful of petals into the fire is presented in the same
sequence with his other quite ordinary activities of kissing his mother goodnight and going to bed; there is an obvious incongruity in these actions. While there is no apparent connection between Paul's biting off flower petals and then kissing his mother goodnight, his action is destructive: in representing Paul as engaging in this "unthinking" action, which immediately follows his statement that he is leaving Miriam, Lawrence directs the reader's attention to Miriam and to Paul's decision to leave her; the reader is led to consider the extent to which Paul is responsible for the failure, for the destruction of their relationship. As the novel progresses, Lawrence guides the reader to see that Paul is, in fact, responsible for the relationship's failure.

The reader sees, as well, that Paul is capable of simplistic, silly, and inaccurate assessments about male-female behavior; Paul's mistaken assumptions about men and women reveal him as another egoist, like those of Meredith. Very much like Meredith's supreme egoist, Willoughby Patterne, whose self-centeredness precludes his ability to have a serious relationship with either Letitia or Caroline, Paul is also unable to have serious relationships. Lawrence shows that Paul's thinking and his consequent behavior create problems in his relationship with Miriam that result in the relationship's failure. For example, after telling Miriam that he will no longer stop by to see her because he does not want to marry her, he asks: "And you won't think about it, and let it trouble you, will you?" After Miriam calmly says, "Oh, no" (221), Paul adds, "Because a man gets across his bicycle--and goes to work--and does all sorts of things. But a woman broods" (221). But Miriam merely responds: "No, I shan't bother." The narrator emphasizes the truth
in Miriam's response in informing us, "And she meant it" (221). The reader is aware not only of the inaccuracy of the polarity Paul sets up between the behavior of men and women, but the irony of this statement is so poignant and elicits a comic response to Paul because time after time the reader has seen Paul brooding. Lawrence reveals Paul's comic limitation in presenting him as imperceptive because his thinking is based on stereotypes. In fact, at the end of the novel Lawrence presents Clara and Miriam as concluding that Paul is unstable. The narrator reveals Clara's thoughts about Paul as she compares him to her husband; the narrator states, "Watching him unknown, she said to herself there was no stability about him . . . . There was nothing stable about him. Her husband had more manly dignity. At any rate he did not waft about with any wind. There was something evanescent about Morel, she thought, something shifting and false" (393). In representing Clara's thoughts about Paul, Lawrence creates another voice in the novel that can be analyzed in terms of Bakhtin's theory of polyphony; Clara's thoughts about Paul demand attention because they affirm what the reader has already concluded about Paul. And at the end of the novel when Paul leaves Miriam, the narrator also reveals her thoughts about Paul's "instability"; he states, "Suddenly she saw again his lack of religion, his restless instability. He would destroy himself like a perverse child. Well, then, he would" (404). Lawrence creates an additional background voice in his representation of Miriam; in creating other textual voices that challenge Paul's voice, Lawrence creates a polyphony of voices in the manner proposed by Bakhtin to represent views about Paul's relationships with Miriam and Clara that are opposite to Paul's views. Thus, Lawrence makes it the reader's job to discern
Paul's comic limitation in *Sons And Lovers*, as well as in *Women in Love*. Lawrence uses other voices to present in Lerner's words "the total situation."

By means of his narrator Lawrence guides the reader to concur with Clara and Miriam that Paul really is unstable. The narrator in *Sons And Lovers* is third person, omniscient, and reliable. In *The Rhetoric of Fiction* Wayne Booth explains the omniscient reliable narrator stating: "I have called a narrator 'reliable' when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not." The "norms of the work" represent Paul as self-deceived and arrogant, as constantly misjudging what Miriam wants, as well as constantly blaming her for his own inadequacies, and also as someone who does not know himself; thus, in continually emphasizing Paul's limitations, Lawrence's narrator clearly upholds the established patterns of the novel. In explaining the omniscient narrator, Booth states: "Complete privilege is what we usually call omniscience. But there are many kinds of privilege, and very few 'omniscient' narrators are allowed to know or show as much as their authors know" (160). But whether or not Lawrence's narrator in *Sons And Lovers* knows what Lawrence knows, it is always clear that he knows what characters think, as well as why they think it; he also knows when, if ever, they will come to understand the reason why they think as they do. What information Lawrence's narrator does convey to the reader is often "inside" information, and it is always accurate; in other words, the narrator always enlightens the reader. Booth also discusses the devices an author uses to make certain that what he or she perceives as truth is also perceived as such by the reader; he
points out "Whenever the demands of concision or clarity or dramatic irony of the most emphatic kind are more important than making the story seem to be telling itself, or giving an air of the puzzling ambiguities of life, the author will seek those devices which can maintain facts as facts and reliable judgments as reliable judgment" (176).

In *Sons And Lovers* Lawrence does "seek those devices which can maintain facts as facts and reliable judgments as reliable judgment"; those devices that Lawrence uses are his narrator and the voices of most of the other characters in the novel, such as Miriam, Clara, and Mrs. Radford. Lawrence takes care to guide the reader to a negative view of Paul; to make certain that the reader does not conclude that Paul's views are meant to be interpreted as correct, as some critics have mistakenly misinterpreted them, Lawrence corroborates what we have already come to believe about Paul by means of his narrator. Thus, what the narrator knows about Paul, or, at the very least, a great deal of critical information that the narrator knows about Paul, he relays to the reader. Oftentimes, after Paul has given the reader some long winded and rather unbalanced assessment of the problems with Miriam and Clara, the narrator subtly emerges and in perhaps three or four words confirms the reader's suspicions about Paul's inability accurately to assess himself and those problems he creates in his relationship with Miriam; that is, the narrator confirms the reader's judgment that Paul is wrong about women, about their place in society, and about himself because he is self-deceived about his own stature and abilities as a man. For example, in spite of Paul's claims that Miriam is simply frigid because she is too spiritual, Lawrence guides the reader to see that the greatest part
of Miriam's problem is really Paul's egoism, his concern only for his own self-fulfillment; by means of his narrator, Lawrence guides the reader to hold Paul responsible for the failure of their physical, as well as their emotional relationship. Paul's self-deception about his own prowess and about his knowledge of the situation is comic in terms of Castelvetro's theory of comedy, which proposes that deception by others, as well as by the individual himself is comic. And Paul is also comic because he trivializes his stature in determining to prove himself right by means of an invalid argument. Lawrence reveals that Paul is such a poor judge of himself that he cannot be taken as an accurate judge of other people; Paul's egoism and his inability to see his own failings and his determination to find fault with others, but never with himself, in effect results in his having two sets of standards of behavior, one by which he judges himself and another by which he judges others, like Miriam. In fact, it is often the case toward the end of the novel, after Paul whines for the umpteenth time about Miriam's ethereal nature, that the reader becomes highly frustrated with him, rather than sympathetic toward him; in systematically guiding the reader to feel frustrated and annoyed with what is in effect Paul's childish behavior and also with his hypocrisy, Lawrence predisposes the reader to lose patience with Paul and, thus, to mock him. Paul's hypocrisy, which results from his human frailty, can be explained in terms of Hoy's theory of comedy, which accounts for a man's behavior in terms of his flawed human nature. Paul's comic limitation, is here manifested in his capacity to foist onto Miriam all of his own uncertainties, hesitancies, and inadequacies; thus, Paul undercuts the validity of his own views and also reveals his limitation. The interjection of
the narrator, who corroborates the reader's judgments, further limits his reliability. Lawrence does guide the reader to see that Paul has never been the patient or understanding lover, that he has never assured Miriam that he really loves her, that he has never done anything to ease her quite natural anxieties about sex, which are largely due to her mother's treatment of the subject. Lawrence also reveals that Miriam's anxieties about Paul's mother, who sees Miriam as a rival, are justified. Like Miriam, the reader is aware that Paul's mother does claim the greatest share of her son's affections. Thus, in revealing Paul's attitude and behavior toward Miriam and his attachment to his mother, Lawrence guides the reader to see that it would be nearly impossible for Miriam or for anyone to sustain a lasting relationship with Paul.

As another example of Paul's self-centeredness, the narrator tells the reader that Miriam "wanted him to look at her with eyes full of love. His eyes, full of the dark, impersonal fire of desire, did not belong to her" (277). Here, by means of his narrator, Lawrence reveals Paul's blindness in a situation that is clear to the reader: Miriam's unhappiness mainly results from her nagging suspicion that Paul is not as committed to her as she is to him, and from the fact that he is unwilling or perhaps is unable to understand her. Lerner makes that very point in arguing "That Miriam is not morbidly spiritual but an intense and perfectly normal young woman who is in love with Paul, seems to be the clearest interpretation of the story, and it is confirmed by Paul's conversation with Clara, the woman who does awaken him sexually . . . ." Paul's one-sided and often childish and inaccurate rendering of Miriam is not meant to be
taken as the novel's, and, thus, as Lawrence's ultimate statement about women as they relate to men.

The narrator also makes it clear that Miriam is the more perceptive and rational of the two in that he pokes fun at Paul's lack of perception and childish complaint that Miriam should constantly enlighten him about those things he does not perceive. For example, when Paul finally leaves Miriam for Clara, Miriam says: "Always--it has always been so! It has been one long battle between us--you fighting away from me" (287). The narrator informs the reader of Paul's thoughts in response to Miriam's outburst: "Then it had been monstrous. There had never been anything really between them. . . . She had known so much, and had told him so little. She had really played with him and not he with her" (289). But the reader is not fooled by Paul's childish rationalization for leaving Miriam: that because Miriam knows Paul better than he knows himself, she is somehow to blame; Lawrence shows that Paul grasps what he sees as the opportune moment to excuse his behavior toward Miriam by taking comfort in the rationalization that "she really treated me unjustly in the first place, and since I am the injured party, whatever I do in response is o.k." It is important to look at what such a contradictory position says about the person saying it. Paul is afraid of being smothered and dominated by Miriam, and is also angry with Miriam because she does not dominate and smother him; Paul's blaming Miriam for his own failures points to his instability, which is the main complaint that Miriam, tired of his indecisiveness, lodges against him, and which Clara, as well, will eventually come to lodge against him. And while contradiction is not necessarily ironic, it can set up a condition for irony, as it does in relation
to Paul. For whatever Paul decides he needs from a woman, it will necessarily and conveniently contradict at least one of these oppositions he has set up; that is, it is not possible for any woman to dominate and to smother Paul while at the same time not doing either thing. At the very least, then, doubt is cast on Paul's ability to think clearly, which, in turn, makes us question the reliability of his judgments. Lawrence presents Paul as contradictory in his thinking to call into question the logic of Paul's assessment of women. Also, in representing his narrator as telling the reader that Paul concludes of Miriam, "She had played with him and not he with her," Lawrence subtly plants the idea in the reader's mind that Paul has a guilty conscience. That is, the narrator represents Paul as seemingly relieved to take comfort in his rationalization that Miriam had been deceiving him, by which self-delusion Paul is able to assuage his guilty conscience for leaving Miriam because Paul knows, as Miriam and the reader know, that he is sexually aroused by Clara Dawes. Thus, Lawrence elicits a comic response to Paul in terms of Castelvetro's theory of comedy, as the reader mocks him for his self-deluded and transparent rationalization for his behavior toward Miriam. The reader's comic response toward Paul entails his criticism of him for in effect using Miriam as a scapegoat; Paul thereby trivializes his stature in the reader's eyes and elicits his criticism, as well as his scorn. It does not seem logical to conclude, as Lawrence's opponents have concluded, that Lawrence intends that the reader have a high regard for Paul, toward whom the reader's response alternates between ridicule and frustration.
In Paul's behavior toward Clara, as in his behavior toward Miriam, Lawrence presents him as self-deluded and selfish; Paul's actions in relation to both women can be analyzed in terms of Castelvetro's theory of comedy. Lawrence reinforces the reader's impressions of him as childish in his thinking and as unreliable in his judgments about women. There is almost no instance when Paul interacts with Clara that he is not portrayed as silly and impetuous, as one whose judgment is not to be trusted. There are five particularly striking instances of Paul's interaction with Clara in which Lawrence creates comic effects to reveal a deficiency in his character that prevents him from being taken seriously. The first example concerns Paul's discussion with Clara on her separation from her husband. Paul asks, "And you don't miss anything in your life?" (228), to which Clara responds, "I've put all that behind me"; Paul answers, "You'll find you're always tumbling over the things you've put behind you" (228). The narrator says: "He felt he had been witty, and his manly pride was high. He whistled as he went down the brick track" (228). It is important that the reader observe Lawrence's subtlety here in that his narrator does not say that Paul really was "witty," only that he "felt he had been." The narrator's further comment that Paul's "manly pride was high," not only calls attention to the fact that Paul feels "manly," but makes us question what "manly" means in this context and whether or not Paul really was "manly," as he went whistling "down the brick track." But Lawrence guides the reader to see that although Paul "felt he had been witty," he is not, especially since Paul does not give Clara any reason why she is wrong. Thus, by having his narrator detach himself from Paul's supposed witticism, yet simultaneously portraying a pompous
young man full of himself, full of "manly pride," Lawrence at once pokes fun at Paul's anti-feminism and renders it ironic.

The comical portrayal of Paul as the lover ignored offers two other illustrations of the way Lawrence creates comic effects to reveal further Paul's limitation. When one day at work Paul offers Clara chocolates, she accepts them rather hesitatingly but does not eat them because she is angry with him. The next day when Paul finds these uneaten chocolates on Clara's bench, we are told "He gathered them together in his fist. 'They'll be dirty now,' he said (260). And with that, "He flung them out of the window into the yard below" (261). While this action alone does not define Paul's character, the reader views Paul's behavior as highly dramatic, petty, and excessive, since Clara could have thrown her own chocolates in the trash if they had, in fact, been dirty. But the reader is led to wonder why the chocolates should be dirty, and even if they were, why Paul should take it upon himself to throw them out of the window. Paul's behavior reveals that he is petulant and nasty when he feels he has been provoked; Paul's action also surprises the reader because it is such an odd thing to do, much like his putting a pink in his mouth and having "a mouthful of petals" surprises the reader because it is such an odd thing to do. By means of his narrator, Lawrence describes the scene to guide the reader to see Paul as childish and domineering when things do not go exactly as he expects they should; when things do not come as he would like them to, Paul's "manly pride" suffers and he becomes petulant. Thus, Paul's response is comic because in its extremity it is out of proportion to what the situation warrants: what Paul sees as a problem is not really a problem at all. Another reason the situation is comic is because
Paul's action surprises the reader, who is not expecting Paul to throw Clara's chocolates out of the window.

Not long after the chocolates incident, Lawrence again undermines Paul's bravado in the way he presents Paul, who leads the way to a suitable place for Clara and him to consummate their relationship. By means of his narrator, Lawrence contrasts Paul's behavior to Clara's; the narrator says "Away he went, slipping, staggering, sliding to the next tree, into which he fell with a slam that nearly shook the breath out of him. She came after cautiously, hanging onto the twigs and grasses" (300). The juxtaposition of Paul as the youth whose lust impedes his ability to watch where he is going, to the extent that he slams into a tree and nearly loses his breath, with Clara, who can manage carefully to plot her way and even to maintain her balance at the same time, creates an impression of Paul as impetuous and a bit foolish. The narrator sharply contrasts Clara, who is cautious and in control, to Paul, who is clumsy and out of control, to emphasize the degree to which Paul's lust impedes his ability to maintain control of himself; the narrator's portrait of Paul as inept because he is sexually aroused trivializes his stature as an adult in that it lessens his dignity. Thus, Lawrence elicits a comic response to Paul that can be analyzed in terms of Castelvetro's conception of the comic: Paul is revealed as self-deceived in his belief that he is in control of things.

Shortly after his tryst with Clara, Paul is one day waiting for her train to arrive. The narrator comically portrays Paul's contradictory emotions, his unreasonable expectations and consequently erroneous conclusions, and his double standards, as he impatiently waits for Clara's delayed train. The narrator states of
Paul, "He hated her for not coming. Why had she promised, then, if she could not keep her promise? Perhaps she had missed her train--he himself was always missing trains--but that was no reason why she should miss this particular one. He was angry with her; he was furious" (309). But Lawrence does not let Clara miss her train; it is simply late. The narrator shows that Paul, who should be the very one to understand that Clara might have missed her train, as he himself "was always missing trains," is unreasonable in his expectation that she not miss it; the reader has a comic response to Paul's hypocrisy. But in orchestrating events so that Clara does not miss her train, Lawrence guides the reader to see that Paul has jumped to the wrong conclusion because of the way he thinks. Lawrence again reveals Paul as operating under one set of standards and as subjecting others to another set of standards. Also, Paul's responding angrily because he feels slighted that Clara might not come is another way that Lawrence reveals Paul's propensity to put his needs before those of others, which is expressed in his capacity for self-centered behavior; that is, Paul is never concerned that something might have happened to Clara to prevent her from catching her train. Paul's inability, or, perhaps, his unwillingness, to perceive Clara's tardiness as anything other than a personal affront to himself can be analyzed in terms of Hoy's theory of comedy, as Paul's tendency first to consider his own self-interest results from his inherent human weakness. Initially, at least, an individual is usually concerned that something might have happened to prevent his party from arriving at the agreed upon time and destination, rather than angry that he has not arrived.
My final example of Paul’s interaction with Clara in which Lawrence creates comic effects to reveal Paul’s limitation is the scene in which Paul makes it plain to Clara that their personal relationship must remain separate from their business relationship. After being involved with Clara for a short time and eventually getting her a job in the factory where she becomes his subordinate, Paul becomes uncomfortable with the way their personal relationship affects their business relationship. One day at work Paul irritably snaps at Clara: "But what do you always want to be kissing and embracing for? Surely there’s a time for everything" (344). When Clara, apparently mockingly, asks what this time is and if it can be rigidly regulated "according to Mr. Jordan’s closing time," Paul is certain that it can be. In response to Clara’s question, "Is it only to exist in spare time?", Paul assures her, "That’s all—and not always then—not the kissing sort of love" (344). While it is especially appropriate that demonstrations of love be kept out of the workplace, and while it initially sounds as if Paul represents the right point of view, the reader is aware that there is something wrong with his argument. And unlike Paul, the reader is also aware that Clara is mocking him. Although Paul’s argument that love must be kept out of the workplace seems right, he misses the larger point of Clara’s implication and thus mistakenly trumpets the misconception that an individual can strictly regulate his feelings. The reader, however, knows that an individual’s feelings about everything are always present, though they may not be expressed at particular times. But, then, the reader is also aware that it is not really love that motivates Paul’s feelings for Clara because he does not love her; it is sex. The reader is aware, as well, that Paul has proven himself
eager enough to engage in "the kissing sort of love" in his "spare time." Lawrence manipulates this scene to remind the reader of Paul's shallow motives for his relationship with Clara and to reveal Paul's naive belief that he can regulate his feelings according to the convenience of "Mr. Jordan's clock." In presenting Paul's motives for his relationship with Clara, and his belief that he can control his emotions to effect a separation between the person he is at work and the person he is at leisure, in conjunction with the serious and authoritative tone Paul adopts in declaring what the reader knows is nonsense, Lawrence creates a comic effect; Lawrence elicits the reader's critical laughter toward Paul in revealing his capacity to deceive himself about his ability to control everything; Paul's propensity for self-deception creates comic effects in the manner proposed by Castelvetro.

Another way that Lawrence creates a comic response to Paul is through Mrs. Radford, Clara's mother, who provides a balance to Paul's anti-feminism; Mrs. Radford represents still another polyphonic voice in the text in the manner proposed by Bakhtin. Mrs. Radford responds to Clara, "Now, then, you shut up about the men. If the women wasn't fools, the men wouldn't be bad uns, that's what I say. No man was ever that bad wi' me but that he got it back again. Not but what they're a lousy lot, there's no denying it" (255). When Paul persists with, "Well, they're all right, aren't they?" She responds, "Well, they're a bit different from women" (255). Mrs. Radford's position restores a balance or counterpoint to Paul's views of male dominance in that she focuses on the negative side of men, who, she implies, must be managed by women. Although Mrs. Radford does not present a highly convincing feminist argument, since few
feminists blame women for men's behavior toward them, her comment that men are a "lousy lot," and Paul's weak objection posed in the form of the question, "Well, they're all right, aren't they?", focuses our attention on Paul, as a man. By means of Mrs. Radford, Lawrence reminds the reader of Paul's self-delusions about the importance of his own ideas, as well as about his misguided, though self-assured belief that he really understands women and what they want. Although Mrs. Radford is not a "main" character and represents a background voice, the reader hears it as separate and distinct from those of Clara and of Paul and discerns that she represents a correction to him. Thus, Mrs. Radford's position, that the plight of women results from their poor handling of men, is contradictory to that of her daughter, who complains about the "trick the men have played, since we force ourselves into the labour market" (225). Mrs. Radford implies women's dominance. In juxtaposing Mrs. Radford's position, which implies women's dominance, to Paul's position, which assumes male dominance, Lawrence creates a balance through a seemingly minor background voice. And while Mrs. Radford's implication that women should dominate men is not the right point of view, just as her statement that men are "a lousy lot, there's no denying it" is not generally the right point of view, her colorful prose and folksy manner, which leaves Paul without a response, much less a valid argument, creates a comic effect and restores balance to his rhetoric. The reader, who is also aware that Mrs. Radford's sweeping generalization about men being "lousy" necessarily includes Paul, applauds her tactic and is amused by it.

The broader implications of my reading of *Sons And Lovers* focus on Lawrence's treatment of relationships between men and women, and
on the way conventional ideas about men and women impede that relationship. In observing and in understanding the comic effects Lawrence creates in Sons And Lovers, the reader gains an accurate perspective on what Lawrence is saying about the ways men and women relate to each other. In considering the comic light in which Lawrence represents Paul in the novel, the reader can distinguish between Paul's mistaken perspective on women, and the novel's perspective, and, by inference, Lawrence's perspective on women. For if the test for validity of what a character tells us is whether or not what he is saying is true in terms of what the reader understands to be true, certainly, Lawrence, as well as everyone else, must have been able to see that his own character, Paul, is arrogant and self-deceived in his thinking about women and in his ideas about women's place in society. Although critics have consistently pointed out that much of what Paul says makes no sense, they have not detected that Lawrence guides the reader to conclude that Paul is not a hero precisely because his arrogance and self-deception about himself and about women result in conclusions that make no sense. It would probably be impossible for an author to create a character like Paul Morel, whose limitations are so blatantly and consistently revealed by two such distinct narrative devices, female characters and the narrator, and to be unaware of what he was doing. Thus, that Lawrence guides the reader comically to respond to Paul's propensity to interpret reality to further his own self-interest, which throughout the novel exposes itself in his capacity for self-deception, would indicate that Lawrence himself does see the folly in Paul's outlook and does expect the reader to see it, as well, and to respond to it. In Sons and Lovers, as well as in Women in Love,
Lawrence shows that things are not as simple as an individual like Paul Morel claims they are; just as Paul takes things as he uncritically assumes they must be, so, too, do critics go astray when they rely only upon Paul's obviously faulty judgments of women and of the way he thinks things are for verification of what Lawrence "really" means in *Sons And Lovers*.

Rather than glorifying Paul, Lawrence guides the reader to sympathize with Miriam in revealing Paul's comic limitation; that is, Lawrence guides the reader to see that Miriam's real problem is that she is troubled by her increasing suspicion, which proves to be right, that her feelings for Paul are not returned. But Paul is blinded to what is obvious to the reader, that he does love Miriam, though because of his own inner conflicts he is unable to commit to her and comes to focus only on the failure of the physical aspect of their relationship; thus, that Paul is unable or, perhaps, unwilling to focus on any aspect of his relationship with Miriam other than the physical aspect of it, reveals his own personal conflict between the spirit and the flesh that Hoy explains as the basis of comic behavior. Lawrence also creates sympathy for Miriam in representing the frustration Miriam feels, which results from her ardent desire to go out into the world and to be free to choose whatever she would like to do, as a man is free to do, and also from society's precluding her freedom to make that choice. Though Paul talks of women doing whatever they want and escaping societal oppression, he repeats time and again conventional ideas about men and women. Listening to the narrator, the reader observes that he undermines and contradicts what Paul says; the reader sees, as well, that Miriam and Clara often throw into question what Paul says.
Lawrence guides the reader to question Paul's assertions; oftentimes the reader's response to Paul's assessment of women is that what he is saying is not true. And while Lawrence does help to guide the reader's response by means of his narrator, in many cases the narrator's undermining what Paul says affirms what the reader already thinks, knows, or suspects about Paul because of what the reader knows about the subject; that is, in many cases the narrator's comments are not revelatory, but confirm what the reader, and, by inference, the author already know. Thus, the reader can almost hear the narrator, who on various occasions calls Paul a fool, foolish, or ridiculous, responding to Lawrence's critics, who argue that Paul is selfish, egotistical, and often anti-feminist, with "Yes, he is. Don't listen to him; he represents a fool and the reader is meant to see that he does."

One of the key things Paul should learn, and the reader does know, is that allowing for one's individuality, rather than having expectations based on stereotypical behavior, is a key to a successful relationship. But allowing for another's individuality can often lead to clashes, as Paul and Miriam and later Paul and Clara demonstrate in _Sons And Lovers_; Birkin and Ursula also demonstrate that idea in _Women in Love_. Paul's comfortable conventional assumptions about what Miriam, Clara, or women in general want or need, are nearly always shown to be inaccurate, with the end result that his relationships are never successful. Time and again we see that Paul does most everything he attributes to women in general and of which he accuses Miriam in particular: he is the one who openly broods; he is the one who remains elusive; he is the one who cannot confront the problem in their relationship. Although Paul
accuses Miriam of wanting to smother him, he is the one who wants to control every aspect of the relationship, and he is not happy unless he does. In having Paul behave the way he accuses Miriam of behaving, Lawrence undermines Paul's supposed knowledge about women and his repeated claims that he knows what they want, both of which point to the inaccuracy of an individual's assuming that a person's limitations result solely from gender. In fact, Lawrence makes it clear that an individual is often disappointed if his expectations are based on stereotypical behavior. The reader is especially aware of the fallacy of gender-based limitation in this day when the reversal of what have been traditionally considered male/female roles has become commonplace.

The comic effects Lawrence creates through his narrators that help to undermine Paul's anti-feminism are subtly created, as opposed to the comic effects Meredith creates through his narrators; Meredith has been constantly lambasted for creating narrators who refuse to stay out of the story, and up until now no one has seen that he creates comic effects by means of his narrators, who guide the reader to a particular response. But there are similarities in Lawrence's and in Meredith's comic methods. Joseph Warren Beach draws an interesting comparison between the two authors, stating, "It is perhaps of Meredith that Lawrence most reminds one in the technical handling of his material." However, Beach follows mainstream criticism of Lawrence in claiming that he "has little irony and no humor" (369). Lawrence's method of handling his narrator is like Meredith's in that Lawrence manipulates his narrator to point out Paul's comic limitation; Lawrence also manipulates Paul to behave in ways that guide the reader to a comic response to that deficiency
within his character that prevents him from attaining a full and satisfying relationship with Miriam. Thus, by means of his narrator and by revealing that Paul's behavior results from his self-delusions, Lawrence utilizes comedy as a "cleanser" in the manner proposed by Meredith in his Essay On Comedy; Lawrence is also like Meredith in that he represents the self-deceived and/or hypocritical individual as comic. Another way Lawrence is like Meredith in his comic method is that he creates male protagonists who are egoists. Although the similarities between Meredith's Sir Willoughby of The Egoist and Lawrence's Paul Morel of Sons And Lovers might not be immediately apparent, they are really rather striking. Both these males are egotistical, and both authors have their narrators point to the comic limitation of these characters; Paul, like Birkin in Women in Love and Sir Willoughby in The Egoist, mainly manifests his comic limitation in his capacity for self-deceit. Also, neither Paul, nor Birkin, nor Sir Willoughby, is able to see himself in the true light in which others clearly see him, a situation that increases the comic potential of all three characters, as Meredith points out. At the end of The Egoist, however, Willoughby does come to understand his error, and Meredith guides the reader to feel that Laetitia will eventually be able to bring him to a full understanding of the error of his ways. My discussion of Ford's The Good Soldier shows to what extreme the comic potential in such a situation can be taken, when a character's blindness to his own shortcomings and consequent inaccurate assessment of things block the flow of sympathy for his plight. But while Lawrence is like Meredith in his use of the comic as a "cleanser" for civilization, he is unlike Meredith in that he does not openly claim, as Meredith openly claims in his Essay On
Comedy, to achieve his ends through a didactic use of the comic. The reader becomes aware, however, that although Lawrence is not read best as a polemical writer, he is like Meredith in that he often uses comic elements to reveal a character's self-deceit; Paul's self-deceit results in his erroneous conclusions about women. Such a similarity between two writers, so different in most respects, may not be completely surprising when the reader considers that Lawrence had read Meredith and refers to him in *Women in Love*.³⁰

The tendency to equate Birkin in *Women in Love* with Lawrence is the same one apparent in attempts to equate Paul Morel with Lawrence; by means of equating Birkin with Lawrence, some critics make personal claims against Lawrence through his work. As in *Sons And Lovers*, the polyphony of background voices in *Women in Love* competes with the voices of Lawrence's male protagonist, Birkin, and with his other male main character, Gerald, and contradicts them; again, as in *Sons And Lovers*, the reader must contend with these voices by discerning what is true, what is not true in terms of the reader's understanding of truth, whose voice it is that speaks the truth, and whose voice it is that does not speak the truth. In discussing Lawrence's use of background voices, Avrom Fleishman argues that Giovanni Verga had a strong influence upon Lawrence; after stating of Lawrence "it is well known that he read and translated most of Verga's novels in 1922 and finished in 1927,"³¹ he argues "It is my larger contention that Lawrence is a grand master of the oral, dialectical, parodic, and polyglot manner that Bakhtin has established for Dostoevsky and that Lawrence creates in normal English diction an equivalent of the narrational heteroglossia distinguishing encyclopedic authors from
Rabelais to Pyncheon" (169). In responding to Fleishman, Booth reaches the same conclusion as Fleishman about Lawrence's "later style," which he characterizes as that pertaining to the novels of the 1920s, but Booth also explains "I don't question Fleishman's thesis that Lawrence became more dialogical after his Italian experience. But I do want to claim that Lawrence was skillful with 'double-voiced' narration in the earlier works as well", and that "much of my initial distress in reading The Rainbow and Women in Love came from my failure to recognize just how often his characters are not simple spokesmen for his views." In his conclusion about Lawrence's "later works," Booth bears out my own position. Booth's initial "failure to recognize" such voices in these novels, might explain, as well, the same "initial distress" that many other critics apparently feel when they interpret Lawrence's male protagonists as "simple spokesmen for his views."

That these narrative voices do exist in Women in Love, as well as in Sons And Lovers, however, is clear. The multiplicity of voices as proposed by Bakhtin in Women in Love is more overt than it is in Sons And Lovers in that these voices reside within the foreground in Women in Love, rather than the background, as in Sons And Lovers. That is, in Sons And Lovers Lawrence frequently relies on the reader's perceptiveness to see that Paul's judgments are rarely accurate, and to look critically at Paul's self-assessments and to detect the irony in them; Lawrence also relies on the reader's ability to detect that the narrator provides many clues to help guide his response to Paul. But in Women in Love, Lawrence is often more openly and obviously critical of Birkin's anti-feminism, in that he
has Ursula, the female protagonist, most often act as a counterpoint to nearly everything Birkin says. Lawrence represents Ursula as continually responding to Birkin to guide the reader to see his self-deception, the chief means through which his comic limitation, like Paul Morel's comic limitation, manifests itself. Lawrence also creates a narrator who sides with Ursula and who is highly vocal about what is true and about who is right. By means of his narrator in *Women in Love*, Lawrence often states outright what he thinks of Birkin, as Lawrence does of Paul in *Sons And Lovers*. But, as I pointed out in discussing *Sons And Lovers*, even if Lawrence was himself anti-feminist, and critics have pointed to various instances in Lawrence's own life that represent his ambivalent, if not, at times, his negative feelings toward women, he does not have to write an anti-feminist novel.

However much of himself Lawrence does or does not project onto Birkin, he does discredit what Birkin says by means of his narrator, who diagnoses Birkin as misanthropic early in the novel; calling Birkin misanthropic rather than misogynistic universalizes Birkin's dislike rather than particularizes it. The narrator states of Birkin "His dislike of mankind, of the mass of mankind, amounted almost to an illness." \(^{33}\) It is important that the reader see that Lawrence's tactic is that he throws into question nearly all of what Birkin, who claims to hate all people, says about women. Less than one third of the way through the novel, the narrator makes a funny though rather startling comment about Birkin, who having just lain naked with the vegetation in the manner of Walt Whitman, gets caught in the rain without his hat. We are told "It was raining and he had no hat. But then plenty of cranks went out nowadays without hats in the rain"
Immediately the reader is made to recall the narrator's remark that Birkin is a misanthrope, as he is told "What a dread he had of mankind, of other people! It almost amounted to a horror... his horror of being observed by some other people" (166). The narrator's juxtaposition of calling Birkin a "crank" with his telling us that he hated mankind associates these two ideas, though it does not blatantly represent a cause and effect relationship. But in placing side by side the ideas that Birkin is a "crank" and that he hates people, Lawrence guides the reader to question Birkin's thinking process and thus limits his credibility by undermining the validity of what Birkin says about women.

Armed with such a description of Birkin, the reader next sees him as the object of Ursula's laughter; the reader is aware that although what Birkin says is funny, and that he apparently intends to elicit a comic response from Ursula, Lawrence guides the reader to see that Ursula laughs at Birkin, as well as at what he says. Using a flower metaphor, Ursula points out that it would be so nice "to do nothing but just be oneself, like a walking flower," to which Birkin responds in great detail about his own flower. He says: "I quite agree, if one has to burst into blossom. But I can't get my flower into blossom anyhow. Either it is blighted in the bud, or has got the smother-fly, or it isn't nourished. Curse it, it isn't even a bud. It's a contravened knot" (188). Of Ursula's reaction we are told: "Again she laughed" (186); the reader laughs with her at Birkin's double entendre. For not only are the sexual undertones in Birkin's speech quite apparent, but he extends the metaphor so far that he destroys it. The reader also feels that Ursula is laughing at Birkin's self-diagnosis and that she is startled, as the reader is
startled, at his oddly taking the opportunity offered by her discussion on nature as represented in a flower, to allude to the intimate nature of what Birkin regards as his problem. Later, the reader sees Birkin philosophizing, as he does throughout the novel, and again he sees Ursula laugh at him when he expresses his views on one's will, a discussion which in the beginning centers around Gerald's need to exert his will over his horse, and at the end centers around men's need to exert their wills over women.

Gerald says that "woman is the same as horses: two wills act in opposition inside her," and that with one will she wants to "subject herself utterly," and with the other "she wants to bolt, and pitch her rider to perdition" (202). Ursula, "with a burst of laughter" responds, "Then I'm a bolter" (202). Ursula's response dismisses Gerald's theories of male dominance and of why women want and need it. It is important that the reader see that to laugh in response to an argument that is seriously presented takes a lot of self-confidence in that it implies a dismissal of the subject. Ursula's laughter implies that a verbal response is not worth her time and effort; the reader agrees that Gerald's argument is not worth either thing. Ursula also laughs at Birkin, who next enlightens the group with, "It's a dangerous thing to domesticate even horses, let alone women" (202). The reader might question why Birkin's comment might be approached as anything other than a joke, and why though what he says is funny and witty, it is more than a comical quip. The reader realizes that Gerald is quite serious when he speaks of the dual desire within women to be at once rebellious and submissive, since the reader has already observed Gerald's cruelty: Lawrence reveals Gerald's cruelty in the enjoyment he takes in terrorizing his horse
into submission, and will later reveal it in the enjoyment Gerald takes in subduing his sister's rabbit. Thus, Lawrence guides the reader to wonder whether Birkin is playfully or seriously responding to Gerald. Birkin's response recalls Booth, who, in discussing *Women in Love* points out, "Again and again Lawrence simply surrenders the telling of the story to another mind, a mind neither clearly approved nor clearly repudiated yet presented in a tone that seems to demand judgment" (*Company We Keep*, 446). It is important that the reader make that "judgment" to determine whether or not Birkin is serious in his response to Gerald so that he can determine Birkin's intention. Finally, the reader needs to consider what Birkin says here in light of his later statements that Ursula and he could attain a perfect spiritual union if she would only be the "satellite" to his "star." The reader eventually comes to believe that Birkin, perhaps unknowingly, also believes that the domestication of women is an idea not completely without merit.

Ursula, the female protagonist, represents the voice of reason, and, as such, represents a correction to Birkin, as she questions his pat conventional assumptions about what women want and about what their place in society ought to be; Ursula's voice, which is clearly in opposition to Birkin's, can be analyzed in terms of Bakhtin's concept of polyphony. Lawrence also utilizes Ursula's voice to point out to Birkin those instances when he contradicts his own assertions pertaining to women's rights. But even if the reader forgets for a moment that Birkin hates people and has been called a "misanthrope" and a "crank" by the narrator, he can hardly accept Birkin's statement "It's a dangerous thing to domesticate even horses, let alone women" as the text's and, ultimately, as Lawrence's ringing
endorsement of male dominance. To do justice to this passage, the reader must consider the context in which Lawrence represents Birkin in his approval of such behavior; that is, in his treatment of Birkin, who implies male dominance, Lawrence guides the reader to see that Birkin is obviously wrong and that Ursula is obviously right. Just as the reader of *Sons And Lovers* assesses Lawrence's method of presenting Paul Morel as comically limited in his self-delusions, the reader of *Women in Love* must similarly consider that if Lawrence had intended that Birkin represent the right point of view, he has gone to great lengths to undercut that view by means of Ursula, who is self-confident, clear-thinking, and right, and also by means of his narrator, who reinforces Ursula's point of view. It is important to the reader's understanding of Lawrence's methods in creating a balance between the anti-feminism that his male protagonists represent, and the voice of reason that his female protagonists represent, to see that he uses Ursula to undermine their positions and show that they are wrong. Ursula dismisses Birkin in much the same manner as she dismisses Gerald: "Good thing, too" (203). With these few words, the reader can almost see Ursula smiling at Birkin; her response indicates a playfulness and also reveals her self-confidence in knowing that Birkin is wrong. Ursula's response points, as well, to Birkin's comic limitation, which manifests itself here in his capacity to deceive himself about the merits of male dominance. The reader agrees with Ursula's handling of the situation and smiles at Birkin, as well. Birkin's proclivity for self-delusion, like Paul Morel's, can be analyzed in terms of Castelvetro's theory of comedy. Also, while the reader is often amused with Birkin, his comic response toward him, like his comic
response toward Paul Morel, results from his continual criticism of him. Birkin is to some degree like Paul Morel, as he often reveals himself as petty in his words, thoughts, and deeds; like Paul Morel, as well, Birkin thereby trivializes his stature in the reader's eyes and usually causes the reader to mock him.

That "endless war" between men and women, as Bloom describes the way men and women relate to each other, represents the relationship between Ursula and Birkin. The love Ursula and Birkin share is based on contradictory emotions; though both characters often experience opposite emotions, this tension is lessened as the relationship becomes deeper. An understanding of Lawrence's love ethic is nearly impossible without an awareness that many aspects of the relationship he represents are continually in a state of change. It is also true that many of the comic and ironic effects Lawrence creates result directly from the contradictions that abound in his work. It is the reader's job to figure out what is to be taken as a statement of truth and what is to be taken as something else, such as comedy, irony, or as a means of revealing the complexity of an individual whose combined failings and potential make him believable and life-like. For example, the reader is told of Ursula's ambivalent feelings for Birkin: "She was strictly hostile to him. But she was held to him by some bond, some deep principle. This at once irritated her and saved her" (205). Lawrence's representation of Ursula's feelings for Birkin have been interpreted by some critics as an example of Lawrence's approving female submission. But the reader is aware that the narrator also says of Birkin much later in the novel "He worshipped her as age worships youth, he gloried in her, because, in his one grain of faith, he was young as she, he was
her proper mate. This marriage with her was his resurrection and his life. All this she could not know" (458-9). But though Ursula "could not know" "All this," the reader does know it. The context of the relationship Lawrence creates between Birkin and Ursula can be analyzed in Blanchard's words, as an example of Lawrence's maintaining a "sensible counter-balance"; that is, for all of Birkin's rhetoric about himself as a lone star surrounded by a "satellite," he is finally forced to admit that he is not fulfilled without Ursula, who insists on her own stature as an equal being.

Thus, though they are "soul mates," Lawrence does not allow Birkin to dominate Ursula, but often makes Birkin himself the butt of Ursula's, the narrator's, and ultimately Lawrence's humor, though critic after critic claims Lawrence had no humor. For example, the discussions Birkin and Ursula have on love come down to his equating himself with the stars and her undermining his position. Birkin's philosophizing about his need for transcendence, an idea which he can never fully articulate, causes the reader as much frustration as it does Ursula. The first such scene shows not only Birkin's inability adequately to express himself, but also reveals the gaps in his apparently logical thinking, gaps which Ursula has no problem in pinpointing and in ridiculing. Their initial discussion on transcendence, which is also their most extended discussion on the subject, takes place during the scene in which Birkin and Ursula have tea at Birkin's house; the scene is very important as it sets the tone for their future discussions on these matters and shows how they interact. Because of the paradigmatic nature of this scene, I will discuss it in some detail.
At this tea Birkin tells Ursula what he wants from a woman:

"There is a final me which is stark and impersonal and beyond responsibility. So there is a final you. And it is there I want to meet you--not in the emotional, loving plane--but there beyond, where there is no speech and no terms of agreement" (208-9). He adds: "It is quite inhuman... one can only follow the impulse, taking that which lies in front, and responsible for nothing, asked for nothing, giving nothing, only each taking according to the primal desire" (209). But Ursula understands Birkin's statement of desire as implying dominance over her, and she quickly responds: "It is just purely selfish" (209). Birkin retorts: "If it is pure, yes. But it isn't selfish at all" (209). Ursula then asks: "But is it because you love me, that you want me?" (209) The reader knows that this question is the one with which she plagues Birkin throughout the novel, and to which he will eventually come to answer, "Yes." But at this point he answers: "No it isn't. It is because I believe in you--" (209). We are told "Ursula laughed, suddenly hurt," and asked, "Aren't you sure?" (209) Lawrence changes Ursula's laughter at the end of the discussion from a comic response to Birkin to a personal response to her feeling "suddenly hurt" because she thinks that perhaps Birkin does not love her. The effect of Ursula's doubts about Birkin's feelings for her and of her feeling "suddenly hurt" because of her momentary doubt only reinforces the reader's feeling that Birkin does love Ursula; the reader is confirmed in his determination that Birkin does love Ursula precisely because his claim that he wants her because his insistence that love has nothing to do with his feelings for her, and that he wants her because he believes in her, does not ring true. That Ursula laughs because she
is hurt is an example of the way Lawrence occasionally uses laughter, which usually represents a comic response, as a non-comic response. In representing Ursula as hurt because she questions Birkin's feelings for her, and in having Birkin make long speeches that initially confirm her suspicion that perhaps he might not love her, Lawrence intensifies the reader's comic response to Birkin. Although the reader is sympathetic to Ursula's pain, which results from her acceptance of Birkin's false statement as genuine, Lawrence guides the reader to understand that Birkin does love her and to expect that sooner or later he must break down to reveal his love for her, as, in fact, Birkin does. Thus, Lawrence guides the reader to a comic response to Birkin, whose elaborate attempt to show that he does not love Ursula makes obvious the fact that he does; Lawrence also guides the reader to a comic response to Ursula, as she gets the best of Birkin.

Their discussion now descends from the ethereal planes of theory into the mundane world of physicality as Ursula "persists in a mocking voice, 'But don't you think me good-looking?'" (209) The scene now begins to get playfully comic, intentionally so on Ursula's part, as the narrator informs the reader "He looked at her, to see if he felt that she was good-looking" (209). The end result is that Birkin's ideas do not sound as weighty as he would like to think them when he states quite seriously, "I don't FEEL that you're good-looking" (209), to which Ursula "mocked bitingly, 'Not even attractive?'" (210) Birkin, who "knitted his brows in exasperation," bursts forth with, "Don't you see that it's not a question of visual appreciation in the least? I don't WANT to see you. I've seen plenty of women, I'm sick and weary of them. I want a woman I don't
see" (210). Ursula, constantly reducing to the ridiculous Birkin's attempts to articulate the sublimity of transcendence, "laughed," quipping, "I'm sorry I can't oblige you by being invisible" (210). But Birkin ignores Ursula's tactic and gravely responds: "Yes, you are invisible to me, if you don't force me to be visually aware of you. But I don't want to see you or hear you" (210). Ursula "mocked, 'What did you ask me to tea for, then?' " (210) The narrator points out that Birkin, all in a fuddle, "would take no notice of her. He was talking to himself" (210). Although Birkin seriously attempts to articulate the transcendence he wants from their relationship, his purposeful and calculated attempts not to say what is obvious to the reader, to Ursula, and possibly to himself, are precisely the reasons he ends up defeated in his argument; the end result is that Birkin's credibility suffers and he thus elicits the reader's laughter. And although the reader does understand that Birkin is serious in his philosophy about male/female relationships, his attention is diverted onto Birkin's elaborate denials of love for Ursula; the reader is amused by them as he is amused by Birkin's failure to get Ursula to acknowledge the seriousness of his subject and to respond accordingly. The reader's comic response toward Birkin can also be analyzed in terms of Castelvetro's theory of comedy, as Birkin is self-deceived in his determination that he has no need for love in terms of an emotional union, with Ursula. And Birkin works hard to convince mainly himself that transcendence, as opposed to a human relationship, is all that he needs.

Finally, in what can be called the last phase of their discussion, Birkin touches on the subject of women and Ursula tells him directly what she thinks of him. Apparently having had enough of
Ursula’s mocking his idea of transcendence, he states, “I want to find you, where you don't know your own existence, the you that your common self denies utterly. But I don't want your good looks, and I don't want your womanly feelings, and I don't want your thoughts nor opinions nor your ideas--they are all bagatelles to me” (210). Ursula immediately rises to the occasion and indignantly “mocked, ‘You are very conceited, Monsieur. How do you know what my womanly feelings are, or my thoughts or my ideas? You don't even know what I think of you’ ” (210), to which Birkin answers, “Nor do I care in the slightest” (210). Finally, Ursula says: “I think you are very silly. I think you want to tell me you love me, and you go all this way round to do it,” to which Birkin, “looking up with sudden exasperation” says with comical bombast, “All right. Now go away then and leave me alone. I don't want anymore of your meretricious persiflage” (210). But Ursula does not leave. "'Is it really persiflage?' she mocked, her face really relaxing into laughter" (210). The narrator points out that she “interpreted it, that he had made a deep confession of love to her. But he was so absurd in his words also” (210).

At last, after a few quiet moments, Birkin again tries to express what he wants from Ursula, and though he is more successful in articulating his desire than he has been thus far, he is still ultimately ridiculed by Ursula and by the narrator. But Birkin is not ridiculed because he desires transcendence; he is ridiculed because he attempts to convince Ursula, as well as himself, that he is beyond mere love. The reader knows, as Ursula knows, that no one is. In this scene Lawrence reveals the shortcomings of Birkin and of Ursula, though Ursula emerges as the one with whom the reader
sides. Birkin states: "What I want is a strange conjunction with you;--not meeting and mingling;--you are quite right;--but an equilibrium, a pure balance of two single beings;--as the stars balance each other" (211). Lawrence makes ironic what Birkin says in relation to his desire to attain a state of pure spirituality; Ursula also points out with stinging acrimony Birkin's hypocrisy, since he has had no problem indulging his sexual nature with Hermione. It seems a master stroke of Lawrence to have Birkin glorify a state of pure spirituality, which is not terribly far removed from the state of pure intellectuality that Hermione, whom Birkin despises, represents. The contradiction between Birkin's claim that he only wants a spiritual union with Ursula and the fact of his ultimate physical relationship with her is set up so that the reader sees that Birkin's thinking is illogical, and, therefore, his judgments are unreliable. Birkin is unable, or perhaps has become unwilling, to see himself as a total human being, with a physical as well as a spiritual side. Although Birkin is somewhat more coherent about what he wants from a woman, Ursula trivializes and ridicules him, as is her wont. We are told, "She looked at him. He was very earnest, and earnestness was always rather ridiculous, commonplace, to her. It made her feel unfree and uncomfortable. Yet she liked him so much" (211). The reader detects that the narrator is not mocking Birkin for his "earnestness" because sincerity is certainly not "always rather ridiculous, commonplace"; rather, the narrator is mocking Ursula who considers sincerity as silly and trite because honesty is, in fact, admirable and rather rare. In revealing Ursula's thoughts about him, Lawrence presents her as defensive toward Birkin, with whom she is rightfully annoyed. Yet the reader knows that Ursula's
overall assessment of Birkin's response is correct, as she matter of factly adds, "But why drag in the stars?" (211) In this scene the reader may recall the narrator's early reference to Birkin as a "crank." Lawrence's comic method is that he has Birkin state his ideas, and has Ursula purposefully misunderstand them, trivialize them, and thereby reduce them to an absurdity. And while Lawrence causes Birkin to attempt to ignore Ursula and to return the conversation to the sublime level upon which he began it, he does allow Ursula to continue to trivialize Birkin's ideas, to the extent that Birkin forgets his point and talks to himself. The effect is that the reader has a comic response to Ursula's tactic and to the outcome of the conversation. The reader is amused with the way Ursula plays with Birkin's cherished ideas and bares the gaps in his thinking. The reader responds comically, as well, to Birkin in that he is amused with Birkin's mighty, though futile, efforts to preserve the serious tone of the discussion, in spite of Ursula's successful efforts to refocus the discussion to get Birkin to reveal his love for her.

Later in this same discussion Ursula echoes her distaste for Birkin's stars, when in response to his explanation of the orbit that they two, as stars, should take she says: "I don't trust you when you drag in the stars. If you were quite true, it wouldn't be necessary to be so far-fetched" (216). The reader agrees with Ursula that Birkin's constant reference to the stars and to the solar system as the only adequate description of his feelings for her is somewhat "far-fetched." The reader also understands and shares Ursula's frustration that Birkin refuses to acknowledge that he loves her when it is so clear to the reader, as it is to Ursula, and as it must be
to Birkin himself, that he does love her. Lawrence also guides the reader to side with Ursula in her response to Birkin's assuring her that he knows that her love is "tick-tack, tick-tack, a dance of opposites" (216): "'Are you sure?,' she mocked wickedly, 'what my love is?'" (216) To Birkin's self-assured response, "Yes, I am," Ursula logically contends, "So cocksure! How can anybody ever be right, who is so cocksure. It shows you are wrong" (216). But, the reader knows that Ursula does love Birkin, wrong or not, and she, at least, knows it, too.

In revealing that Ursula loves Birkin in spite of his being wrong, Lawrence is not presenting female submission; Lawrence is saying that though everyone has his limitations, and in Lawrence it is usually the males whose limitations are most emphasized, that does not necessarily mean that an individual is bad or that he is not lovable. An individual's limitation is a part of his potential; even that individual with the greatest potential has his own inherent limitations. And Lawrence represents Birkin, as well as all of his characters, as more than walking concepts; Lawrence represents them as characters of considerable complexity, whose limitations are a part of that complexity. Birkin is an example of one of Lawrence's males who does not understand why he is wrong, though Ursula, the reader, and by inference Lawrence, do understand why he is wrong. Still, Lawrence endows Birkin with intelligence and sensitivity, and like Meredith's handling of Sir Willoughby, guides the reader to feel that, though mistaken in his ideas about women and self-deceived about his own importance as a man, he will come to see the error in his thinking under a particular woman's influence; as Willoughby
becomes enlightened under Laetitia's influence, Birkin also becomes enlightened under Ursula's influence.

One of the ways Lawrence represents Birkin's shortcomings as comic, like Paul Morel's shortcomings, is that he represents Birkin as contradicting himself, a point about him which Ursula makes. Although self-contradiction is not necessarily comic, it can be comic when an author sets up a predictable pattern of contradictory behavior for a particular character; self-contradiction can be comic when the reader comes to expect a particular character, like Birkin, to contradict himself in reference to particular situations, as in his conversations with Ursula in which he argues that she must be a satellite to his star. Thus, because the reader comes accurately to predict that Birkin will nullify his own position whenever he engages Ursula in discussion about "star-equilibrium," what he says is diminished in importance in the reader's eyes. Lawrence's tactic is that he points to Birkin's limitation, here expressed in his capacity constantly to shift his position much closer to Ursula's position, but to argue as if he had made no concessions, to elicit a comic response to Birkin. Also, it is comic that Birkin does not see that he contradicts himself; Ursula and the reader, however, do see Birkin that way. The end result is that the reader finds suspect much of what Birkin says, which limits his reliability.

Another example of the comic effects Lawrence creates in the interaction he presents between Birkin and Ursula shows Birkin stoning the moon. Believing himself alone, Birkin shouts, "You can't go away. There IS no away. You only withdraw upon yourself" (322); then, "Cybele--curse her! The accursed Syria Dea!--Does one begrudge it her?--what else is there?" (323) Unknown to Birkin, Ursula is
behind the next tree. The narrator tells us that "Ursula wanted to
laugh loudly and hysterically, hearing his isolated voice speaking
out. It was so ridiculous" (323). Still unaware of her presence,
Birkin begins to stone the moon. The reader does feel sympathy for
the ineffable frustration Birkin feels, as he "must go on" throwing
stones at the moon like a "madness" (324). But the image of a grown
man throwing stones and shouting at the moon is comical because it is
an odd thing to do, much like Paul Morel's eating a pink and throwing
Clara's chocolates out the window are odd things to do; like Paul
with the pink and the chocolates, Birkin surprises the reader.
Birkin's stoning the moon and his talking out loud are also comical
because the reader knows that Ursula is behind the next tree trying
to stifle the same laughter that the reader feels, as well.
Explaining Ursula's reason for finally revealing herself to Birkin,
the narrator says "Birkin lingered vaguely by the water. Ursula was
afraid he would stone the moon again" (325). The narrator's use of
the word "again" points to the comic and ironic qualities in Birkin's
action in that the reader knows, as Lawrence must have known, that an
individual cannot ever really stone the moon. Birkin is not
accomplishing anything; he is only putting himself in the
compromising position that elicits Ursula's and the reader's
laughter.

Once Ursula and Birkin begin speaking, it becomes obvious that
Birkin cannot do without Ursula, and he tells her as much, but not
without making himself, as well as Ursula, look foolish. Still
unaware, or, perhaps more accurately, still unwilling to admit that
he is continually restless because he loves Ursula, Birkin looks at
her and says, "There is a golden light in you which I wish you would
give me," to which she replies, "My life is unfulfilled," and adds that she feels "as if nobody would ever love me" (326). But Birkin is as stubborn as she is and persists with, "I want you to give me... that golden light which is you" (326). Ursula responds, "But how can I, you don't love me!... You don't want to serve ME, and yet you want me to serve you. It is so one-sided!" (326), an idea that the reader acknowledges rings true. Birkin, however, attempts to convince Ursula with his murky logic that "It is different"; that "I serve you in another way--not through YOURSELF--somewhere else"; that "I want us to be together without bothering about ourselves... as if it were a phenomenon, not a thing we have to maintain by our own effort" (326). But Ursula is not taken in by Birkin's rhetoric and says, "No. you are just egocentric... You want yourself, really, and your own affairs" (326). After Birkin tells her he wants her to "drop" her "assertive WILL" and let herself "go," Ursula, angrily responds to Birkin and gives him her opinion of what he has all along been about, stating: "It is you who can't let yourself go, it is you who hang onto yourself as if it were your only treasure... . YOU are the Sunday School teacher... you preacher!" (328) The narrator corroborates Ursula's point of view stating "The amount of truth that was in this made him stiff and unheeding of her" (328). Very shortly after this heated exchange, Ursula again asks, "Do you really love me?", and Birkin, who "laughed," comically responds to her relentlessness with, "I call that your war-cry" (328). When Ursula asks, "'why?', amused and really wondering," Birkin responds, "your insistence. Your war-cry... is 'Do you love me?--yield knave, or die'" (328). Ursula protests that she must know if he loves her, and Birkin finally surrenders in what Bloom describes as
Lawrence's "endless war between men and women" (3), and responds: "Yes, I do. I love you, and I know it's final. It is final, so why say anymore about it?" (328) The reader has seen that most of Birkin's and of Ursula's interactions end up as a match of words, with Ursula trying to get Birkin to say that he loves her, and with Birkin who does love her, trying to avoid saying that he does. Both Ursula and Birkin are comically portrayed in this scene: Lawrence creates comic effects in representing Ursula as characteristically insisting that Birkin tell her that he loves her; Lawrence creates comic effects in representing Birkin as stoning the moon and as characteristically insisting, at least initially, that he does not love Ursula, and reinterpreting her burning question of whether or not he loves her as a death threat. Interestingly, however, the reader observes that it is Ursula, and not Birkin, who wins this "war." But after this scene and progressively throughout the novel, Ursula and Birkin do achieve a far less war-like state that is something like the one whose adequate description Birkin could never articulate. E. Douka-Kabitoglou draws the very insightful conclusion about the final outcome of Ursula's and Birkin's relationship which does end in marriage: "The final tone of the book which leaves the relationship still in progress, gives an implication of a continuous, life-sustaining conflict between them, which excludes the possibility of submission or dominance from either part." 34

Two other ways that Lawrence represents Birkin's self-contradiction to elicit a comic response are in his marriage to Ursula and in his nest building. Birkin's reversal in politics on marriage and on nest building is comic because Birkin has spoken so emphatically and so passionately against them throughout the novel;
Lawrence points out the discrepancy between what Birkin says about marriage and the fact that he does marry Ursula, and between what Birkin says about the home and the fact that he buys furniture for it. Lawrence creates these comic effects to undermine what the self-assured male proclaims to be the best course of action. The narrator states of Birkin's views on marriage: "What it was in him he did not know, but the thought of love, marriage, and children, and a life lived together, in the horrible privacy of domestic and connubial satisfaction was repulsive" (269). When Birkin does ask Ursula to marry him, she refuses to answer him; Ursula, who has come to treat much of what Birkin says as a joke, even treats his proposal as such. We are told that Ursula asked Birkin "as if it were a joke," 'Did you really come to propose to me?" Birkin responds, "Yes, I suppose I came to propose" (338-9). We know that Ursula wants to marry Birkin; the reason she treats his proposal as a joke is that Birkin has all along been so against marriage as a bourgeois institution that she has difficulty believing that he has really come to propose to her. Also, Lawrence has previously revealed that Ursula can laugh to hide her feelings, as she does at the tea party when Birkin hurts her feelings.

In referring to this scene where Birkin comes to propose to Ursula, the narrator twice uses the word "fiasco"; Ursula, who always questions Birkin on his star philosophy, in which she views male dominance as implicit, and who always asserts her independence in little ways at home, turns the entire scene around and makes Birkin and her father look foolish. Ursula enrages her father and leaves Birkin to shift for himself in befuddled embarrassment because she refuses to answer his proposal on the grounds that they are trying to
"bully" her; leaving the scene, Ursula, in apparent tranquility, goes up to her room. Although she is no more calm than either Birkin or her father, Lawrence presents Ursula as able to control her emotions, an ability not generally attributed to women. Ursula's demeanor during this "fiasco," is really quite admirable. Amazed at the scene which has just transpired, Ursula looks out her window and watches Birkin go up the road. Watching him go in "such a blithe drift of rage," Ursula wonders about him. The narrator informs us: "He was ridiculous, but she was afraid of him" (339-40). The proper context in which to interpret the narrator's comment that Birkin was "ridiculous" relies on the reader's knowledge of Ursula's responses to Birkin throughout the novel, and on his understanding that Ursula is defensive about not responding to Birkin's proposal when she had the opportunity to do so. First, the reader considers that Ursula calls Birkin's equating the kind of union he wants with her to the stars "far-fetched"; that Ursula calls Birkin's refusal to tell her that he loves her "ridiculous"; that Ursula considers Birkin's refusal to marry her and his alternative proposal that they establish a primitive society of people who wear no clothes, ridiculous, as well. The narrator's comment that Birkin was "ridiculous" can also be interpreted to reveal that Ursula is defensive about not responding to Birkin's proposal. Although Ursula does want to marry Birkin, she does have to consider the possibility that he may not propose again, which would also explain the narrator's telling the reader that "she was afraid of him."

The market place scene is another instance of Lawrence's casting doubt on the logic of Birkin's thinking and making fun of him to elicit a comic response. This scene is a superb example of the
way Birkin contradicts himself, but acts as if he had not done so: here is Birkin, who has done nothing if not philosophize about the evils of materialism, until Ursula and the reader are quite bored with him, now reveling in the capitalistic enterprise, exploiting the masses. Birkin is buying a chair. Birkin's reaction to the chair and the narrator's comment on the scene are set-up as follows: "'So beautiful, so pure!' Birkin said. 'It almost breaks my heart.' They walked along between the heaps of rubbish" (443). Although the narrator does not directly say that everything there, including this chair, is rubbish, the juxtaposition of Birkin's nearly tearful praises of the chair's abstract qualities with the narrator's quiet interjection that they were surrounded by "rubbish" creates a comic effect. The narrator thereby makes fun of Birkin by reducing his abstraction to an absurdity, and also by making Birkin's previously stated disgust for the "home" ironic. Thus, Lawrence elicits the reader's comic response to Birkin's limitation by revealing his behavior as contradictory, though Birkin does not acknowledge it as such, and by revealing that Birkin is moved to tears by what an objective consciousness informs the reader is trash.

Lawrence thus reveals how illogical is Birkin, who claims to hate the home, but not the chair, which is to be part of the home. That Birkin is unable to see his self-contradiction is obvious in Ursula's reaction to him. When Birkin proclaims, "Houses and furniture and clothes, they are all terms of an old base world, a detestable society of man," Ursula quite logically asks if "we are never to have a home of our own," to which Birkin replies, "Pray God in this world, no" (445). Pragmatically, she insists, "But there's only this world," to which he "spread out his hands with a gesture of
indifference," and said, "Meanwhile, then, we'll avoid having things of our own" (445). Ursula must then point out, "But you've just bought a chair" (445). Birkin, however, does not see, or, at least, does not acknowledge that he shifts his theoretical stance, something he has done countless times throughout the novel, and says, "I can tell the man I don't want it" (445). The way in which Birkin jumps from one thing to its opposite without ever thinking about or explaining his change of views, and especially without acknowledging that he has even changed his views, greatly minimizes his credibility.

The broader implications of my reading of Women in Love, as of my reading of Sons And Lovers, include Lawrence's treatment of male/female relationships and the way conventional ideas and assumptions based on stereotypes impede those relationships. A close reading of Women in Love, like a close reading of Sons And Lovers, shows that Lawrence guides the reader to conclude that an individual must not base his expectations of another individual on conventional ideas about people; specifically, in both novels Lawrence addresses men's conventional ideas and assumptions about women. An individual's assumptions about another person that are made only upon the basis of what he uncritically assumes to be fact often create tension and result in misunderstandings; novels have been written on that subject, Pride and Prejudice for example. Women in Love, and, by inference, Lawrence, show the degree to which conventional assumptions about men and women undermine a relationship. For example, Birkin wants Ursula to let him be completely himself, yet to do so he finds it necessary for her to give up her own individuality, a point upon which Ursula will never capitulate, much to the reader's
great pleasure. Lawrence guides the reader to see that Birkin is self-deluded in his approval of male dominance; Lawrence does not guide the reader to hold Birkin's initial desire to dominate Ursula as positive. It seems obvious, then, that Birkin's outlook is often muddled, a fact about which the reader is meant to be aware, as Ursula and the narrator are aware throughout the novel. It is very significant, then, that Birkin will only be happy with Ursula, who is the strongest woman in the novel, possibly the strongest woman in Lawrence's fiction, and who is able to influence him enough to make him rethink his ideas and act on his modified views.

In *Women in Love*, as in *Sons And Lovers*, Lawrence allows his female characters to undermine the rhetoric of his male characters whose beliefs are based on expectations that result from stereotypical behavior. Lawrence's method is that he creates comic effects to reveal the self-delusions and the anti-feminism of his male protagonists and some of his other male main characters to challenge what could be called the novel's dominant view put forth by these males; Lawrence critiques the views that Paul, Birkin, and Gerald hold to show that the views opposite to theirs held by Miriam and by Ursula are the correct views. The reader becomes immediately aware of the power of comedy, in that once he is led to see Birkin and Paul in the comic light in which Lawrence casts them, it is impossible to take them and what they say completely seriously. The reader cannot interpret Birkin or Paul as representing the truth, as the reader understands truth in relation to the issues of male dominance and women's role in society, because for the most part neither character tells the truth; thus, neither Paul nor Birkin is a representative of Lawrence's views about women. Having interpreted
Lawrence's male protagonists in a comic light, the reader cannot fail to see that they do not attain the stature of a hero because their credibility is constantly called into question.

In *Women in Love*, in spite of all the male rhetoric to the contrary, both Gudrun and Ursula are stronger than their male counterparts. Although I have not addressed the relationship between Gerald and Gudrun, largely because Gerald is brutal and almost evil, the end Gerald comes to represents its own critique of how not to live. And, as critics have commonly mentioned, Gudrun is clearly stronger and certainly more independent than Gerald; while Ursula is in many ways different from her sister, she is also like Gudrun in that she is stronger than her counterpart, Birkin, in that she does prevail in her thinking and in her determination to be independent.

It is important to note that both women in the novel are stronger than their male counterparts in the male struggle for dominance, which Gerald openly proclaims he wants and which Birkin continually deludes himself that he does not want. For Gerald and Birkin never do achieve the power for which they strive; Gerald dies in a way that strongly suggests suicide and Birkin marries Ursula and modifies his ideas to coincide with Ursula's. In the final analysis of *Women in Love*, Lawrence reveals that Birkin changes his way of thinking and does come to understand that Ursula is at least his equal.

In analyzing what Lawrence is saying in *Women in Love*, as well as in *Sons And Lovers*, it is important that the reader analyze the motivation for the behavior of Lawrence's anti-feminist males. In attempting to determine what motivates the behavior of Lawrence's males, the reader is aware that Lawrence's fiction is loaded with biblical allusions and Christian symbolism, though it is common
knowledge that Lawrence claimed to have rejected Christianity at a young age.35 Still, there is controversy about Lawrence's Christianity or lack thereof; Harold Bloom, for example, calls Lawrence a "Puritan." But whether or not Lawrence rejected Christianity, Sons and Lovers and Women in Love, as well as much of his other fiction and also some non-fiction, are heavily influenced by Christian symbols and motifs. And whatever Lawrence's beliefs, at the very least, Christianity held a fascination for Lawrence, and he was profoundly influenced by its teachings.

It seems to me that so much, in fact, was Lawrence influenced by Christianity that he creates characters, such as Paul Morel and Birkin, whose comic limitations result from their inherent character failings, and which can be explained in terms of Christian theology's concept of Original Sin; although the Christian view does not prevail in Lawrence in any ostensible way as the cause of an individual's behavior, the actions of Lawrence's characters can be analyzed in the Christian terms proposed by Hoy. Although Hoy does not mention Lawrence, the limitations of Lawrence's male protagonists, as they are played out in Sons And Lovers and Women in Love, are analyzable in terms of Hoy's theory of comedy. The argument can be made, then, that the self-deception and egoism of Paul Morel and Birkin, and the resulting anti-feminism manifested in their thoughts, words, and deeds, result from each character's own innate frailty. Hoy's representation of the individual as driven to engage in behavior that is detrimental to others, and to himself, explains Paul's and Birkin's behavior.
Paul's anti-feminism and his mistreatment of Miriam, for example, finally culminate in his rationalization that the relationship's failure is her fault and that he is thus free to pursue a sexual relationship with Clara; the reader, however, sees that the real problem results from his own egoism in terms of his own mistaken assumptions that the self-serving nonsense he confidently asserts as right is beyond reproach. Although Paul never wants to hurt Miriam, he is simply not able to get beyond his own self-interest to consider her as a complete person who is just as important as he seems to think he is; thus his comic limitation, which is manifested in his capacity for self-deceit, impels him to behave in ways hurtful to Miriam and which he does regret. Birkin also demonstrates the way an individual is driven to behave in ways that reveal his limitation; like Paul Morel, Birkin's innate failing is largely manifested in his capacity for self-deceit. Birkin fails to see that there is any inequity in his equating himself with a star and Ursula with a satellite that revolves around him; Birkin never considers Ursula the "star" and himself the "satellite." Birkin also fails to see that his deciding what he and Ursula need, without ever once considering what Ursula thinks about things, is destructive to his relationship with her. Thus, the reader is aware that Birkin's comic limitation, which Lawrence manifests in his capacity for egoism, for self-serving behavior, impels him almost to alienate Ursula from himself. Although Birkin is not happy without Ursula, he is driven to behave as he does and is, initially, not able to behave any differently. But Lawrence shows that because they love each
other, Birkin and Ursula are able to work out the problem. Yet
Birkin is the one who must change, or it is evident, his natural
proclivity for domination will ruin his chances with Ursula, who will
clearly not submit to any man's claims of power over her.
Notes


2 see pages 6-7 and 46-47 in my "Introduction" for a full account of Castelvetro's theory of comedy.

3 See pages 17 and 46-48 in my "Introduction" for a full account of Hoy's theory of comedy.


5 Critics commonly refer to Lawrence's "Leadership" novels, which are usually cited as Kangaroo, Aaron's Rod, and The Plumed Serpent, to indicate a phase in which he seems to advocate male dominance. In classifying Lawrence's different views, Mailer discusses them tellingly; he states "There is a stretch in the middle of his work, out in such unread tracts as Aaron's Rod and Kangaroo, when the uneasy feeling arrives that perhaps it was just as well Lawrence died when he did, for he could have been the literary adviser to Oswald Mosley about the time Hitler came in . . . " (The Prisoner, 136-37); Mailer also states of Lawrence at the time he was writing Aaron's Rod "These are the years when he flirts with homosexuality, but is secretly, we may assume, obsessed with it" (157); and that "By the time of writing Women in Love, his view of women would not be far from sinister" (156); and that "Then it is too late. He is into his last years. He is into the last five years of his dying. He has been a victim of love, and will die for lack of the full depth of a woman's love for him--what a near to infinite love he had needed (159) . . . . but he was a lover, he wrote Lady Chatterley, he forgave . . . ." (160).


10 In Son of Woman: The Story of D. H. Lawrence, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1931), John Middleton Murry concludes that Lawrence did not like women; see page 27 in particular. And in comparing various male writers, Lawrence among them, Simone de Beauvoir concludes "Feminine devotion is demonstrated as a duty by Montherlant and Lawrence" (251) and that "We could multiply examples, but they would invariably lead us to the same conclusion. When he describes woman, each writer discloses his general ethics and the special idea he has of himself; and in her he often betrays also the gap between his world view and his egotistical dreams;" (The Second Sex ed. & tr., H. M. Parshley, [1953; N. Y. : Vintage, 1989] 251-52).


12 Jessie Chambers, who wrote about Lawrence under the pseudonym "E. T." objected that she was not as spiritual as Lawrence represented her in the character of Miriam. (E. T. [Jessie Chambers], D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record second ed. [N. Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1965] 201-205).


14 Carolyn G. Heilbrun states of Lawrence, His awkward and strident attempts to avoid the implications of homosexuality forced him at times to damage his novels and betray the artist he might have become" (102) and, "Kate Millett treats Lawrence as the male chauvinist and phallic worshipper he undoubtedly was, and her attack on him as one of the chief practitioners of (110). But Heilbrun seems positive about Ursula, who first emerges in The Rainbow as the daughter of Lydia and Will Brangwen, in pointing out, "Ironically, hindsight suggests that there was no one less likely than Lawrence to have created her, and most of his readers, knowing what he had written previously and would write later (even in his next novel, Women in Love) did not recognize what he had done." (Toward a Recognition of Androgyny [N. Y.: Knopf, 1973] 110). Heilbrun does not quote any of the passages from the text or from Millett to support her position; that she does not discuss particular passages in context makes it very difficult to respond to her except to say that while there are passages that support her position that Lawrence supports male dominance, there are also other passages that undermine that view. In discussing Simone de Beauvoir's assessment of various male writers, Lawrence among them, another critic, Patricia Meyer Spacks, argues, "Although these writers represent divergent attitudes toward women, all are finally inadequate in their treatment of the opposite sex. Mlle de Beauvoir demonstrates this fact through
careful and on the whole sympathetic analysis of individual texts" (The Female Imagination [N. Y.: Knopf, 1975] 20). Spacks states of Millett, "Kate Millett has successfully maintained her toughness. One distinction of Sexual Politics is that it made so many people angry . . . she constructed an elaborate exercise in political rhetoric, and for it she got a Ph.D. in English" (29); although Spacks has problems with Millett's methods, she concedes that "However clumsily stated, unoriginal, muddled, Miss Millett's was an idea whose time had come, the idea that relations between men and women have always been more fundamentally a matter of politics--meaning manipulations of power--than of sentiment. The evidence for this truth is historical--the record of centuries of male domination; literary--the writings of such 'male chauvinists' as D. H. Lawrence . . ." (29-30). Like Heilbrun's, Spacks' response to Millett does not refer to specific passages in any novel; she simply makes assertions. It is difficult to respond to her generalizations, like Heilbrun's generalizations, except to say that the reader must consider what is stated within the given context of a passage to which he responds from moment to moment. Those passages that support Spacks' view that Lawrence harbors an anti-feminist bias can be overturned by other passages that show that he does not harbor that bias. But Faith Pullin, another critic who argues that Lawrence does harbor an anti-feminist bias, states, in her opening line, of "Lawrence's treatment of Women in Sons and Lovers," "Lawrence is a ruthless user of women; in Sons and Lovers, the mother, Miriam and Clara are all manipulated in Paul's painful effort at self-identification, the effort to become himself" (49) and, "The truth is that the Lawrence hero can't cope with women except in their maternal aspect or as faceless objects of passion . . . All idea of a woman as a thinking being, operating in any but a supportive and reinforcing manner with her mate, is rejected. A woman, after all, can only give the unimportant part of herself to work, the rest must be available for the use of the man" (71). Pullin is so angry with Lawrence that though she points out Miriam's responses to Paul, she cannot see that there is value and importance in what Miriam says; Pullin cannot see, or, perhaps will not consider that Lawrence would agree with her assessment of Paul because he intentionally portrays him as he does to show that his conventional assumptions about women make him most always wrong and foolish, as well. An example of Pullin's seeing only a part of Lawrence's method rather than the whole of it is her argument that "Paul's continuing self-deceptions lead him to rearrange the destinies of Clara and Dawes" (70) and that "Miriam remarks, in one of the truest sentences in the novel, 'I have said you were only fourteen--you are only four!''' (71) Pullin is unable to conclude that she is meant to see Paul just as she sees him and also to see Miriam just as she sees her; Pullin cannot or will not accept that the reader is meant to see that Paul's self-deceit and self-centeredness lead him to behave in ways that are hurtful, especially to Miriam, and that, therefore, Paul is wrong-minded. Lawrence reveals Paul's comic limitation, mostly in his capacity for self-deception, and guides the reader to mock Paul and to side with Miriam. Lawrence contrasts Miriam's common sense and perception to Paul's lack of common sense and lack of perception. And Anne Smith, who discusses Lawrence's treatment of the women that he knew personally at particular times in his life, Jessie Chambers, Alice Dax, and Louie Burrows, states that Lawrence "used them mercilessly:
certainly then, and arguably, later in his life if not his work, Lawrence's way of love is best summed up in Goldsmith's definition, 'an abject intercourse between tyrants and slaves.' (22) Smith does not quote passages in the text, but goes freely back and forth between Lawrence's life and his novels; Smith mostly refers to letters Lawrence had written to various individuals at various time, as the source of her assessments of Lawrence's attitude toward women in his fiction. Smith's method is clear even in her title, "A New Adam and a New Eve--Lawrence and Women: A Biographical Overview," Lawrence and Women Ed. Anne Smith (N. Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1978). The problem with making direct correlations between a letter that an author like Lawrence writes and a fictive character he creates is that there are no rules that say that an author must create that character as he might have described individuals of that gender, or even a particular individual in that letter. In the creative process an author endows his characters with a certain complexity that makes them take on a life-like reality; thus, they cannot be readily assessed as necessarily representing Lawrence's views and as having no dimension. Mark Spilka, who supports the feminist charges against Lawrence, claims, "As I have elsewhere observed, Lawrence was about as hostile in his treatment of women as Doris Lessing in her treatment of men. He also liked women, as she likes men, and his treatment of women characters has in this respect attracted as many admiring women readers as her work has attracted male admirers. Yet both saw the opposite sex as essentially threatening to personal integrity" (192). But Spilka does conclude of Women in Love, "Thus the balances arrived at in mid-career, in novels and tales like Women in Love... reflect an emerging and rather short-lived equivalence in male strength, an equivalence easily confused with the urge to dominate because that issue is, for the first time, stridently posed. One might more feasibly argue, however, that Ursula's strength is constant throughout the novel and that Birkin has all he can do to fight through his own weaknesses and her justified resistances to the point where she will bring him an affirming flower." ("On Lawrence's Hostility to Willful Women: The Chatterly Solution," Lawrence and Women, Ed. Anne Smith, 195). What is interesting about what Spilka says about Ursula's strength, a point I will discuss in the text in relation to other critics who only defend Lawrence tenuously, or who set out to defend him and finally condemn what they consider his anti-feminism, is that for the most part neither Spilka, nor many of the other critics, actually make the argument that they claim can be easily made; they make assertions. And since these assertions are unproved because unsubstantiated by specific passages from the text, their arguments are not persuasive. Hilary Simpson, like Anne Smith, bases her conclusions about Lawrence's fiction on his biography; her dissatisfaction with Lawrence results from her contention that "The real blow to feminism in Sons and Lovers lies in Lawrence's failure to connect the personal world of individual development to the larger material forces which have a part in shaping it.... The personal world of feeling is explored so well in Sons and Lovers that we are liable to forget that there is any other; that, although we see Clara at work, we never see her 'talking on platforms' or doing any of the other things that we are assured she takes part in as a suffragist" (D. H. Lawrence and Feminism [DeKalb: Northern Illinois UP, 1982] 37). But Lawrence is not
writing a documentary and is, therefore, under no obligation to 
present Clara doing those things that Simpson says Lawrence ought to 
have her doing; Simpson, like many of the other critics I have 
discussed in this section, does not see what Lawrence is actually 
doing in Sons And Lovers and Women In Love because of her 
expectations of what he ought to be doing in these novels. Cornelia 
Nixon is another critic who makes personal claims against Lawrence 
through his work; in Lawrence's Leadership Politics And The Turn 
describes Lawrence as "clearly didactic" (4), primarily focuses on 
the beliefs Lawrence held at various times as the explanation for his 
fiction. Nixon states, "Most critics have been reluctant to 
recognize that Lawrence's next novel was moving in the direction of 
leadership politics, and they have justified their reluctance on the 
grounds that Women In Love was written in 1916, predating the 
leadership novels and essays that were written after the war" (186) 
and that "Furthermore, there is no doubt that Lawrence extensively 
revised Women In Love in 1917, the year he also began the first full 
philosophical treatment of his leadership politics" (186). When 
Nixon does discuss the novel, she argues, "And, in the main, the 
conclusions the reader is encouraged to make in Women In Love 
coincide with Birkin's. Often those conclusions agree with Birkin's 
judgments as refined by Ursula, but just as often that is not the 
case--and the reverse is never true. Birkin's side of the argument 
is often the one Ursula knows or comes to know in her heart to be 
true, and the novel several times demonstrates Birkin's insights to 
be prophetic" (209). Although Nixon offers Birkin's prediction of 
"Gerald's death by freezing" as one example of Birkin's prophetic 
abilities, her example has nothing to do with her strong implication, 
if not charge, of anti-feminism; Nixon does not offer any example to 
support her assertion that "Ursula comes to know in her heart" that 
whatever Birkin says is true. Perhaps Nixon does not do so because 
just the opposite is true; Birkin comes to know in his heart, what 
the reader, and thus Lawrence, have known all along, that Ursula is 
right. Another example of Nixon's method of discussing the novel to 
fit her judgment of Lawrence himself, which she bases on his 
biography, is her contention that, "The other characters often 
ridicule Birkin's insights, but even as they laugh they never lose a 
pointed interest in what he thinks. To the extent that Birkin is 
subtly presented as a seer to whom the scoffers might well listen, 
his characterization is the first evidence in Lawrence's fiction that 
'some men are born from the mystery of creation, to know, to lead, 
and to command. And some are born to listen, to follow to obey 
(SM78)" (210). But there are no "other characters" and "scoffers" 
who consider Birkin a "seer," to whom they "might well listen," and 
who "never lose a pointed interest in what he thinks"; there is only 
the omniscient narrator, the objective consciousness who reveals 
Birkin's thoughts to the reader, and though he often ridicules 
Birkin's thoughts, he is not himself influenced by them. And there 
is Ursula, the female protagonist, who does not at all behave as 
Nixon claims she does, but who undermines almost everything Birkin 
says; to the extent that Birkin modifies his thinking to see things 
Ursula's way, because Lawrence shows that Ursula's point of view is 
right. The problem with Nixon's analysis is typical of those critics 
who become so focused on what Lawrence himself thought, or on what
they determine he must have thought, based on some of the things he said and/or wrote; thus, Nixon's methods result in her inability to consider that the mimetic aspects of the novel play a significant role in its interpretation.

15 Douka-Kabitoglou states "In Women in Love, although the man-woman relationship still remains the central problem, it is seen from a different angle which a.) is much closer to Lawrence's later attitude that produced the Leadership doctrine [see note number 5 for a brief explanation of what critics often refer to as Lawrence's "Leadership" doctrine.] and b.) as a result of this it makes man rather than woman the pivot in the sphere of both social and personal values. (Woman As A Gateway, 86.) Douka-Kabitoglou argues, "The dominance of the male principle as opposed to female submission pervades the novel throughout; it is presented either by an association with various symbols such as in the chapters "Mino" and "Rabbit", or very explicitly in Birkin's exposition of ideas" (86). Although Douka-Kabitoglou claims that "the dominance of the male principle as opposed to female submission pervades the novel throughout" she is in effect saying that in Women in Love the female is submissive, since only one force can dominate. Another critic, Phillipa Tristram, states, "My own feelings about Lawrence are divided, both admiration and anger finding their focus in his attitude--or rather attitudes to women" (137); she later discusses Lawrence in reference to Freud and states, "It is possibly an impatience to get on with the search for the other half of the loaf which leads Lawrence to assail his female characters in Women in Love" (138-9); and Tristram later concludes, "No doubt Lawrence was right to draw the 'fighting line' in the self. He was mistaken to identify the enemy with women, not with the enemy within" ("Eros and Death [Lawrence, Freud and Women]," Lawrence And Women, 149-150.) Marion Shaw, who numerous times quotes only Hilary Simpson, concludes of Lawrence, "Although feminists are justified in berating Lawrence, in their final assessment he should be allowed a place in their pantheon. The reasons have little to do with sexual liberation and much to do with his articulation of neediness. He took feminism seriously by being frightened of it; he bestowed power on it, no one more vividly or vehemently."
("Lawrence and feminism," Critical Quarterly Vol.25 [3] Autumn 1983, 27). And Sandra M. Gilbert, who starts out by accepting the feminist condemnation of Lawrence, concedes Lawrence's fascination with the female; she states, "Famously misogynistic and, in rhetoric, fiercely, almost fascistically Patriarchal, he is nevertheless the author of books whose very titles . . . . are haunted by female primacy, by the autonomous sexual energy of the goddess" (141). Agreeing with Anne Smith, Gilbert concludes, "Indeed, it is possible to speculate, as Anne Smith has, that Lawrence's God was Woman, Woman, moreover as 'Magna Mater.'" ("Potent Griselda: 'The Ladybird' and the Great Mother," D. H. Lawrence: A Centenary Consideration, eds. Peter Balbert and Philip L. Marcus [Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985] 141).

16 Mailer's claim that "Lawrence understood women as they had never been understood before" is stretching things farther than they can go, in light of the fact that earlier he states that he does mean to say that Lawrence wrote about women better than a woman could
write about women; Mailer is carried away in his claim "It is not only that no other man writes so well about women, but indeed is there a woman who can?" (152) But, that objection aside, though a large one, Mailer does provide an excellent response to Millett, by revealing her methods of analysis, claiming that for her own purposes "she is obliged to bring in the evidence more or less fairly, and only distort it by small moves, brief elisions in the quotation, the suppression of passing contradictions, in short bring in all the evidence on one side of the case and harangue the jury but a little further" (136). But Mailer, like Lawrence's opponents, misses the point that Lawrence caricatures his anti-feminist males in stating that "in all his books there are unmistakable tendencies toward the absolute domination of women by men, mystical worship of the male will, detestation of democracy" (136). In describing Lawrence, Mailer states, "Lawrence "was on the one hand a Hitler in a teapot, on the other he was the blessed breast of tender love ..." (The Prisoner Of Sex [Boston & Toronto: Little, Brown, 1971] 137).


18 In a letter to George Neville, who was a year younger than Lawrence and also a close friend, Lawrence responds to Neville's telling him to redo the bedroom scene in The Rainbow; Lawrence responds to Neville's criticism, "Don't you see that we must each of us be prepared to take the responsibility for our own actions? How can anyone complain so long as the narrator tells the truth? And suppose their puny feelings are hurt, or, what is probably nearer the mark, they get a pain in their pride, what does it matter so their lesson is given to the world and they shall have taught others to avoid the mistakes they made?" ("Recollections of a 'Pagan'," George H. Neville, D. H. Lawrence: Interviews and Recollections, ed. Norman Page, [Totowa: Barnes & Noble, 1981] 2 vols. I: 42). Although Neville states that this conversation transpired about 1912, which was shortly before The Trespasser, and Sons And Lovers was published in 1913 and Women in Love in 1920, it would not seem that an author would change his views on the function of a narrative device as important as the narrator.


20 Weiss explains his use of the term comedy in relation to the Oedipus complex; Weiss states, "the rejection of death is positive and absolute, and in its rejection, perverse as it may seem, is the implicit rejection, valid in unconscious terms, of the women to whom he might have turned after the long night of his childhood was past." ("The Mother in the Mind," Twentieth Century Interpretations Of Sons And Lovers, ed. Judith Farr [Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, 1970] 40).
Like Lawrence, Byatt's heroine, Frederica, is very interested in transcendence through love to form a special kind of conjunction; Lawrence's focus on transcendence seems to account for Frederica's interest in Lawrence. The narrator tells the reader of Frederica's interest in Forster and Lawrence, stating, "Both characters, both novelists, so passionately desire connection. They want to experience an undifferentiated All, a Oneness, body and mind, self and world, male and female. Frederica has tried to want all this. Exhortations to want it have permeated her reading" (A. S. Byatt, *Babel Tower* [N. Y.: Random House, 1994] 216). The narrator later informs the reader that "Frederica by a pure trick of time feels involved in *Women in Love*, which is a book about which she feels a fierce ambivalence (it is powerful, it is ridiculous, it is profound, it is willfully fantastic)" (214). By means of Frederica, Byatt, like a few other critics, observes that "Rupert Birkin spends most of *Women in Love* vilifying 'connection' and expressing intemperate suspicion of and antagonism to the word 'love.' But he ends in mystical vision of oneness and connectedness, beyond language" (308). In representing her heroine as wanting "all this," that is, as wanting what she calls Birkin's desire for "connection," Byatt reveals Frederica as limited by means of her narrator. Byatt's narrator comments upon Frederica's shortcomings in relation to her response to Birkin's desire for Oneness with Ursula; he states, "Frederica has tried to want all this." In revealing that Frederica "has tried" to want a connection with someone in Birkin's terms, a connection that Birkin himself can never achieve with Ursula because the transcendental union he desires cannot be achieved, Byatt shows that her heroine, like Birkin, has expended some effort to desire something that is unreal. It would appear, then, that Byatt reveals Frederica as limited and, thereby also reveals Birkin as limited, through her perhaps intellectual desire for something that on an emotional level she knows is not real and perhaps does not even want. I see Birkin's behavior here, as I discuss later in the text, as one of the chief ways Lawrence makes fun of Birkin; Birkin's admitting to what he considers the bourgeois and mundane concept of love, and then actually getting married, are two of the three chief things against which Birkin argues passionately. It appears that Byatt is thinking about the tea party scene, in which Birkin and Ursula have their most extended discussion on transcendence and also in which the narrator several times states that Ursula mocked Birkin, or that she responded mockingly; thus, though I do agree with Byatt that Lawrence "intelligently and complicitly mocks" Birkin, it cannot be inferred from a casual sentence in a novel whether or not Byatt sees Lawrence mocking Birkin as a sustained critique throughout *Women in Love*, or just in that tea party scene in which Ursula obviously plays with Birkin's ideas to tease him.

In his opening line to "Bert Lawrence and Lady Jane," *Lawrence And Women*, Ed. Anne Smith, (178), Moore states, "Like most members of our civilization, D. H. Lawrence was brought up in the tradition of male dominance. Unlike most others, however, he was
aware of this situation and, although he often accepted it, if only unconsciously, he often fought against it—something for which he has not usually been credited.


26 In reference to Sons And Lovers, Keith Sagar states that "Flower themes are woven into the novel so skillfully that only cumulatively does one recognize their symbolism," Twentieth Century Interpretation Of Sons And Lovers, ed. Judith Farr (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970) 47. And in The Love Ethic Of D. H. Lawrence, (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1955), Mark Spilka argues that "flowers are the most important of the 'vital forces' in Sons And Lovers. The novel is saturated with their presence, and Paul and his three sweethearts are judged, again and again, by their attitude toward them, or more accurately, by their relations with them" (45); although I disagree with Spilka's interpretation "that Miriam suffers from an "unhealthy spirituality" (45), which Spilka deduces from Miriam's association with the flower "maiden-blush" (45), he is correct in his observation that flower imagery is significant in the novel. Frieda Lawrence, as well, points out the importance of flowers to Lawrence and applauds Spilka's analysis of them in Lawrence's work; in the "Foreward" to Spilka's The Love Ethic of D. H. Lawrence, she states that "Mr. Spilka discovers many things, from the importance of flowers in Lawrence's writings to the special form of his novels" (Foreward, Frieda Lawrence Ravagli [Bloomington: Indiana UP] 1955, xi).


28 The rest of that phrase after "the woman who does awaken him sexually," is "that is placed, for maximum effect, at the end of a chapter" (74). Lerner quotes the following passage that I propose, as well, precisely shows that Lawrence guides the reader to conclude that there is nothing wrong with Miriam; rather, the problem lies with Paul. Lerner presents Paul's conversation with Clara about his situation with Miriam as follows:

'I know she wants a sort of soul union.'
'But how do you know what she wants?'
'I've been with her for seven years.'
'And you haven't found out the very first thing about her.'
'What's that?'
'That she doesn't want any of your soul communion. That's your own imagination. She wants you.'
29 Joseph Warren Beach, *The Twentieth Century Novel* (N. Y.: Appleton-Century, 1932) 369. In addition to Joseph Warren Beach and to Lydia Blanchard, who was previously discussed, Norman Mailer and Norman Douglas have commented on Lawrence's lack of humor; although "humour" has been treated at length by various critics, like Fielding and Coleridge, who argue that the subject has nothing to do with the comic, those who discuss Lawrence's "humor" use the term as it is generally understood to refer to comic perception. Mailer, probably Lawrence's most enthusiastic supporter, states that Lawrence was "at his worst, a humorless nag" (*Prisoner*, 37); Norman Douglas states that Lawrence had "Neither poise nor reserve" and adds "Nor had he a trace of humour." ("An Inspired Provincial," *D. H. Lawrence, Interviews and Recollections*, Vol. 2, Ed. Norman Page [Barnes & Noble: Totowa, 1981] 276).

30 In *Women in Love* Lawrence makes two references to Meredith. In describing the arrival of Hermione's brother, the narrator states "They all waited. And then round the bushes came the tall form of Alexander Roddice, striding romantically like a Meredith hero who remembers Disraeli" (40). And later in the novel Lawrence's narrator refers to Meredith's *Modern Love, Sonnet XXIII*, in describing Ursula's feelings for Birkin and the "unspeakable intimacies" she wanted with him; the narrator states, "She wanted to have him, utterly, finally to have him as her own, oh, so unspeakably in intimacy. To drink him down—ah, like a life-draft. She made great professions, to herself . . . after the fashion of the nauseous Meredith poem" (343).


34 E. Douka-Kabitoglou, "D. H. Lawrence: The Role Of The Woman As A Gateway To Fulfillment," *ERPSAPT* 17 (1978) 89.

35 Critics have argued about Lawrence's rejection of Christianity, which he claimed occurred when he was sixteen. Daniel J. Schneider refers to Emile Delavenay, who, in "using evidence from *Sons and Lovers*, argues that Lawrence's religious crisis occurred between twenty and twenty-two," but adds that "one cannot be sure"; Schneider also disagrees with what he calls "Jessie Chambers' unqualified assertion" that Lawrence "'swallowed materialism at a gulp'" (*The Consciousness of D. H. Lawrence, An Intellectual Biography* [Kansas: Up, 1968] 47, 49). But other critics, like Harold Bloom, argue that "Lawrence, hardly a libertine, had the radically Protestant sensibility of Milton, Shelley,
Browning, Hardy—none of them Eliotic favorites. To say that Lawrence was more a Puritan than Milton is only to state what is now finally obvious. What Lawrence shares with Milton is an intense exaltation of unfallen human sexuality. With Blake, Lawrence shares the conviction that touch, the sexual sense proper, is the least fallen of the senses, which implies that redemption is most readily a sexual process" ("Introduction," Modern Critical Interpretations, Women in Love, ed. Harold Bloom, [N. Y.: Chelsea House, 1988] 1). A look at Lawrence's fiction shows that it is loaded with biblical allusions and Christian symbols. Lawrence does rework many of the Christian symbols he uses to represent his own belief in sexual redemption, such as The Man Who Died, in which Lawrence presents a couple who are resurrected; they are awakened through their sexuality. Also, Lawrence often quotes extensively from scripture and discusses such complex mysteries as the Trinity and the Holy Ghost. But whatever Lawrence's beliefs, and it is apparent that he was ambivalent about Christianity and that he was not an orthodox Christian, his extensive biblical quotations and his constant references in his fiction to Christian symbols make it clear that Lawrence's fascination with the teachings of Christianity had a strong enough hold on him to preclude his making a total break with it.
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