THE THOUGHT OF THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK:

A STUDY OF HIS PHILOSOPHICAL, POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND AESTHETIC IDEAS

by

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PREFACE

This thesis examines the thought of Thomas Love Peacock on a variety of important subjects. It attempts to show that his attitudes were based, not upon mere prejudice, but upon serious analysis. Many critics have regarded Peacock as a destructive satirist with little constructive purpose in his novels. Others have seen his thought as superficial or confused. This study aims to correct these impressions by emphasising the positive aspects of his thought. Peacock's opinions and attitudes on a wide range of intellectual, political, social and aesthetic issues are discussed. Evidence is drawn from the whole corpus of his writings. Despite certain limitations of thought, Peacock emerges as an intelligent observer of contemporary affairs who was seriously concerned not only to ridicule falsehood and stupidity but also to present positive attitudes to contemporary life and thought.

The manuscript and printed materials used in the preparation of this study are listed in the Bibliography. I should like to thank my supervisor, Dr. J.R. Watson of the Department of English in the University of Leicester, for constant help and encouragement. I wish, too, to acknowledge assistance received from the staffs of the University of Leicester Library, the British Museum and the Pendlebury Music Library, Cambridge.
Supporting Evidence

The following book and periodical articles by the candidate are submitted with the thesis as supporting evidence:


2) 'Gladstone's reading of Thomas Love Peacock.' Notes and Queries, new series XIV, 1967, 334.

3) 'Peacock, Tennyson and Cleopatra.' Notes and Queries, new series XV, 1968, 416-417.

4) 'A short guide to Peacock studies.' Typescript of an article accepted for publication shortly in Critical Survey, IV, 1970, 193-197.

J.L.M.
FORMS OF ENTRY IN FOOTNOTES

Throughout the thesis footnotes have been made as brief as possible. Because of the frequency of references to the standard Halliford Edition of the Works of Thomas Love Peacock this has been regularly abbreviated to H. A typical entry lists volume number in roman and page numbers in arabic numerals - e.g. H VIII 123-125. References to books cite author or editor, short title and page numbers. References to periodical articles cite author (where known), short title of periodical, volume number in roman numerals, year and page numbers. Full details of all works mentioned in the text and in footnotes are given in the Bibliography.
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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

LIFE AND WORKS

In a review of Crotchet Castle in 1831 a writer in the Literary Gazette declared: 'Were we to be asked our private opinion as to who is the wittiest writer in England, we should say Mr. Peacock'. ¹ The writer of this could not know that Peacock, although he was to live for a further thirty-five years, would write only one more novel. Born in 1783, Peacock had failed in his earnest attempt to become a serious poet and, after meeting Shelley, had in 1815 begun to establish himself as a prose satirist of contemporary ideas. By 1831 he had published six of his seven novels.

Biographical information about Peacock has been assembled by H.F.B. Brett-Smith in the first volume of the Halliford Edition and by C.E. Jones in his thesis, The Life and Works of Thomas Love Peacock. For details about Peacock's character

¹ Literary Gazette, no. 735, 1831, 115
and attitudes both writers rely heavily on the records of those who knew him. Valuable contemporary reminiscences were provided by Peacock's granddaughter, Edith Nicolls, in her 'Biographical Notice' to Sir Henry Cole's three-volume edition of the Works, published in 1875; by Robert Buchanan, whose 'Personal Reminiscence' was first published in the New Quarterly Magazine in 1875; and by Sir Edward Strachey, son of Peacock's colleague at the East India Company, in his 'Recollections of Thomas Love Peacock', published in Richard Garnett's ten-volume edition of the Works in 1891-92.

Peacock's life and literary career fall into certain fairly distinct phases. His first ambitions were poetic, commencing in February 1800 with the winning of a prize in a competition organised by the Monthly Preceptor for a poem on the subject 'Is History or Biography the More Improving Study?'. The rather undistinguished pieces which followed included Palmyra (1805, revised 1812), The Genius of the Thames (1810, revised 1812), The Philosophy of Melancholy (1812) and Abrimanes (written 1813-14 but not published). During this period Peacock also published an attempt at comic verse in the early piece, The Monks of St. Mark (1804), and a heavy-handed satire, Sir Proteus (1814). Only Rhododaphne (1818), the last of his serious poems, shows any real merit. This long excursion into classical legend, however, is

2. H VII 157-158
charming and capable rather than a significant contribution to English poetry. Nevertheless, it is just to note that it received praise from Shelley, who had also lauded Peacock's earlier work, and from Byron.

Clive Bell has perceptively criticised Peacock's poetic achievement: 'It was clear from the first that Peacock would not be a poet; he lacked the essential quality - the power of feeling deeply. Before he was twenty it must have been clear that he possessed a remarkable head and an ordinary heart. He had wits enough for anything and sufficient feeling and imagination to write a good song; but in these early days his intellect served chiefly to save him from sentimentality and the grosser kinds of rhetoric'. Peacock suffered, too, from the defect which he himself found in Shelley's own poetry: 'the want of reality in the characters with which he peopled his splendid scenes'. His poems are of more value as indications of his early abilities, attitudes and interests than as creative works.

During the years 1810 to 1815 Peacock wrote two plays which were neither published nor performed during his lifetime. The Dilettanti and The Three Doctors are clear

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3 H I 1-li
4 H I lxxviii-lxxix
5 Pot-boilers, 68
6 H VIII 131
anticipated of the novels. In these plays he experiments with dramatic dialogues, songs, slapstick situations and with certain themes, most notably landscape gardening, which were to occupy his attention later. The plays' lack of vitality, however, seems due primarily to the fact that, at this time, Peacock had not yet devised his characteristic technique of using the discussion of ideas as the basis of his comic dialogue. Without this the weak plots and slightly drawn characters fail to retain the reader's interest.

Peacock's most active and successful literary period covered the years 1815 to 1836. In 1815 he published his first novel, Headlong Hall, which was post-dated 1816 on the title-page. The influence of Shelley, whom he first met in 1812, is evident in this work and in Melincourt (1817) and Nightmare Abbey (1818). Between 1820 and 1837 Peacock published a number of essays and reviews, chiefly on literature and music. As an essayist and reviewer he contributed to the Westminster Review in 1827-30, the London Review in 1835-36 and Bentley's Miscellany in 1837. His provocative essay, The Four Ages of Poetry, was published in the first number of Ollier's Literary Miscellany in 1820. He acted as opera critic for the Globe in 1830 and for the Examiner in 1831-34. The novels Maid Marian (1822), The Misfortunes of Elphin (1829)
and Crotchet Castle (1831) were also published during this period.

In 1819 Peacock had been appointed to the staff of the East India Company. In 1836 he succeeded James Mill as Examiner of Indian Correspondence. The increased work and responsibility of this post, together with the pressure of domestic concerns, restricted his leisure for writing and he published nothing further until 1851. In 1856 he retired from the East India Company. The works of his last years included several essays and reviews for Fraser's Magazine. It was in this periodical that he published his final novel, Gryll Grange, in 1860 and his Memoirs of Shelley in 1858-62.

A poor correspondent, Peacock left only a few letters and a short fragment of a diary compiled during July and August 1818. Fragments of a few novels and essays, which he began but did not complete, also survive.

THE NOVELS

Despite the importance of such essays as The Four Ages of Poetry and the Memoirs of Shelley Peacock's fame rests almost entirely on his seven published novels. The attribution of this nomenclature has, indeed, frequently been disputed. Ian Jack describes them as 'satiric tales'. W.H.W. Bliss declares: 'they are not novels and no word exactly describes

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8 English Literature, 1815-1832, 213
them - they are just books by Peacock'. H.W. Boynton describes them as 'satirical romances'. The debate about terminology, while not of major significance, does serve to indicate the unique nature of Peacock's works. His books are characterised by a marked lack of concern for the development of plot and situation, a free use of dramatic dialogue form, interpolation of songs, lengthy digressions and erudite notes.

Ronald Mason has stated that Peacock's 'plots do not affect his characters; his characters do not affect his plots'. His characters are important, not for their contribution to the usually perfunctory plot, but for their conversation. Ian Jack has neatly summarised the difference between Peacock and Jane Austen: 'Unlike Jane Austen, Peacock is more interested in ideas than in people: his concern is not with what his characters do, but with what they say'. H. Steuert describes the novels as 'organized discussions within a loose conversational framework'. Peacock's characters are often mere embodiments of a theory and exist only to advance an opinion. More complex figures such as Sir Oran in Melincourt, Seithenyn

9 *Month*, March 1930, 206
10 *Atlantic Monthly*, XCIII, 1906, 766
11 *Horizon*, IX, 1944, 243
12 *English Literature, 1815-1832*, 213
13 *Dublin Review*, CCXVI, 1945, 72
in *The Misfortunes of Elphin* and *Dr. Folliott in Crotchet Castle* achieve memorability rather by their extravagance than by any notable human insight revealed in their creation. Even those characters, such as Captain Fitzchrome in *Crotchet Castle* and Lord Curryfin in *Gryll Grange*, whom Peacock seems to have attempted to portray with greater realism than was usually his practice, are not fully realised as independent imaginative creations. Only in his depiction of women, and most notably in Lady Clarinda in *Crotchet Castle*, does Peacock occasionally succeed in making his characters convince the reader that they are living creatures and more than mere voices for the expression of opinion.

Peacock is 'a sort of laughing philosopher', a writer who is fascinated by ideas and theories, by the beliefs and principles which men hold either intellectually or through prejudice, rather than by their practical motives and actions. John Mair describes him as 'the first novelist to write exclusively for and about intellectuals'. While opinions form the subject matter of his novels, and discussion their characteristic framework, however, Peacock's immediate appeal as a writer lies chiefly in his style and tone. Although his pose is that of an amateur, his artistic method is professional.

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14 Anonymous reviewer of *Headlong Hall* in *Critical Review*, series 5, III, 1816, 69

15 Introduction to *Three Novels*, ix
The analysis of his stylistic achievement necessarily separates ingredients which produce their effect by integration. Few critics, indeed, have attempted such analysis, sensing perhaps that Peacock's style, like Jane Austen's, is elusive.

The following brief attempt to isolate some of the outstanding characteristics of Peacock's style in his novels presupposes the essentially homogeneous nature of his artistic method throughout the novels. This is, of course, to some extent an oversimplification, as Howard Mills, attacking Humphry House, notes. Nevertheless, it may be maintained that although, for example, Headlong Hall is generally more pedestrian than Nightmare Abbey, the novels, despite all their varied thematic preoccupations, display a recognisable similarity of method which makes it possible to discuss them as a closely related group.

The Literary Gazette, quoted above, described Peacock as 'the wittiest writer in England'. More than any other element in his novels, his success is attributable to his verbal ability. Edmund Wilson finds his style 'Light, lucid, neat and dry...it redeems him from insipidity at the moments when he is running thinnest; it gives charm to his most telling jokes by slipping them in with a minimum of emphasis'. The reader's dominant

16 Peacock; His Circle and His Age, 85
17 Literary Gazette, no. 735, 1831, 115
18 Classics and Commercials, 406
impression is of a concise style, the impact of which is dependent upon short, neatly-turned sentences or phrases. The opening narrative passages of *Headlong Hall* and *Crotchet Castle*, however, reveal Peacock's ability to handle long, rather stately sentences, filled with subordinate clauses. This, indeed, is frequently the manner adopted in his reviews and essays. Lytton Strachey, praising *The Four Ages of Poetry*, was impressed by 'the last enormous sentence' when he declared: 'That man knew how to write prose'.

Something of the variety of Peacock's effects is indicated by the opening of the first two chapters of *Crotchet Castle*. In the first chapter, the site of the villa is described in a single lengthy sentence:

In one of those beautiful vallies, through which the Thames (not yet polluted by the tide, the scouring of cities, or even the minor defilement of the sandy streams of Surrey,) rolls a clear flood through flowery meadows, under the shade of old beech woods, and the smooth mossy greensward of the chalk hills (which pour into it their tributary rivulets, as pure and pellucid as the fountain of Bandusium, or the wells of Scamander, by which the wives and daughters of the Trojans washed their splendid garments in the days of peace, before the coming of the Greeks); in one of those beautiful vallies, on a bold round-surfaced lawn, spotted with juniper, that opened itself in the bosom of an old wood, which rose with a steep, but not precipitous ascent, from the river to the summit of the hill, stood the castellated villa of a retired citizen.

19 *Letters*, ed. Woolf and Strachey, 97
20 H IV 1-2
This leisurely sentence succeeds in evoking an idyllic atmosphere by its stately and balanced rhythm, its use of a rather mannered diction, employing such words as 'greensward' and 'pellucid', and by the allusion to a graceful scene from classical literature. The tone of the writing, which is obviously designed to transport the reader from the real world into an ideal pastoral landscape, may be contrasted with the staccato utterances of Dr. Polliott on his first appearance at the opening of the following chapter:

"God bless my soul, sir!" exclaimed the Reverend Doctor Polliott, bursting, one fine May morning, into the breakfast-room at Crotchel Castle, "I am out of all patience with this march of mind. Here has my house been nearly burned down, by my cook taking it into her head to study hydrostatics, in a sixpenny tract, published by the Steam Intellect Society, and written by a learned friend who is for doing all the world's business as well as his own, and is equally well qualified to handle every branch of human knowledge. I have a great abomination of this learned friend; as author, lawyer, and politician, he is *triformis*, like Hecate; and in every one of his three forms he is *bifrons*, like Janus; the true Mr. Facing-both-ways of Vanity Fair. My cook must read his rubbish in bed; and as might naturally be expected, she dropped suddenly fast asleep, overturned the candle, and set the curtains in a blaze. Luckily, the footman went into the room at the moment, in time to tear down the curtains and throw them into the chimney, and a pitcher of water on her nightcap extinguished her wick: she is a greasy subject, and would have burned like a short mould". 21

This speech, as befits the character of Dr. Polliott, is jerky and impatient. Balanced phrases and references to the classics - *'triformis*, like Hecate...*bifrons*, like Janus* -
are used to create a witty, epigrammatic effect. It is noteworthy that the impression of conciseness is not achieved by means of short sentences but by the cumulative effect of the successive short phrases. Throughout his novels Peacock frequently uses this method to maintain conciseness while avoiding the monotony of a too regular use of the short sentence.

Constant mental alertness and verbal ingenuity are displayed in every successful sentence of Peacock's novels. He is rarely lazy and his effect of compactness and tautness is achieved by a constant intellectual discipline which makes unremitting demands on the reader's attention. The failure of any passage in the novels - as in the parts of Melincourt and The Misfortunes of Elphin which critics have labelled tedious - is usually traceable to a temporary slackening of this alertness.

Peacock's active intelligence is immediately evident in the opening paragraph of his first novel, Headlong Hall. The paragraph comprises a single rather lengthy sentence which at once establishes the essentially humorous tone of the book:

The ambiguous light of a December morning, peeping through the windows of the Holyhead mail, dispelled the soft visions of the four insides, who had slept, or seemed to sleep, through the first seventy miles of the road, with as much comfort as may be supposed with the jolting of the vehicle, and an occasional admonition to remember the coachman, thundered through the open door, accompanied by the gentle breath of Boreas, into the ears of the drowsy traveller. 22
The reader's attention is secured in this passage by the apt adjective 'ambiguous' to describe the light of the December morning, and the ironical references to 'the gentle breath of Boreas', the north wind, and the 'soft visions' of the passengers which contrast with the jolting of the vehicle and the thundering admonitions of the coachman.

This combination of apt description and ironical commentary is quickly brought to perfection in Peacock's novels. The first three sentences of Nightmare Abbey epitomise his particular merit as a stylist:

Nightmare Abbey, a venerable family-mansion, in a highly picturesque state of semi-dilapidation, pleasantly situated on a strip of dry land between the sea and the fens, at the verge of the county of Lincoln, had the honour to be the seat of Christopher Glowry, Esquire. This gentleman was naturally of an atrabilious temperament, and much troubled with those phantoms of indigestion which are commonly called blue devils. He had been deceived in an early friendship: he had been crossed in love; and had offered his hand, from pique, to a lady, who accepted it from interest, and who, in so doing, violently tore asunder the bonds of a tried and youthful attachment. 23

In this passage, the economical satiric thrust at those who prefer picturesqueness to utility and soundness of structure, the hint of one aspect of Glowry's character by the fact that it is the house that is described as honoured by his residence in it, the unusual and learned adjective 'atrabilious' and the carefully balanced phrases which describe the history of Glowry's courtship, all exemplify typical characteristics of
Peacock's mature style.

Peacock's prose style combines stateliness and elegance with conciseness and verbal ingenuity. His tone is by turns romantic, satiric, comic and learned. The descriptions of the philosophers' walk to Tremadoc in Headlong Hall and of the dingle in which Chainmail meets Susannah in Crotchet Castle display his romantic style, at once factual and full of warm appreciation of natural scenery. Comedy is achieved by the juxtaposition of contrasting theory and practice, as when Escot, at the moment of his engagement, announces that he is the happiest man alive but then states that 'A slight oscillation of good in the instance of a solitary individual...by no means affects the solidity of my opinions concerning the general deterioration of the civilised world'. The effect of Peacock's juxtapositions is frequently disturbingly ambiguous, as when Dr. Polliott declares that the state lacks a paterfamilias to regulate distribution: 'In the state it is all hunger at one end, and all surfeit at the other. Matchless claret, Mr. Crotchet'. Folliott's depiction of the disparity between those who live in luxury and those who are left to hunger is suddenly given present force by his act of drinking
a matchless claret. The reader is left to ponder whether Peacock's aim is comic contrast or satiric social commentary.

Saintsbury has declared of Peacock's mature style: 'It is not a "snip-snap" style, and though it is full of epigram, the epigram is not fired off pointblank at the reader with an obvious "there's one for you" from the writer'. Edmund Wilson has noted 'his restraint and distinction'. Peacock succeeds in avoiding obvious and predictable effects as he succeeds in escaping from the tedium of over-lengthy satiric attacks by his brevity and terseness and by the swiftness with which he shifts discussion from subject to subject.

The restraint and lightness of Peacock's style, however, are combined with an uninhibited delight in exaggerated farcical description and in erudite digression. Farcical situations are common in the novels and are usually described with considerable verbal ingenuity. Headlong Hall has not proceeded far before Cranium is projected by the shock of an explosion into the lake:

cutting short the thread of his observations, he bounded, under the elastic influence of terror, several feet into the air. His ascent being unluckily a little out of the perpendicular, he descended with a proportionate curve from the apex of his projection, and alighted, not on the wall of the tower, but in an ivy-bush by its side, which, giving way beneath him, transferred him to a tuft

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28 Introduction to 'The Misfortunes of Elphin' and 'Rhododaphne', ix

29 Classics and Commercials, 407
of hazel at its base, which, after upholding him an instant, consigned him to the boughs of an ash that had rooted itself in a fissure about half way down the rock, which finally transmitted him to the waters below. 30

This description, adorned by geometrical fancy, is typical of the treatment of several such episodes in the novels. Dr. Folliott, in Crotchet Castle, overturning his chair, 'laid himself on the carpet in a right angle, of which his back was the base'. 31 Seithenyn, in The Misfortunes of Elphin, having stumbled over a drunken hero, who was 'coiled himself up into his ring', lies 'in a right line, as a tangent to the circle'. 32

Peacock's robust delight in farcical description is equalled by his enthusiasm for displays of erudition. His works contain many outrageous neologisms, which provide further evidence of his Rabelaisian love of linguistic experiment. Some of these, such as 'that osteosarchaematosplanchnochondroneuromelous, or' to employ a more intelligible term, ossecarnisanguineovisceri-cartilaginoneryomedullary, compages, or shell, the body', 33 are rather pedantic exercises. Others, such as 'philotheoparoptesism' (roasting by a slow fire for the love of God) in Maid Marian, 34

30 H I 88-89
31 H IV 101
32 H IV 99
33 H I 109
34 H III 45
and 'tethrippharmatelasipedioploctypophilous' (driving a chariot of four horses with hoofs striking the ground) in *Melincourt*, are extremely ingenious.

Much more significant, however, is Peacock's range of reference and allusion. Osbert Burdett declares that he is 'a master of the footnote, and he is one of the few writers, perhaps the only novelist, whose footnotes could not possibly be spared'. His experience, as expressed in the novels, is primarily literary and it is perhaps only in his descriptions of nature, and especially in the passages devoted to Welsh mountain scenery, that he clearly draws upon a first-hand experience of life apart from books. His characters' ideas are derived from books and his references and allusions are to literature and, to a lesser degree, to music. By *Gryll Grange* literary quotation has become one of his principal methods of creating atmosphere. In this work, more than in any previous book, he explores byways of knowledge. He himself explains the purpose of the quotations in a prefatory note: 'The mottoes are sometimes specially apposite to the chapters to which they are prefixed; but more frequently to the general scope, or to borrow a musical term, the *motto* of the *operetta*'.

35  H II 213
36  *Critical Essays*, 92
37  H V xi
The reference to music here is significant. Peacock's knowledge of opera was demonstrated during his period as a reviewer for the *Globe* and the *Examiner*. In his novels his love of music may be seen in his delight in developing contrasting themes of argument and in the frequently somewhat operatic climaxes of action. An outstanding example of this occurs in *Nightmare Abbey* when Scythrop is discovered with Celinda. The scene is reminiscent of the climax of a comic opera and Peacock is obviously conscious of the similarity: 'Multitudinous questions, and answers *en masse*, composed a *charivari*, to which the genius of Rossini alone could have given a suitable accompaniment'.\(^38\) The argument that he deliberately imitated the methods of composers such as Rossini and Mozart has been developed by Paulina J. Salz.\(^39\) Edmund Wilson declares: 'You get closer to what Peacock is trying to do by approaching him through his admiration of Mozart - "There is," he wrote, "nothing perfect in this world except Mozart's music" - than by assimilating him to Lucian or Voltaire'.\(^40\)

At a more obvious level, his delight in music is expressed in his songs. Except for *The Misfortunes of Elphin*,

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38 \(\text{H III 133}\)


40 *Classics and Commercials*, 407
where the translation of Welsh traditional lyrics becomes rather tedious, the songs form an integral part of the novels. The romantic lyrics and ballads serve to set off the charms of the heroines, and many arguments are dissolved in drinking songs, a genre in which Peacock excels. These drinking songs restore balance and harmony, preserving the characteristic tone of good temper, which, despite the satire and controversy, finally pervades Peacock's works. They enable characters of widely differing temperaments and principles to express a common pleasure in the fundamental amenities of social life and thus help to preserve the reader's belief in the fiction of their enjoyment of each other's society.

THE VALUE OF PEACOCK'S THOUGHT

The title-page of Crotchet Castle includes a quotation from Samuel Butler, one of Peacock's favourite authors, quotations from whose works also precede Nightmare Abbey and Gryll Grange:

Should once the world resolve to abolish
All that's ridiculous and foolish,
It would have nothing left to do,
To apply in jest or earnest to.  

The lines indicate Peacock's subject matter in his works.

It is, of course, impossible to imagine his novels without

41 H IV title-page
their satiric attacks on ridiculous and foolish manifestations of human thought and behaviour. Many critics, however, have expressed the belief that Peacock applied himself only in jest, that his satire is merely destructive and not grounded in a desire either for the reformation of society or for the statement of positive principles.

Few critics will adopt the extreme position of the contemporary reviewer of Crotchet Castle that 'the philosophy is rubbish, the wit trash'\(^\text{42}\) or agree with Gladstone that the novels are 'unreadable'.\(^\text{43}\) Many have suggested, however, either that Peacock advances no personal convictions or that his ideas are merely superficial. Among early critics James Spedding declared in 1839 that 'Explicit faith of his own he seems to have none; the creeds, systems and theories of other men he treats as toys to play with'.\(^\text{44}\) A contributor to Temple Bar in 1875 asserted that 'at the conclusion of every argument in Peacock's dialogues the reader is left in doubt as to which side has triumphed'.\(^\text{45}\) In the same year E.W. Gosse stated that Peacock used satire 'as a punishment, not as a

\(^{42}\) Fraser's Magazine, IV, 1831, 19

\(^{43}\) Cf. J.L. Madden, 'Gladstone's reading of Peacock'. Notes & Queries, new series XIV, 1967, 384

\(^{44}\) Edinburgh Review, LXVIII, 1839, 443

\(^{45}\) Temple Bar, XLIV, 1875, 117
corrective*.\(^{46}\)

Many twentieth-century critics have expressed similar views. James Sutherland perceives in Peacock 'no consistent attitude to the modern world. His satire plays impartially on progress and conservatism, on romanticism and rationalism'.\(^{47}\) J.I.M. Stewart contrasts him with Shaw, who 'is writing ultimately out of a body of settled and confident convictions about men, nature and society', whereas 'Peacock has no convictions in this large sense; he has only prejudices and crotchets'.\(^{48}\) One of Peacock's most recent editors, Raymond Wright, states that 'One can get some indication of his antipathies from the narrators in his novels, in spite of the bantering tone, but very few hints about his more positive views'.\(^{49}\)

\(^{46}\) London Society, XXVII, 1875, 496

\(^{47}\) English Satire, 122

\(^{48}\) Introduction to J.B. Priestley, Peacock, xxv

\(^{49}\) 'Nightmare Abbey'; 'Crotchet Castle', ed. Wright, 17. Other modern critics who have stated that Peacock has no personal convictions include Kenneth Hopkins: 'Peacock himself was no propagandist, no reformer, he had no panacea of his own with which to save the world' (Introduction to Crotchet Castle, 17); Olwen W. Campbell: 'Peacock had no convictions; he committed himself to no "view of life"; he was not the apostle or the proselyte of any human or superhuman creed' (Shelley and the Unromantics, 48); J.P. Smith: 'he looked neither deeply nor long into any matter, but moved from point to point with playful irresponsibility' (A Critical Study of Peacock, 171); P.M. Yarker: 'He uses the elements of satire, but seems to lack the satirical intent' (Introduction to 'Headlong Hall' and 'Nightmare Abbey', xv); Humphry House: 'he switches his point of view with each of his talkers' (Listener, XIII, 1949, 998); G.D. Klingopulos: 'Judgements of any finality require an affirmative quality lacking in Peacock' (From Dickens to Hardy, ed. Ford, 138).
Among critics who find Peacock intellectually superficial, A.E. Dyson has argued most cogently in his essay in *The Crazy Fabric*. Dyson declares that Peacock cares little for the truth of ideas: 'it is their quaintness, their picturesqueness, their absurdity that catches his eye'.\(^{50}\) Peacock is guilty of smug complacency, 'a two-sides-to-every-question geniality, steering all sharp exchanges towards the safety of sport'.\(^{51}\) Dyson asserts that 'Peacock failed to distinguish between genius and crankiness' and between 'complacency and common sense'.\(^{52}\) He contrasts Peacock unfavourably with Johnson for whom common sense is wisdom distilled from human experience over the ages.

The charge of superficiality is also brought by Mario Praz, who asserts that Peacock evades serious philosophical issues by 'taking sips at the secondary philosophers, those who maintained out-of-date positions and were easy and pleasant to read', such as William Drummond and Horne Tooke.\(^{53}\) John Hampson, too, claims that the reader has 'an underlying recognition that Peacock's moral position is common-place and unsatisfactory'.\(^{54}\)

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50 *The Crazy Fabric*, 58
51 *Ibid.*, 61
52 *Ibid.*, 65
53 *The Hero in Eclipse*, 89
54 *The Novels of Peacock*, 185. Douglas Haintt, in a very recent article on *Contact Castle*, finds Peacock superficial: 'Contact Castle, despite its incident-rich familiarity, is an example of apparent openness of mind created by basic familiarity, by an unthinkingness - fatal to the effect of a novel or ideas - to take any ideas seriously.' (*Essays in Criticism*, XX, 1970, 211)
There are, of course, exceptions to these common representations of Peacock as a merely destructive satirist or superficial thinker. A contemporary reviewer in the *Literary Gazette* stated that 'Mr. Peacock has a keen perception of the absurd, because he has a clear perception of the truth'.\(^{55}\) Peacock's obituary in the *Athenaeum* claimed for him 'a genial recognition of all that is best, highest, and most liberal'.\(^{56}\) Ian Jack sees the sequence of novels as a 'discussion of the true meaning of Progress'.\(^{57}\) A.H. Able declares that Peacock has been 'too little appreciated for his genuine values of thought' and has been 'hitherto regarded chiefly as a skeptical and self-contradictory humorist'.\(^{58}\) Douglas Bush finds that 'like most satirists, he attacked his age because he had visions of a better one'.\(^{59}\) Q.D. Leavis, in the only reference to Peacock in *Scrutiny*, asserts that 'Peacock's entertaining surface and occasional frivolity proceed from a mind that is fundamentally responsible, that takes living and the problems of life and society seriously'.\(^{60}\) F.R. Leavis echoes

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55 *Literary Gazette*, no. 735, 1831, 115
56 *Athenaeum*, no. 1998, 1866, 208
57 *English Literature, 1815–1832*, 214
58 *Meredith and Peacock*, 15
59 *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry*, 181
60 *Scrutiny*, I, 1942, 290
this judgement when he states: 'In his ironical treatment of contemporary society and civilisation, he is seriously applying serious standards'.

Several critics have discerned in Peacock an eighteenth-century attitude to intellectual problems. H. Steuert refers to 'his firm adherence to the centrality of the Augustan code'. John Mair describes him as 'a perfect example of the eighteenth-century man'. Douglas Bush labels him 'an eighteenth-century aristocrat'.

Such a diversity of critical opinion clearly indicates a fundamental uncertainty of approach to the study of Peacock's works in general and to the novels in particular. If Clive Bell was deliberately overstating his case when he declared that 'a man without a vestige of humour or taste may read him for his point of view', it is certainly true that the point of view should be examined. David Garnett has stated: 'I believe that he is a writer whose thought one should understand as well as his wit'.

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61 The Great Tradition, 9n
62 Dublin Review, CCXVI, 1945, 69
63 Introduction to Three Novels, vii
64 Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry, 180
65 Pot-boilers, 54
66 Novels of Peacock, xvi
The present study analyses Peacock's positive values and attitudes on a number of philosophical, political, social, and aesthetic topics. It attempts to illuminate the positive aims and ideals which motivated Peacock as a writer. The analysis is intended primarily as an aid to the understanding of the novels. It is, of course, evident that great care has to be exercised when using the novels themselves as evidence. It is easy for the modern reader to attribute to Peacock greater insight than he possessed. For this reason many readers have assumed without evidence that, because Monboddo's opinions about the orang-outang are now generally seen to be nonsense, Peacock in *Melincourt* is necessarily satirising all Monboddo's ideas.

The dangers arising from too close an identification of, for example, Dr. Folliott with Peacock himself have been practically demonstrated in several critical works. Wherever possible, in the present study, themes have been traced from novel to novel and corroborative evidence of the sincerity of the thought as an expression of the author's own ideas has been sought in other writings. In particular, the opinions which Peacock expresses in his letters, diary, essays and reviews are used to clarify his own position in the novels. In general, his essays and reviews provide a very valuable
guide to his ideas and opinions at the time of writing. There seems, indeed, no justification for Raymond Wright's unsupported assertion that 'if one turns for help [about Peacock's positive views] to his essays and reviews one seldom finds them more revealing than the novels'.

Only in Melincourt does Peacock present a hero and heroine who, throughout most of the novel, seem to express unequivocally his own views at the time of writing. This novel, while artistically the least satisfactory of all his works, is of enormous value to the student of his ideas during the period of his closest friendship with Shelley. It was at this time that Shelley, writing to Leigh Hunt, described Peacock as 'an amiable man of great learning, considerable taste, an enemy to every shape of tyranny & superstitious imposture'. In the other novels Peacock does not contrast his characters so simply as in Melincourt but adopts a more ambivalent position, frequently presenting complex characters some of whose opinions are clearly satirised while others seem to express the author's own viewpoint.

Peacock lived to the age of eighty. Inevitably, his opinions changed during the course of his life. Too great consistency, indeed, would indicate stagnation of thought. On

67 'Nightmare Abbey'; 'Crotchet Castle', ed. Wright, 17
68 Letters of Shelley, ed. Jones, I, 518
many of the problems discussed below it is possible to trace his developing attitude. Some questions, however, such as the controversy about landscape gardening, occupied his attention for only a comparatively brief period. On these subjects it is possible only to indicate with reasonable certainty his opinions at a given time.

In his important essay, French Comic Romances, published in 1835 in the London Review, Peacock advances his own ideas about 'comic fictions'. His opinions on the function of ridicule are discussed below in chapter 9. In this essay he advances the argument that the greatest satirists use ridicule to test standards of truth and thus to promote moral values and philosophical ideas. The present study is written in the belief that Peacock's own satire is based not, as the majority of critics have supposed, upon mere crotchets and prejudices, but upon standards and convictions which are deeply considered and honestly held. Peacock lacks the imaginative strength and vitality of the greatest novelists as he lacks the sustained and penetrating intellectual effort of the most important thinkers. Nevertheless, he emerges as a fundamentally serious and positive commentator on contemporary ideas and achievements.

69 H IX 258-259
CHAPTER 2

FAITH, REASON AND INTUITION

CHRISTIANITY

Reviewing Sir Henry Cole's edition of Peacock's works, Alexander I. Shand wrote in the Edinburgh Review: 'Impious he never is, nor can he be fairly styled irreverent. Yet the absence of either religious or even doctrinal allusion in his colloquies is the more conspicuous, that almost invariably there is an orthodox clergyman figuring prominently among the interlocutors'. 1 In the preface to Cole's edition Lord Houghton noted 'the total absence of theology as an element of social life or public discussion'. 2

Peacock's lack of concern for theological discussion has been emphasised by many of his biographers and critics. 3

1 Edinburgh Review, CXLI, 1875, 121; author identified by Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, I, 523
2 Works, ed. Cole, I, xvii
3 E.g. C. Van Doren finds him 'to an unusual degree...devoid of the religious spirit' (Life of Peacock, 245); E.M.W. Tillyard notes that 'Peacock had little religious sense' (Essays Literary and Educational, 119); Ian Jack states that he 'seems for the greater part of his life to have remained a consistent pagan' (English Literature, 1815-1832, 8).
Only in his earliest and last years does Peacock reveal traces of sympathy for Christianity. Probably between 1801 and 1802 he paraphrased in verse passages from the Bible, including the Lord's Prayer and parts of Revelation and the seventeenth chapter of Isaiah. The first version of Palmyra closes with a reference to the Fatherhood of God. In the 1812 version, however, this was changed to a more general theistic statement. There is an indication of belief in immortality in The Old Man's Complaint, On the Death of Charles Pembroke, Esq. and The Rainbow. These poems were all included in the 1805 volume of Palmyra, and Other Poems. The Antijacobin Review in 1810 found the author of The Genius of the Thames 'a man of good religious and moral principles'.

The religious ideas in these early poems, however, are conventionally expressed and seem lacking in any deep emotional conviction. It was not long before Peacock adopted a more sceptical attitude towards all questions of the supernatural. In Headlong Hall the case for Christianity is

4 H VI 70; H VII 170, 175-176; for dating see K.N. Cameron, Shelley and His Circle, I, 247
5 H VI 21-22
6 H VI 175
7 H VI 65-68
8 Antijacobin Review, XXXVII, 1810, 84
immediately weakened by the introduction of the gluttonous and ignorant Dr. Gaster. The attacks made upon this easy target indicate that Peacock agreed with Escot that on the question of final causes he was 'as profoundly ignorant as the most dogmatical theologian possibly can be'. 9 When in 1819 Jane Gryffydh replied to Peacock's proposal of marriage, she expressed the hope that 'Your Sentiments on the awful subject of Religion I trust are changed', though she expressed her own belief that people may have misrepresented Peacock's lack of faith. 10 A Welsh lady who spoke to Shelley about Peacock's visit to Wales in 1811, however, was definite in her conviction that 'he was an Atheist'. 11

Whether or not he should be classed as an atheist, it is evident that Peacock's attacks upon Christianity were directed far more against examples of corruption and abuse than against doctrinal arguments. He displays particular hostility towards the use of religion for political purposes. In Melincourt Paperstamp declares: 'a little pious cant goes a great way towards turning the thoughts of men from the dangerous and jacobinical propensity of looking into moral and

9 H I 18
10 H VIII 477
11 Letters of Shelley, ed. Jones, I, 334
political causes, for moral and political effects'. The scene at Mainchance Villa in chapter XXXIX of Melincourt constitutes a bitter attack upon the deliberate use of Christianity in order to arouse popular emotion and to confuse reason. In his review of Moore's The Epicurean Peacock seems to imply that he regards this practice as universal in all relationships between religion and the state: 'religion was of course then, as now, called in to subserve, as far as it would go, the cause of political supremacy'.

Peacock's works do not reveal sympathy for any sect. He was always opposed to religious enthusiasm and missionaries and Methodists especially arouse his hostility. Missionaries are satirised in Satyrane and in Calidore. In Crotchet Castle the three classes of men who flourish in Dotandcarry-onestown are Methodist preachers, slave-drivers and paper-money manufacturers.

None of the Anglican clergymen in Peacock's novels displays distinctively Christian faith. There is certainly an increasing sympathy shown in the progression from Gaster,

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12 H II 414
13 H IX 6
14 H VIII 297-298
15 H VIII 331-334
16 H IV 134
Portpipe and Grovelgrub through Larynx to Folliott and Opimian, but the attractiveness is due to a recognition of cultural standards, learning and good sense rather than to any deepened spiritual awareness. If Dr. Folliott was intended, as Edith Nicolls asserts, as an 'amende honourable to the clergy' there is no indication that Peacock had reached a sympathetic appreciation of the spiritual role of the Christian ministry.

Peacock is hostile to all manifestations of religious bigotry and hatred. In Maid Marian he coins the word 'philothecoparoptesism' to mean 'roasting by a slow fire for the love of God', an idea which is anticipated in Nightmare Abbey where he describes 'the good old times', praised by Mosoky, as 'the days when polemic theology was in its prime, and rival prelates beat the drum ecclesiastic with Herculean vigour, till one wound up his series of syllogisms with the very orthodox conclusion of roasting the other'. In The Four Ages of Poetry he refers to 'the crazy fanaticism of the crusades'. In Calidore Bacchus declares that 'the ugliest object in nature is a human visage distorted by a fanatical faith'.

17 Works, ed. Cole, I, xli
18 H III 45
19 H III 11
20 H VIII 14
21 H VIII 334
It was perhaps the lack of tolerance frequently shown by Christians which most prejudiced Peacock against the protagonists of Christianity. In *Rich and Poor* and *A Bill for the Better Promotion of Oppression on the Sabbath Day*, both probably written about 1821, he attacked the Sunday Observance laws. Peacock revised both these poems in 1837, shortly after the publication of Dickens's *Sunday Under Three Heads*. Like Dickens, Peacock was doubtless angered by Sir Andrew Agnew's attempt to introduce a Bill to increase the penalties for Sabbath-breaking. Both writers note that laws to enforce Sunday observance discriminate unfairly against the poorer classes. Thus Dickens states: 'If the rich composed the whole population of this country, not a single comfort of one single man would be affected'.

Peacock's *Bill* ends:

> For no party whatever has aught to fear
> From said act who has more than £300 a year.

That Peacock had no sympathy with Lord John Russell's campaign against the Roman Catholics is evident from *A Goodbye Ballade of Little John*. In his review of Moore's *Letters*
and Journals of Lord Byron Peacock praised Jefferson's liberal tolerance in religious matters. It is significant that he quotes with approval Jefferson's conviction that even the existence of a God should be questioned, 'because if there be one, he must more approve the homage of reason, than of blindfolded fear'. In French Comic Romances Peacock describes the Reformation as an advance towards 'freedom of conscience and freedom of inquiry'.

Peacock's praise is reserved for moral excellence rather than for doctrinal conviction. Anthelia Melincourt's father, who 'though an unexceptionable moral character, was unhappily not one of the children of grace, in the theological sense of the word', is an ideal type. It was in Melincourt that the British Critic discerned 'the cloven foot of infidelity'. In his review of Moore's Letters and Journals of Lord Byron Peacock quotes with approval Richard Payne Knight's The Progress of Civil Society in which he notes that the term 'a good Christian' 'has not only had a different signification in every age and country, but in the mouth of almost every individual who has ever used it'. Knight uses this argument
to assert the impossibility of arriving at any generally acceptable definition of the phrase. In *The Epicier* Peacock points out how religious observances differ according to the spirit of the age.  

None of Peacock's sympathetically portrayed characters, except possibly Falconer in *Gryll Grange*, possess any marked religious faith. Falconer himself reflects Peacock's own interest in late life in Saint Catharine, of whose legend he collected books, prints and engravings. Falconer's devotion, however, is paid to a symbol of 'ideal beauty', as Dr. Opimian perceives and as Falconer himself acknowledges. His impulse, in fact, is similar to that which leads Robin Hood in *Maid Marian* to pay exclusive devotion 'to our Lady the Virgin'. The opening of *A Story of a Mansion* among the Chiltern Hills at St. Katharine's Chapel near Guildford demonstrates further Peacock's interest in the legend of this saint in his later years. However, his satiric reference to Roman Catholic devotion in *Chapelle and Bachaumont*, written shortly before *Gryll Grange*, reveals his continuing distrust of religious observances: 'they employed the next
morning entirely in devotions, - that is to say, in bringing their rosaries into contact with a number of holy bodies, and dropping large pieces of money into basins and boxes". 36

If there are few references in Peacock's works to the supernatural these are significant. Although he confines his attention to the discussion of ghosts, the argument advanced could be applied with equal force to the evidences of the Resurrection. Peacock grounds his explanation of supernatural manifestations on the theory of the association of ideas. In Melincourt Fax explains Forester's vision of Anthelia by noting the tendency of the imagination in times of stress to supply a missing person or object in a familiar scene. He asserts that 'This single mental principle will explain the greater number of credible tales of apparitions'. 37 The same argument is used by the sane Hilary in Nightmare Abbey. He declares that 'it is more easy for a soldier, a philosopher, or even a saint, to be frightened at his own shadow, than for a dead man to come out of his grave. Medical writers cite a thousand singular examples of the force of imagination'. 38

That this sceptical attitude represents Peacock's own view
is clear from his comment on Shelley's delusions in the Memoirs of Shelley: 'An idea may have the force of a sensation; but the oftener a sensation is repeated, the greater is the probability of its origin in reality'. Under the stress of deep emotion and suffering, on the death of his daughter Margaret in 1826, he did not conceal his fundamental disbelief in immortality. The poem - 'Long night succeeds thy little day' - which he wrote for her gravestone is certainly unorthodox in tone and brought inevitable opposition from the vicar of Shepperton.

The remark in his review of Moore's The Epicurean, which Olwen W. Campbell cites as evidence that Peacock was not a total unbeliever, is surely either ironic or a concession to the convictions of his readers. Having written with obvious warmth of Epicurean teaching, and having emphasised its insistence on the mortality of the soul and its derision of belief in the truth of dreams, he states: 'In England, we all believe in the immortality of the soul, and some of us believe in the verity of dreams'. In the

39 H VIII 102
40 H VII 239
41 H I cxxviii
42 Peacock, 100
43 H IX 53
same review Peacock asserts that 'The truth of the Christian Religion is too clearly established amongst us to admit of dispute'.44 The whole tenor of the essay, however, seems so markedly in favour of 'the noblest philosophy of antiquity'45 that it is difficult to believe that Peacock is not indulging in an ironic contrast between Epicurean and Christian faith and practice. Seven years earlier, in The Four Ages of Poetry, he had noted how, as the light of the Gospel spread over Europe, 'by a mysterious and inscrutable dispensation, the darkness thickened with the progress of the light'.46

It is interesting to note that in 1860, when Peacock published in Fraser's Magazine some letters which he had received from Shelley, he deleted the anti-Christian passages.47 As he also deleted names and descriptions of persons attacked in the letters, the omissions probably represent a prudent desire not to prejudice Shelley's reputation, rather than any indication that the passages offended Peacock's own taste. Certainly, Peacock's own convictions about the methods which should be adopted by biographers, as expressed at the beginning of the Memoirs of Shelley,48 would support such a conclusion.

44 H IX 39
45 H IX 67
46 H VIII 13
47 H VIII 498
48 H VIII 39-40
REASON AND INTUITION

Peacock's basic position on questions of religion and the supernatural is essentially rationalistic. Like Escot in Headlong Hall he attempted 'to deduce what is probable and rational from the sources of analysis, experience, and comparison', without reference to ecclesiastical or scriptural authority. In 1809 Peacock wrote to Hookham recommending him to read Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding 'before any other speculative book', as 'the very best foundation of an enlightened system of study'. Escot's criteria of judgement - 'analysis, experience, and comparison' - may be derived from Locke's principle that all knowledge is founded upon experience in the form of 'external material things as the objects of SENSATION, and the operations of our own mind within as the objects of REFLECTION'. It is possible, too, that Peacock's attitude to visionary experiences is derived from Locke. Fax's explanation of Forester's vision of Anthelia, quoted above, may be an extension of Locke's arguments about the involuntary association of ideas. Certainly Peacock would agree with Locke's tenet

49 H I 40
50 H VIII 176
51 An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Yolton, I, 77-78 (Book II, chapter I, paragraphs 1-4)
52 Ibid., I, 335-341 (Book II, chapter XXXIII)
that knowledge is based upon the probabilities suggested by comparison of the experience of particular men and of the human race in general.\textsuperscript{53} This is implied both in Peacock's own attitude to Shelley's delusions and in Escot's criteria of judgement. It would seem, however, that Peacock is probably sceptical even on those matters, such as the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which Locke allows to be 'above reason'.\textsuperscript{54}

Peacock's hostility to the philosophy of intuition as the chief opponent of Locke's rational and empirical philosophy finds frequent expression in his attacks upon Coleridge as a disciple of Kant. Strangely, there is no indication that Peacock ever read Locke's disciple, David Hartley, whose thought exercised such a strong influence on Coleridge until his conversion from materialism and empiricism. There is a marked similarity between Peacock's views of 'transcendental philosophy' and those of William Drummond in his \textit{Academical Questions}. Like Shelley, Peacock early admired Drummond, praising him in a note to \textit{Sir Proteus}.\textsuperscript{55} In the preface to \textit{The Revolt of Islam} Shelley described the \textit{Academical Questions} as 'a volume of very acute and powerful metaphysical criticism'.\textsuperscript{56} In \textit{Melincourt} the \textit{Academical Questions} is one of the works to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{53} \textit{Ibid.}, II, 255-256 (Book IV, chapter XVI, paragraph 6)
  \item \textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid.}, II, 279 (Book IV, chapter XVII, paragraph 23)
  \item \textsuperscript{55} H VI 287n
  \item \textsuperscript{56} \textit{Works}, ed. Ingpen and Peck, I, 242n
\end{itemize}
which Peacock refers his readers for an elucidation of key concepts of Kant's philosophy. In the same note he also cites a review by Thomas Brown of Villers' *Philosophie de Kant* in the *Edinburgh Review*. Although he may have read this article, he does not directly employ its ideas and phrases as he does those of Drummond.

It is noteworthy that there is no real evidence that Peacock had read Kant's works. Since he himself knew no German he could only have consulted them, if at all, in a translation such as 'Professor Born's Latin translation' to which he refers the reader of *Melincourt*. It is probable, however, that he falls into that class described by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* as 'those who have taken their notion of IMMANUEL KANT from Reviewers and Frenchmen'.

Like Drummond, Peacock criticises the arrogance of Kant and his disciples, their unsupported emphasis on intuitive knowledge, their love of jargon and mystery and their refusal to define terminology. Peacock was probably influenced by Drummond's penultimate chapter, which forms the most heavily satirical part of the *Academical Questions*. Traces of such

57 H II 330n
58 *Edinburgh Review*, I, 1803, 253-280; author identified in *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*, I, 431
59 H II 330n
60 *Biographia Literaria*, ed. Shawcross, I, 99
influence are especially evident in Melincourt in the description of Cimmerian Lodge in chapter XXXI. The idea of the 'Island of Pure Intelligence' in the 'Ocean of Deceitful Form' may be inspired by Drummond's translation of a passage in Kant's work. At the end of his chapter on Kant and transcendental philosophy Drummond states: 'I shall now take leave of the transcendental philosophers. I trust I shall never have occasion again to disturb them, while they continue to navigate their stormy ocean, and to measure their island of pure intelligence'. In his chapter Peacock uses phrases from Drummond such as 'taste for the bombast' and 'admirer of the obscure'; 'the stone of doubt'; 'anticipated cognition'. He also alludes to the 'process of transcendent alising a cylindrical mirror' - a reference to an image in Villers' Philosophie de Kant which Drummond also ridicules. The emphasis upon 'the difference between objective and subjective reality' may also echo Drummond.

61 H II 330
62 Academical Questions, 380
63 Academical Questions, 381
64 H II 331; Academical Questions, 370
65 H II 329; Academical Questions, 371
66 H II 329, 336; Academical Questions, 352
67 H II 330, 337-338; Academical Questions, 373-374
68 H II 330, 338; Academical Questions, 352, 369, 372-373, 377
In his attack upon transcendental philosophy Drummond advises the enquirer to consult 'experience (that useful monitor!)', 'his reason, if indeed he can preserve it amidst the visions of the new philosophy, and the antinomia of pure cognitions' and 'his common sense, which may help to bring him to himself, in case he should grow giddy, while he is gazing from some sublime and transcendental height of critical exaltation'.

Peacock's appeal, similarly, is to experience, analytical reason and common sense against intuition, love of mystery and obscurity of thought and expression, all of which he finds characteristic of Coleridge as a disciple of Kant. His satire is directed against Coleridge himself and also against the habits of thought which he represents.

Panscope in Headlong Hall shrouds his thought in obscurity, is hostile to 'the futile process of analytical dialectics' and appeals to 'synthetically deduced opinions' which are 'transcendently self-evident'.

In Melincourt Mystic criticises Forester and Fax as 'empirical psychologists, and slaves of definition, induction, and analysis, which he intended for terms of abuse, but which were not taken for such by the persons to whom he addressed them'.

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69 Academical Questions, 354
70 H I 54-55
71 H II 335
several years in transcendental darkness, till the common daylight of common sense became intolerable to his eyes. His love of darkness, of course, aggrandises his mental obscurity. He is the opponent of analysis: 'Analytical reasoning is a base and mechanical process, which takes to pieces and examines, bit by bit, the rude material of knowledge, and extracts therefrom a few hard and obstinate things called facts, every thing in the shape of which I cordially hate.' Flosky's claim that he 'carries the whole science of geometry in his head without ever having looked into Euclid' is probably taken directly from Drummond's gibe at transcendental philosophers 'who know metaphysics a priori, who possess an intuitive faculty, who see visions of pure reason, and who carry the whole science of geometry in their heads, before they ever looked into Euclid.' The attack upon intuitive knowledge is continued in Crotchet Castle, where Crotchet recognises the debate of the intuitive against the inductive as one of the great philosophical questions. Skionar here defines transcendentalism as 'the philosophy of

72  H III 10
73  H III 72-73
74  H III 49
75  H III 79
76  Academical Questions, 358
77  H IV 22
intuition, the development of universal convictions' which may be obscured by superstitions prejudice or by Aristotelian logic.\textsuperscript{78}

From the number of echoes of the \textit{Academical Questions} in his attacks upon Kant and his followers it seems certain that Peacock had carefully studied Drummond's arguments. There is also, however, a significant similarity between Peacock's attacks upon Kant and Coleridge and those of Hazlitt. Peacock would probably have seen Hazlitt's essays in the \textit{Edinburgh Review} and the \textit{Examiner}, both of which he was certainly reading during the period in 1818 when he kept a diary.\textsuperscript{79} It is not certain that he would have seen the important series of essays on 'Madame de Staël's Account of German Philosophy and Literature' which Hazlitt contributed to the \textit{Morning Chronicle} in 1814,\textsuperscript{80} for he refers to this journal on only one occasion, in \textit{Crotchet Castle}.\textsuperscript{81} Hazlitt's opinion of Kant's philosophy is conveniently stated in these essays: 'Its chief object is to oppose certain fundamental principles to the empirical or mechanical philosophy, and it either rejects or explains away the more common and established notions, except in so far as

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{78} H IV 21-22
\textsuperscript{79} H VIII 435-444
\textsuperscript{80} Works, ed. Howe, XX, 12-36
\textsuperscript{81} H IV 200m
\end{footnotesize}
they coincide with the rigid theory of the author. He sets out with a preconceived hypothesis; and all other facts and opinions are made to bend to a predominant purpose. 82

This criticism forms the basis of later attacks. In August 1817 Hazlitt contributed to the Edinburgh Review a notice of Coleridge's Biographia Literaria in which he declares of Kant that 'his system appears to us the most wilful and monstrous absurdity that ever was invented...He has but one method of getting over difficulties:—when he is at a loss to account for anything, and cannot give a reason for it, he turns short round upon the inquirer, and says that it is self-evident'. 83

In his review of Coleridge's The Statesman's Manual in the Edinburgh Review for December 1816 Hazlitt attacks Coleridge for talking nonsense, for ignoring facts, and for living in a world of self-delusion. 84 In his Political Essays he again refers to Coleridge's unwillingness or inability to make himself understood and his power of voluntary self-delusion. 85 In his article 'On Consistency of Opinion' in the London Magazine for November 1821 he notes contradictions. 86

82 Works, ed. Howe, 20
83 Ibid., XVI, 123-124
84 Ibid., XVI, 99-101
85 Ibid., VII, 114-115, 123
inconsistencies in Coleridge's thought. 86

In his hostility to the philosophy of Kant and Coleridge, then, Peacock agreed with the strictures of Drummond and Hazlitt. His fundamental objection to an intuitive philosophy was that its criteria are essentially non-rational and therefore unable to be tested. Peacock believed that philosophical statements should be based on experience and observation and on reflection upon these. They should be judged on grounds of probability in the light of the general experience of mankind. For Peacock the search for truth was empirical and based upon a balance of probabilities. He denied the validity of intuitive perceptions which could not be verified by general experience.

86 Ibid., XVII, 29
CHAPTER 3

DETERIORATIONISM, PERFECTIBILISM AND NECESSITARIANISM

Three closely related philosophical problems occupy much of Peacock's attention in his early writings. He is concerned with the question whether mankind in general is deteriorating or whether it is improving physically, morally and mentally. As a corollary to this he considers whether man is found at his happiest and best in some primitive state of nature or in modern civilised society. Thirdly, he questions whether man has free-will - whether, in fact, deterioration or improvement are in any sense inevitable conditions of life.

Peacock's interest reflects a serious contemporary concern for these problems, not merely for their interest as abstract speculation, but also for their practical social implications. He had certainly read the arguments in favour of optimistic necessitarianism, based on the belief that truth and virtue will inevitably triumph over error and evil, in Shelley's Queen Mab and in Godwin's Political Justice, a copy of which was supplied to him by Hookham in 1809.¹ There is no

¹ H VIII 174
evidence that he ever read the older defences of optimistic
necessitarianism in David Hartley's *Observations on Man* and
Joseph Priestley's *Doctrine of Philosophic Necessity Illustrated*. Certainly, no reference to either author occurs in any of his
writings. His friendship with Shelley made him personally
acquainted with the deteriorationist John Frank Newton.
References to the theories of Rousseau and Monboddo about the
differences between primitive and civilised man are frequent,
most notably in *Melincourt*.

The arguments about deteriorationism, perfectibilism and
necessitarianism had a degree of interest for Peacock throughout
his life, but they impressed themselves with most force and
urgency during the period from his first meeting with Shelley
in 1812 until the completion of *Melincourt* in 1817. The first
strong influence on his imagination seems to have been his
acquaintance with J.F. Newton, which caused him in 1813-14 to
commence a long poem, *Ahriman*, as an exposition of Newton's
mythological and deteriorationist theories. In this poem the
genius Aretina declares that

Parent of being, mistress of the spheres,
Supreme Necessity o'er all doth reign.

She narrates how power over the earth was first given to

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3 H VII 271
'Oromazes - lord of peace and day' and mankind enjoyed prosperity. Later, however, authority passed to Ahriman, god of war and destruction:

'Tis Ahriman still that wield'd the rod;
To him all nature bends, and trembles at his nod.\(^5\)

In his outline of the poem Peacock provided for a final prophecy of the return to power, at some time in the distant future, of Oromazes.\(^6\)

Despite its small literary merit Ahriman provides a useful indication of Peacock's interest in the problems of deterioration and necessity. When he described J.F. Newton in the Memoirs of Shelley he depicted him as a comic eccentric, emphasising his vegetarianism and his zodiacal mythology.\(^7\) It seems evident, however, that in Peacock's earlier years, Newton exercised a stronger influence on his thought and imagination than he was willing to admit in later life.

In Headlong Hall Peacock treats the problem by means of a direct contrast between two philosophers, Escot 'the deteriorationist' and Foster 'the perfectibilian'.\(^8\) Each adopts an

\(^4\) H VII 272
\(^5\) H VII 274
\(^6\) H VII 286
\(^7\) H VIII 71-73
\(^8\) H I 8
extreme position. Escot, following Rousseau and Monboddo, contrasts the life of man in the state of nature with the existence of civilised man: 'Luxury, oppression, poverty, misery, and disease kept pace with the progress of his pretended improvements, till, from a free, strong, healthy, peaceful animal, he has become a weak, distempered, cruel, carnivorous slave'. Like Rousseau in the *Discours sur l'Origine de l'Inégalité* and Monboddo in *Ancient Metaphysics* Escot states that men, who at first lived simple lives in the open air and without the faculty of speech, became slaves as a result of their own apparent progress and the institution of property and society.

Against Escot's picture of man's deterioration, Foster proposes a doctrine of necessary improvement by the mere increase of knowledge: 'I conceive," said Mr. Foster, "that men are virtuous in proportion as they are enlightened; and that, as every generation increases in knowledge, it also increases in virtue".'

The views of both Escot and Foster agree in part with those of Godwin in *Political Justice* and Shelley in *Queen Mab*. Escot agrees with their doctrine of present deterioration, while Foster joins them in their vision of future perfection.

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9 H I 39
10 H I 34
Like both Condorcet and Godwin, Foster cites as supporting evidence for his belief in perfectibility the steady improvement of the arts and sciences. He agrees with Godwin, too, in basing his faith firmly upon 'the immediate and unavoidable operation of an improved intellect'. Escot's advocacy of vegetarianism because the formation of his stomach and teeth 'clearly place man in the class of frugivorous animals' agrees with Shelley's note to Queen Mab: 'Comparative anatomy teaches us that man resembles frugivorous animals in everything, and carnivorous in nothing'.

As if in parenthesis, the idea of the inevitable force of necessity is presented in different ways by Cranium and Mac Laurel. Cranium's phrenological theories involve him in the belief that actions result inevitably from physical characteristics. It is important to remember that Peacock is dealing with a serious contemporary cult. The growth of interest in phrenology during the early nineteenth century was to lead to the establishment of twenty-nine societies by 1832. Mac Laurel's necessitarianism is based on his Benthamite conviction that each man instinctively follows his own self-interest

11 Political Justice, ed. Priestley, III, 23n
12 H I 19
13 Works, ed. Ingpen and Peck, I, 159
14 H I 48
as he perceives it.  

Critics have disagreed about Peacock's standpoint in Headlong Hall. Some have felt with O.W. Campbell that none of the speakers' views is sympathetically presented. A.M. Freeman, however, finds Peacock in fundamental agreement with Escot. E.M.W. Tillyard, too, apparently believes that Peacock was in moderate sympathy with Escot's Rousseauistic beliefs, though 'he was not in the least danger of swallowing Rousseau whole'.

It may be argued that, in fact, Escot has a more vocal rôle in the novel than Foster and is generally given the final word in the philosophical arguments. Despite the comic absurdities of such situations as his attack upon dancing when he is himself taking an energetic part in the ball and his defence of his deteriorationist philosophy even when he is

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15 H I 45-47

16 Peacock, 35. Similarly, James Spedding argues that, although Escot's case is conducted energetically, 'enough of extravagance, inconsistency, and caricature is mixed up with it, to mark it as a theory to which the author is in no way committed' (Edinburgh Review, LXVIII, 1839, 448). Alice Chandler argues that 'Although the deteriorationist seems at times to have a slight edge in the argument, the reason is probably that satire always favors the pessimist' (Bucknell Review, XIII, 1965, 43).

17 Peacock, 162-166, 233

18 Essays Literary and Educational, 116

19 H I 120
just married, Escot's enthusiasm recommends his point of view to the reader and implies that Peacock was more sympathetic to his ideas than to those of Foster or Jenkison.

In Melincourt Peacock attempts a more complex examination of the problem. Although he openly advocates certain deteriorationist doctrines, Forester is not so simple a philosopher as Escot. Like Escot he believes that 'Man under the influence of civilization has fearfully diminished in size and deteriorated in strength'. His ideas upon the degenerate physical effects of civilisation are supported by quotations from Monboddo and Rousseau. Forester is also convinced that man has degenerated morally. Thus he declares: 'Nature seems to have raised her mountain-barriers for the purpose of rescuing a few favoured mortals from the vortex of that torrent of physical and moral degeneracy, which seems to threaten nothing less than the extermination of the human species'. Like Escot, too, he asserts that increased knowledge has not brought an increase in mental power or in wisdom.

When they are confronted by Sarcastic's total cynicism about human motives, however, both Forester and Anthelia reveal

20 H I 151-154
21 H II 184.
22 H II 276-277
23 H II 381
their faith in the possibility of moral and intellectual improvement. Forester declares: 'The progress of truth is slow, but its ultimate triumph is secure; though its immediate effects may be rendered almost imperceptible, by the power of habit and interest'. Anthelia asserts that human nature possesses the potential for good: 'Many are the modes of evil — many the scenes of human suffering; but if the general condition of man is ever to be ameliorated, it can only be through the medium of BELIEF IN HUMAN VIRTUE'. Immediately before her abduction Anthelia is reading the *Esquisse d'un Tableau historique des Progrès de l'Esprit humain* of Condorcet, 'that most amiable and sublime enthusiast' as he is described by Peacock the narrator.

Neither Forester nor Anthelia indicates any agreement with Fax's belief that mankind is already in process of improvement but they hold the Godwinian faith that truth will ultimately prevail, though this belief is expressed without Godwin's strong necessitarian optimism. Their position lies between extreme deteriorationist and perfectibilian theories.

The major difficulty of interpretation in Melincourt

24 H II 236-237
25 H II 298
26 H II 353
27 H II 433-434
centres in the treatment of Sir Oran, the orang-outang. As Leo J. Henkin notes: 'There is not a quality or an action attributed to Sir Oran that is not based upon grave extracts from writings by Linnaeus, Buffon, and Monboddo'. Throughout Melincourt Peacock reveals a close acquaintance with Lord Monboddo's *Ancient Metaphysics*, a rambling work in six volumes published between 1779 and 1799. Monboddo ranges over an enormous number of speculative problems and theories, including the structure of the universe, the composition and working of the human mind, the physical, intellectual and moral history of mankind, and the nature and attributes of God. In the course of the work Monboddo argues that the orang-outang represents primitive man.

The extent to which Peacock agrees with Monboddo's theories is difficult to estimate precisely. Henkin is probably correct when he describes Peacock as 'half in jest, half in earnest'. There seems at times to be much intentional comic effect in the presentation of the case for considering Sir Oran as 'a genuine fac simile of the philosophical Adam'. It is, however, significant that Shelley, in the notes to *Queen Mab*, refers to the physical similarities between the orang-outang and man in support of his arguments for vegetarianism.

28 *Darwinism in the English Novel*, 35
29 *II*, 54
30 *Works*, ed. Ingpen and Peck, I, 159
Peacock's aim in depicting Sir Oran is complex. In part he probably aims to satirise Monboddo's views by the technique of *reductio ad absurdam*. In part, of course, he is using Monboddo's ideas as a foundation for the satire of society by presenting 'many unflattering similarities and still more unflattering contrasts between Sir Oran and his associates'.

While the reader feels at times that Peacock is also sympathetic to Monboddo it is worth noting that shortly afterwards, in *Nightmare Abbey*, Mr. Asterias' search for 'the orang-outangs of the sea' is mercilessly satirised.

In several ways Sir Oran exemplifies Rousseau's primitive man as pictured in the *Discours sur L'Origine de l'Inégalité*. He is physically strong and healthy, displays simple manners and instinctive sympathy for those in distress, and has not yet acquired the power of speech. He presents a direct contrast to the many degenerate and corrupt members of society who are depicted in the novel. Whatever degree of sympathy Peacock feels for Monboddo's claim that the orang-outang represents primitive man and differs from monkeys and apes in actually being of the human species, he seems quite clearly to advance the thesis that a reaction is necessary against

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31 L.J. Henkin, *Darwinism in the English Novel*, 35
32 H III 60
33 Cf. H II 55n
civilisation and in favour of simple habits. Both Forester and Anthelia, although they are inevitably placed in a social environment, embody the principles of simplicity of manners, freedom from avarice and active sympathy for the needs of others. The ideal of the happy community which naturally proceeds from the advocacy of these principles, forms part of Peacock's social theory and is discussed below in chapter 7.

In none of the later novels do these questions engage so much of Peacock's attention as in *Headlong Hall* and *Melincourt*. In *Nightmare Abbey* Scythrop's dream of the perfect society is treated satirically. However, the deteriorationism of Toobad, who seems to be a caricature of J.F. Newton, is equally satirised. Against these two extreme theories is set the moderate optimism of Hilary: 'To reconcile man as he is to the world as it is, to preserve and improve all that is good, and destroy or alleviate all that is evil, in physical and moral nature - have been the hope and aim of the greatest teachers and ornaments of our species'. The standard here is common sense and the avoidance of extremes of hope and despair: 'To expect too much is a disease in the expectant, for which human nature is not responsible'. It is important to note, however, that Hilary occupies a much more positive position than the 'moderate' Jenkison in *Headlong Hall*. It is, indeed, one of

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34 H III 109
35 H III 107-108
the weaknesses of *Headlong Hall* that Jenkison's attitudes are mere formalised and unenthusiastic gestures towards the doctrine of acceptance. By contrast, Hilary expresses a constructive and hopeful philosophy which combines an honest assessment of human motives with a faith in the possibility of moderate and gradual improvement.

In *Crotchet Castle* and *Gyll Grange* the debate is no longer a major issue. *Crotchet Castle* contains merely a passing comic reference to Newton as 'Mr. Ramsbottom, the zodiacal mythologist'. The influence of Rousseau is felt by Susannah Touchandgo in her Welsh retreat, but this is rather a cause of romantic delight in the consoling effect of nature than a ground of philosophic belief in the degenerate effect of civilisation. It is significant that she is influenced by *Les Réveries du Promeneur solitaire* and not by the *Discours sur l'Origine de l'Inégalité*. Chainmail eulogises the twelfth century while Folliott praises the classical Athenians, and both express dissatisfaction with contemporary life. However, each places himself on fundamentally satisfactory terms with modern life. While there is no facile optimism, the positive emphasis on the pleasures of home life makes the tone of the book far from pessimistic.

36 H IV 3

37 H IV 154-155
In *Gryll Grange* the controversy finds brief expression in one discussion between Falconer and Dr. Opimian. Falconer fixes his imagination on 'thoughts and images of the past and the possible' rather than on the disquieting present. Dr. Opimian, though he has little faith in the progress of human wisdom, asserts that 'there is much good in the world; more good than evil, I have always maintained'. It is difficult to avoid the impression that, despite his own evident delight in the idealisation of classical superiority, which is most apparent in the characters of Hilary, Folliott and Opimian, this is Peacock's own view from *Nightmare Abbey* through his later writings. He is prepared to use the classical world, the Middle Ages, as in *Maid Marian*, or the sixth century in Wales, as in *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, to emphasise his opposition to certain aspects of contemporary life, but he retains a moderate hope of the triumph of good over evil. E.A. Baker's assertion that 'Peacock was no pessimist or deteriorationist' seems a just assessment of his mature position, though it should be emphasised that he was certainly no perfectibilian.

That Peacock was never sympathetic towards facile

38 H V 91
39 H V 92
40 *The History of the English Novel*, VII, 125
optimism is evident from the satiric reference, in his review of Edgcumbe's *Musical Reminiscences*, to 'the philosophical few, who are satisfied that "every generation grows wiser and wiser," and that the progress of the useful in one way is more than a compensation for the loss of the agreeable in another'. In his very serious review of the *Memoirs of Jefferson*, however, he recommends the work 'as confirming rational hopes of the progress of knowledge and liberty'. Jefferson is praised for tempering his enthusiasm for the progress of liberty and happiness 'with a calm philosophical judgment, restraining its pursuits within the limits of the attainable'. Peacock's assessment of Jefferson indicates, perhaps more clearly than any other passage in his writings, the moderate position at which he finally arrived.

41 H IX 224
42 H IX 185
Melincourt, published in 1817, and Gryll Grange, published in 1860, represent opposite extremes in Peacock's attitude to the question of social responsibility. This marked contrast in attitude is indicative of a fundamental change in Peacock's philosophy of life. It has been suggested in chapter 3 that, after Melincourt, he gradually withdrew from his early involvement in the philosophical debate between the perfectibilians and the deteriorationists and adopted a much more moderate position of strictly controlled optimism. At the same time he moved away from his open concern for social improvement to a more reactionary standpoint. This was not a simple shift from social concern to a selfish denial of responsibility for the welfare of others. Rather, it was the result of Peacock's adoption of a code of conduct based on the precepts of classical Epicureanism. This did not involve a denial of social concern but it certainly encouraged a less active participation in the life of society. This chapter
attempts to trace the development of Epicurean attitudes in Peacock's works and to mark the gradual shift in emphasis that is discernible in his treatment of the claims of personal contentment on the one hand and social responsibility on the other.

In Melincourt there is a constant interest in social behaviour and an emphasis on the duty of the individual towards his fellow men. In a key speech Forester declares: 'Yet what is human society, but one great family? What is moral duty, but that precise line of conduct which tends to promote the greatest degree of general happiness?' When he is conducting his visitors round his estate he asserts: 'My father...began what I merely perpetuate. He estimated his riches, not by the amount of rent his estate produced, but the number of simple and happy beings it maintained'. In conversation with Fax and Sir Telegraph, Forester argues that, although a man has a legal right to do what he pleases with his own money, he has no moral right: 'If, in any form of human society, any one human being dies of hunger, while another wastes or consumes in the wantonness of vanity, as much as would have preserved his existence, I hold that second man guilty of the death of the first'.

1 H II 266
2 H II 288
3 H II 265; Cf. H II 262
The frequent references in *Melincourt* to Rousseau emphasise the source of many of Forester's ideas. Some of these allusions, of course, are primarily intended to provide supporting evidence for Monboddo's theories about the orang-outang. The name of Rousseau, however, together with those of Voltaire and Gibbon, is invoked as the representative of un-biassed reason against hypocrisy and prejudice\(^4\) and there seems no doubt that, at this time, Peacock was influenced by his thought.

In *Melincourt* Peacock is concerned to uphold the concept of the human race as a family whose members have mutual responsibilities. Both Forester and Anthelia believe that benevolent concern for the poor is the duty of the rich. It is this which prompts Anthelia to aid the Desmonds and which leads Forester to declare that the rich are 'the stewards of the poor'.\(^5\) There is no suggestion that the existing order of society should be fundamentally changed but merely that each member should recognise his duty towards his fellows.\(^6\)

This concern for active social involvement does not markedly activate Peacock's thought in his other novels. Its appearance in *Melincourt* is, indeed, probably due to the

\(^4\) E.g. *H II* 140, 406, 441
\(^5\) *H II* 270
\(^6\) *H II* 269-270
influence of Shelley. It is significant that Shelley, writing to Peacock in November 1820, declared: 'Your Melincourt is exceedingly admired, and I think much more so than any of your other writings. In this respect the world judges rightly. There is more of the true spirit, and an object less indefinite, than in either Headlong Hall or Scythrop'. This is the only one of his early novels in which Peacock clearly advances a theory of moral conduct and social responsibility, though the other novels certainly express attitudes towards specific social issues, such as slavery, war and education. There are, too, some tentative anticipations of Forester's outlook in the speeches of Escot in Headlong Hall. This is most evident when Escot imagines the estate of a public benefactor, arranged on the model of the farms of the Roman republic, covering the land with 'a simple, innocent, and smiling population, who shall owe, not only their happiness, but their existence, to his benevolence'.

In 1827 Peacock contributed his review of Moore's *The Epicurean* to the *Westminster Review*. This essay marks a significant point in the development of his ethical attitude. In his works before 1827 there is no reference to Epicurus and only a single very brief reference in *The Philosophy of*

7 *Letters of Shelley*, ed. Jones, II, 244
8 H I 46
Melancholy to 'the Epicurean poets'. Although one aim of the review is certainly to discredit Moore's knowledge and style, the tone of the writing leaves no doubt that Peacock is expressing ideas congenial to himself. H.E.B. Brett-Smith has described the review as 'in some sort a confession of faith'.

The review appears to indicate a new insistence by Peacock on the search for personal happiness through tranquillity. He acknowledges that this involves a recognition of the rights of others in a type of social contract. Thus he asserts that for Epicurus 'Natural justice is the symbol of utility, or of that which conduces among men to prevent the inflicting, or suffering, of injury'. He notes that this involves a measure of agreement between Epicurus and Bentham: 'Thus Epicurus first taught, that general utility, or as Bentham expresses it, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," is the legitimate end of philosophy'. Similarly, in Melincourt, Forester advocates the definition of moral duty as 'that precise line of conduct which tends to promote the greatest degree of general happiness', thus echoing one of

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9 H VI 225n
10 H I cxxxv
11 H IX 48; Cf. C. Bailey, Epicurus: the Extant Remains, 103
12 H IX 48-49
13 H II 266
the central ideas of Bentham's *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.

If happiness is the aim of both Epicureanism and Utilitarianism, however, there is in the two philosophies a difference of emphasis which is reflected in Peacock's own works. In his review of Moore's *The Epicurean* Peacock stresses the Epicurean insistence on the private life of temperance and fortitude and the attainment of tranquillity by the freeing of the mind from cupidity and fear. This is in agreement with the statements in the Epicurean 'Principal Doctrines', which are quoted by Diogenes Laertius and referred to by Cicero, Plutarch, Diodorus and Lucian. 14

Peacock's high regard for 'the noblest philosophy of antiquity' 15 is evident in this review and in his later writings. He extracted from the account of Epicurus' life and teachings as related by Diogenes Laertius, together with references in other classical writers, the ethical and metaphysical ideas which he regarded as most significant for his own age. In the review of Moore's novel he states his faith that 'the doctrines and character of Epicurus and his followers it will always be important for mankind thoroughly to understand and appreciate, and for all who love mankind to liberate

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15 H IX 67
from that mass of misrepresentation, which the deluders and
deluded of all ages have heaped upon them'. In The Épicier,
written in 1835-36, he states: 'An age which demands free
inquiry, pushed without fear or compromise to its legitimate
conclusions, turns up an Epicurus or a Hobbes'. Epicurus
is praised in Gastronomy and Civilization in 1851 and again
in Peacock's review of Müller and Donaldson's History of Greek
Literature in 1859.

In Peacock's writings the concern for social reform and
the desire for private tranquillity generally coexist. The
change in his outlook is reflected in the differing emphases
which he gives to these two facets of his thought. The
difference is most clearly demonstrated in the contrast between
Forester and Anthelia in Melincourt and Falconer and Morgana in Gryll Grange. Both Forester and Anthelia are involved in
works of active benevolence, though both value the cultivation
of private tranquillity. Falconer and Morgana, by contrast,
are primarily concerned with tranquillity and only involved in
the affairs of the world to a very small degree. Falconer's
retirement to the tower is in part the escapist action of a

16 H IX 56-57
17 H IX 293
18 H IX 351-352
19 H X 221-223
mind which reacts too sensitively against the evils and sorrows of the world. He declares: 'I cannot sit here, like one of the Gods of Epicurus, who, as Cicero says, was satisfied with thinking, through all eternity, "how comfortable he was." I look with feelings of intense pain on the mass of poverty and crime; of unhealthy, unavailing, unremunerated toil, blighting childhood in its blossom, and womanhood in its prime; of "all the oppressions that are done under the sun"'. The words could have been spoken by Forester in the context of Melincourt. It is an indication of the difference between the two books, however, that there is never any serious suggestion that Falconer should actively involve himself in attempts at social amelioration.

The quality praised in Gryll Grange is tranquillity. The mood of the book celebrates private enjoyment in a quiet atmosphere. Lord Curryfin is converted from an attempt to instruct and reform his fellow men. In this he represents the only character in Peacock's novels to undergo a major transformation of character. The nearest other example of such a transformation is Sir Telegraph in Melincourt who, significantly, is persuaded towards greater social involvement. Even the representative of political economy, MacBorrowdale, is not over-inclined to reform. When Dr. Opimian and Mr. Gryll
become pessimistic it is MacBorrowdale who recalls them to private enjoyment of the present good: 'In the meantime, we are all pretty comfortable: and sufficient for the day is the evil thereof; which in our case, so far as I can see, happens to be precisely none'. The message of tranquillity is fully endorsed in the Aristophanic comedy where the calm philosophy of Gryllus is contrasted with the restless desire for excitement of the contemporary world.

The philosophy of Gryll Grange, indeed, is often explicitly Epicurean. The assertion of Edith Nicolls that 'it seems to me that the term "Epicurean Philosopher," which I have often heard applied to him, describes him accurately and briefly' most aptly fits Peacock as he appears in this novel. It is notable that Gryll is a professed Epicurean: 'Epicuri de gregor porcus'. Falconer declares: 'I have aimed at living, like an ancient Epicurean, a life of tranquillity'. It is stated of Falconer that 'He had always placed the summum bonum of life in tranquillity and not in excitement'. Miss Gryll, too, has grown up in an 'atmosphere of quiet enjoyment' which 'seemed to have steeped her feelings in its own tranquillity'.

21 H V 323
22 Works, ed. Cole, I, xlix
23 H V 13
24 H V 102-103
25 H V 99
26 H V 16
It would, of course, be false to claim that characters such as Gryll and Falconer are intended as exact models of the Epicurean character. Like most of Peacock's characters they are too interested in the pleasures of the table and too little inclined to asceticism to fulfil all Epicurus' precepts.

The tone of the mottoes, too, which Peacock describes as indicating 'the general scope, or to borrow a musical term, the *motive* of the *operetta*', is directed more to a positive snatching of enjoyment than to a strictly Epicurean doctrine.

Nevertheless, the basic attitudes in the novel reflect Epicurus' teaching on the importance of tranquillity and friendship. The way of life adopted by these characters is very similar to that advocated by Epicurus: 'The man who has best ordered the element of disquiet arising from external circumstances has made those things that he could akin to himself and the rest at least not alien: but with all to which he could not do even this, he has refrained from mixing, and has expelled from his life all which it was of advantage to treat thus'.

In *Gryll Grange* Peacock creates an ideal picture of life founded upon the major Epicurean doctrines. In part, the novel carries to its logical conclusion the philosophy

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27 H V xi
of *Crotchet Castle*. Van Doren notes: 'There is a complete social amenity among the personages of the piece which makes the atmosphere in *Crotchet Castle* much more tranquil than in *Headlong Hall*. Everywhere appear the evidences of a dignified retirement from commotion'.²⁹ In *Crotchet Castle*, however, the tranquil enjoyment of private life is frequently interrupted by the impinging of the external world, whereas in *Gryll Grange* it is never seriously threatened. The characters here pursue their own happiness with little positive reference to the actions of society outside their own circle. Unlike the earlier novels, *Gryll Grange* portrays a society of friends whose conversational mode is discussion rather than argument. The contrast between the militant Dr. Folliott and the pacific Dr. Opimian strikingly illustrates the difference in tone between Peacock's last novel and his earlier work.

²⁹ Life of Peacock, 200
CHAPTER 5

POLITICAL ATTITUDES

No aspect of Peacock's writings reveals more acutely the complexity of his satire and the difficulty of accurately identifying the author's own opinions than his treatment of political issues. Lord Houghton summarised the difficulty admirably in his preface to the first collected edition of Peacock's works: 'The intimate friends of Mr. Peacock may have understood his political sentiments, but it is very difficult to deduce them from his works. They may, indeed, have justifiably undergone any amount of change in the half-century that elapsed between the studious friend of Shelley and the retired officer of the East India Company; but there is a singular continuity of impressions lasting through the whole course of his writings, which indicates that at no time of his life would he have been what is commonly called a consistent member of a political party'.

1 Works, ed. Cole, I, xvii-xviii
The majority of commentators have concluded either that Peacock had no identifiable political ideas or that his thought was hopelessly inconsistent and confused. This attitude was stated succinctly by Herbert Paul: 'to classify him would have taxed the ingenuity of Dod himself'. The most cogent expression of the judgement that Peacock was fundamentally un-involved in contemporary political issues is provided by J.B. Priestley. Priestley argues that Peacock is not a typical political satirist, seeking to discredit one party in order to exalt another, but a satirist of politics in general, using the abuses and incongruities of political life as convenient material for his wit rather than as the basis of propaganda for specific remedies.

The generalisations offered by critics of Peacock's works have served to establish a tradition which regards him, not merely as politically uncommitted, but as fundamentally un-involved.

2 Stray Leaves, 117. Other critics who have expressed similar views include G. Kitchin, who finds his political attitudes 'ludicrously mixed' (A Survey of Burlesque and Parody in English, 256); E.A. Baker: 'It is risky to identify him with any party' (The History of the English Novel, VII, 129); C. Van Doren, who describes his attitude as a blend of constitutional toryism and intellectual independence (Life of Peacock, 191); A.H. Able: he is 'a man standing in no fixed place, at once the friend and enemy of both Radical and Tory' (Meredith and Peacock, 56); J. Hannay: 'Like many men who are literary rather than political, he seems to have been Conservative on one side of his mind and Liberal on the other' (North British Review, XLV, 1866, 87); E.W. Gosse: 'it is very difficult to discover what his real convictions were. Perhaps it is safest to conclude that he had none' (London Society, XXVII, 1875, 507).

3 Peacock, 196
irresponsible and frivolous in his attitude to serious contemporary questions. Extreme statements of this view are found in J.W. Draper's classification of Peacock as 'at once arch-critic of things-as-they-are, and arch-critic of reforms-as-they-are-proposed'\(^4\) and in Herbert Paul's statement that 'Peacock held at the same time, and in reference to the same subject-matter, opinions which the utmost ingenuity cannot reconcile'.\(^5\)

It is clear from Peacock's writings that he did not offer whole-hearted support to any existing political party. David Thomson, however, warns against drawing glib and over-sharp lines of distinction between the major political parties in the early nineteenth century.\(^6\) Peacock's unwillingness to identify himself closely with the shifting ideals of any political group does not necessarily imply lack of interest. A study of his work, indeed, reveals that he was far from being politically apathetic. An entry in his diary in 1818 states that he had been reading Stanley's *History of Philosophy*: 'noticed in C.VI the law by which Solon declares infamous and banishes any person who takes neither part in political discussions'.\(^7\) H.P.B. Brett-Smith discovered that in September

\(^4\) Modern Language Notes, **XXXIII**, 1918, 457
\(^5\) Stray Leaves, 117
\(^6\) England in the Nineteenth Century, 24-25
\(^7\) H VIII 437
1818 Peacock prepared but did not publish a political pamphlet about the meeting of Parliament. In *The Epicier* in 1836 he attacked the narrow-minded and politically uninterested, the Parisian grocer class which constitutes 'a great political negation'.

In his attitude to several major questions and personalities Peacock reveals certain coherent political ideals. If these do not constitute a sufficiently extensive body of political opinion to enable him to be fixed by any specific party label, they dispel the image of him as utterly detached and uncommitted in his treatment of political subjects.

**PARLIAMENTARY REFORM**

All Peacock's novels except *Gryll Grange* were published before the Reform Bill of 1832. In *Melincourt* and *The Misfortunes of Elphin* he pays considerable attention to the case for parliamentary reform.

The election scenes in *Melincourt* constitute a serious and powerful indictment of the abuses of the contemporary system. When Forester informs Sir Telegraph Paxarett of his intention of securing for Sir Oran a seat in Parliament as one of the representatives of the rotten borough of Onevote, Sir

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8 H I xci

9 H IX 303
Telegraph immediately asks whether his principal object is not 'an irresistible exposure of the universality and omnipotence of corruption by purchasing for an oran cutang one of those seats, the sale of which is unblushingly acknowledged to be as notorious as the sun at noon-day.'

Despite Forester's disclaimer, this is evidently the point of his action in terms of the total satiric effect of the novel.

In his depiction of the borough of Onevote, which consists of a solitary unproductive farm in the middle of a desolate heath, Peacock may well have been thinking specifically of the borough of Old Sarum, the most notorious of the rotten boroughs, which in 1827 was still returning two members, although it was not even so large as a village. By contrast, the City of Novote, which has no representation for its fifty thousand inhabitants, symbolises the already large and rapidly expanding manufacturing towns, such as Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds and Sheffield, which were still without any members.

Sarcastic's speech to the people of Novote on the blessings of virtual representation is a powerful satire on

10 H II 62
11 H II 239
13 H II 241-246
the corrupt system by which seats were purchased, the
parliamentary rhetoric by which the system was justified and
the lack of sympathy displayed by politicians for the interests
of the population as a whole. In conversation with Forester
and Sir Telegraph, Sarcastic is direct in his condemnation of
existing practice. He attributes the continuation of the
system to self-interest: 'All that reason can say on the
subject [of reform], has been said for years, by men of all
parties - while they were out: but the moment they were in,
the moment their own interest came in contact with their own
reason, the victory of interest was never for a moment doubt­
ful'.\textsuperscript{14} He envisages progress towards reform taking place
when the interest of the masses and the pressure of personal
suffering shall have created 'an independent power, greater
than the power of the interest of corruption'. By contrast,
Forester argues the power of reason and an improved moral
code.\textsuperscript{15}

If the reader feels instinctively that Sarcastic's
satiric attack upon the corruption of the contemporary system
represents Peacock's own standpoint, the impression becomes
certainty in chapter XXXIX of \textit{Melincourt} when Forester and
Fax visit Mainchance Villa. The bitterness of the satire

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{H II} 235

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{H II} 236-237
directed against the Tory Quarterly Review - thinly disguised as the 'Legitimate Review' - is exceptional in Peacock's works. Throughout the chapter the author's footnotes direct the reader to the issue of the Quarterly for October 1816, which contained a lengthy article on 'Parliamentary Reform' by Southey. As in the parody of Byron in chapter XI of Nightmare Abbey, Peacock here uses the device of paraphrase. Unlike the Byron parody, however, the chapter in Melincourt is almost wholly lacking in humour. Peacock is here earnestly engaged with his subject and takes no pains to conceal his hostility and contempt for the object of his satire. The speeches of the reactionary party are distinguished by the constant repetition of the catch-phrase, 'the church is in danger', the open support of obscurantism and the cynical erection of illogical arguments in favour of the practical efficiency of a morally indefensible system. Although Peacock attacks individuals such as Gifford as Vamp and Wordsworth as Paperstamp, his main target is the type of reactionary attitude which is common to the Quarterly Review's contributors.

It is significant that Forester attributes the inevitability of reform to the fact that 'The people read and think; their eyes are opened; they know that all their grievances arise from the pressure of taxation far beyond their means,

16 Quarterly Review, XVI, 1816-17, 225-278
from the fictitious circulation of paper-money, and from the corrupt and venal state of popular representation'. The movement towards reform is here seen as a conflict between the just claims of an enlightened populace and the selfish attempts of their rulers to keep them in unintelligent subjection by the imposition of Gagging Bills or, failing this, by directing their energies into the channel of foreign war. The mention of the Gagging Bills here is presumably a reference to the Bills against the holding of seditious meetings which were passed in 1816 after the riots resulting from increased unemployment and the formation of the Hampden Club in support of parliamentary reform.

In Melincourt Peacock is evidently in sympathy with the radicals' desire for reform based upon the voting rights of individuals and is opposed to the continuing eighteenth-century emphasis on property as the criterion of the right to vote. David Thomson notes that, in 1815 and the years following, 'Only the growing movements of Radicals held that men should have votes as men and citizens, and not as the owners of specified quantities of landed property. And Radicals, for the moment, were associated with Jacobins -

17 H II 403
18 H II 406
19 Cf. E.L. Woodward, Age of Reform, 60-61
the revolutionaries of France who had brought war to England and so much misery to Europe'.

Peacock, however, never makes absolutely clear his ideas about how far the suffrage should be extended. The logical tendency of some of the views advanced in Melincourt is towards free universal male suffrage, which was advocated by Cobbett in 1818. It is probable, however, that Peacock supported the more moderate suggestions which Shelley outlined in 1817 in *A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote throughout the Kingdom. By the Hermit of Marlow*. In this pamphlet Shelley declared that claims for universal suffrage and for the advantages of a republican government were logical. However, England was not yet ready for either of these because the men of the lowest class had been rendered 'brutal and torpid and ferocious by ages of slavery'. He therefore suggested that 'none but those who register their names as paying a certain small sum in *direct taxes* ought, at present, to send Members to Parliament'. Shelley argued in favour of moderation and a scheme of gradual and cautious improvement:

...a pure republic may be shewn, by inferences the most obvious and irresistible, to be that system of social order the fittest to produce the happiness and promote the genuine eminence of man. Yet, nothing can less consist with reason, or afford the smaller

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20 *England in the Nineteenth Century*, 22

21 *A Year's Residence in the United States of America*, II, 277-278
hopes of any beneficial issue, than the plan which should abolish the regal and the aristocratical branches of our constitution, before the public mind, through many gradations of improvement, shall have arrived at the maturity which can disregard these symbols of its childhood. 22

Twelve years after Melincourt, in The Misfortunes of Elphin, Peacock again satirised reactionary arguments against parliamentary reform. Seithenyn's defence of the rotten embankment is certainly one of the most successful satirical passages in all Peacock's works. When Elphin argues that Seithenyn should aim to make all the embankment structurally sound, Seithenyn replies:

So I have heard some people say before...; perverse people, blind to venerable antiquity: that very unamiable sort of people who are in the habit of indulging their reason. But I say, the parts that are rotten give elasticity to those that are sound: they give them elasticity, elasticity, elasticity. If it were all sound, it would break by its own obstinate stiffness: the soundness is checked by the rottenness, and the stiffness is balanced by the elasticity. 23

This speech is clearly a parody of illogical parliamentary rhetoric. Sir Henry Cole thought it a direct satire of Canning. 24 The Benthamite Westminster Review, however, saw it as an admirable parody of 'a certain favourite train of reasoning in a nameless assembly'. 25 H.F.B. Brett-Smith notes

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22 Works, ed. Ingpen and Peck, VI, 68
23 H IV 16
24 Peacock: Biographical Notes, 25
25 Westminster Review, X, 1829, 432
that, as Canning died in August 1827, it is more likely that Peacock's target was general rather than specific. 26

Perhaps the most significant point about Seithenyn's speech is that its tone is essentially humorous. Peacock is at least as concerned to exploit a comic situation as to point a moral. There is here nothing of the reforming fervour of the scene at Mainchance Villa in Melincourt. Mario Praz comments perceptively that, while Peacock is interested in reform in The Misfortunes of Elphin, 'he concentrates upon his task as an intellectual, as the champion of clarity, the champion of mental effort against common, trite ideas, against the platitudes by which the world allows itself to be guided'. 27

Elsewhere The Misfortunes of Elphin reveals little concern with the reform question, though in chapter VI Peacock writes more bitterly: 'Political science they had none. The blessings of virtual representation were not even dreamed of... Still they went to work politically much as we do. The powerful took all they could get from their subjects and neighbours; and called something or other sacred and glorious, when they wanted the people to fight for them. They repressed disaffection by force, when it showed itself in an overt act; but they encouraged freedom of speech, when it was, like Hamlet's reading,
"words, words, words". The satire in this passage, however, is directed less to the promotion of the cause of reform than to the critical analysis of the cynical and ruthless methods adopted by statesmen.

In The Misfortunes of Elphin, as in Melincourt, Peacock is concerned to expose self-interest, corruption and irrational justifications of the existing system. Unlike the earlier novel, however, The Misfortunes of Elphin does not impress the reader as the work of a man who is actively interested in promoting reform. Certainly there is in this novel no repetition of Forester's appeal to the gradual education and enlightenment of the populace as the foundation upon which future progress will be built.

The conclusion that the enthusiastic optimism displayed by Peacock during the period when he was writing Melincourt had largely evaporated by the time parliamentary reform was actually about to be effected is supported by his next novel, Crotchet Castle, published in 1831, contains virtually no discussion of the question. There is a brief satiric reference to the sale of parliamentary seats in Robthetill's letter from America: Touchandgo longs for a seat in Congress and 'thinks it very hard that he cannot buy one with his own coinage, as he used to do in England'.

28 H IV 51-52
29 H IV 138
however, is Brougham and 'the march of mind'. Peacock now seems convinced that the people, far from becoming increasingly enlightened, are merely gaining information for which they have no use and which distracts them from exercising their proper function in society. The impact of contemporary events is seen clearly in the final chapter of Crotchet Castle, which was obviously written very shortly before publication. The attack upon Chainmail Hall reflects Peacock's immediate reaction to the Swing riots of 1830. The significance of Crotchet Castle for the understanding of Peacock's attitude to social questions is discussed in chapter 7 below. Although his reaction to the agrarian disturbances in southern England is not, as is often suggested, a mere petulant outburst of repressive conservatism, his reference to the 'rabble-rout' is a sufficient indication of his loss of faith in the enlightened intelligence of the people. It is greatly to be regretted that no letters or diaries survive from this period of Peacock's life to throw definite light on the processes by which the idealism of Melincourt was modified.

In Gryll Grange, thirty years later, MacBorrowdale voices Peacock's final disillusion with the progress of reform. Like Peacock, MacBorrowdale's father had been a

30 Cf. H I cxi v
31 H IV 203
supporter of the reform movement. He was converted from this by the violent and unintelligent actions of the mob.\textsuperscript{32}

Agitation for the extension of the franchise has now become 'reform lunacy'.\textsuperscript{33} If the franchise is further extended it will effectively annihilate the franchise of the educated classes, 'for it would not be worth their while to cross the road to exercise it against the rabble preponderance which would then have been created'.\textsuperscript{34}

In part, of course, the changes in Peacock's attitude towards reform are merely indications of increasing age and experience. He is consistent, however, both in his criticism of contemporary abuses and in his belief that an extension of the franchise will be of no value unless it is accompanied by a general increase in intelligence and enlightenment. As Edmund Wilson notes, Peacock believes in human values and is dissatisfied with merely mechanical arguments about human rights.\textsuperscript{35} If his early belief in the necessity for a radical extension of the suffrage gave place to disillusion he was influenced by the visible results of reform and by the undisciplined actions of popular agitators. In Melincourt he

\textsuperscript{32} H V 179
\textsuperscript{33} H V 180
\textsuperscript{34} H V 178
\textsuperscript{35} Classics and Commercials, 408
had forecast that reform would be achieved by increased enlighten¬
ment. In Gryll Grange he realised that, in fact, it had been gained by such 'out-of-door logic' as 'Burning houses, throwing dead cats and cabbage-stumps into carriages, and other varieties of the same system of didactics'.

JEFFERSON AND THE REPUBLICAN IDEAL

In October 1830 Peacock contributed to the Westminster Review an essay on Thomas Jefferson Randolph's edition of the Memoirs, Correspondence, and Private Papers of Thomas Jefferson. In this review he praised with unmistakably genuine admiration the character and achievements of the American republican. Peacock finds Jefferson especially noteworthy for the quality of his leadership, his active concern for the amelioration of social conditions, his mistrust of the trappings of authority, his incorruptibility, his support of the aims of the French Revolution and his constant belief in the principle of the liberty of the press.

The essay is of major importance, not as a critique of Jefferson himself, but as an insight into Peacock's own political ideals. Its serious tone convinces the reader that Peacock is here discussing matters which seem to him of the greatest significance. The essay includes lengthy quotations from Jefferson's writings, which Peacock describes as full of good sense, careful investigation, human sympathy, integrity,
enthusiasm and sincerity. In his selection of quotations, Peacock is able to express many of his own convictions. Thus Jefferson was opposed to a hereditary monarchy and aristocracy; he favoured universal suffrage but emphasised that care must be taken to ensure that 'the moral and political condition of our own citizens qualifies them to select the able and good for the direction of their government'; he was opposed to the spread of paper currency; he supported small manufactories; he was strongly in favour of liberty of opinion, believing that an enlightened and informed populace was the best safeguard of the state; and he advocated the emancipation of slaves.

Many of these ideas echo the thought of Peacock's novels. If he felt in *Crotchet Castle* that English political development had betrayed many of the principles which he supported, he reveals in this essay, written in the same period, a continuing belief in the virtue of these principles. The essay is, indeed, a valuable corrective to too close an identification of Peacock with Dr. Polliott's more extreme reactionary views. As Carl Van Doren notes: 'one should guard against the assumption...that Dr. Polliott's gibes at the whole trend of reform in 1830 are drawn directly from Peacock's own private opinions.'

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37 H IX 184-185
38 H IX 173-182
39 *Life of Peacock*, 196
The opening of the essay on Jefferson states clearly Peacock's belief in the principles of the French Revolution, his republican sympathies and his impatience with those who will support a corrupt government rather than allow any political change. He expresses no sympathy for English policy in the War of American Independence. He cites with approval the American 'doctrines of the right of the possessors of life and property to choose for themselves the legislators who dispose of that life and property; of the right of the governed to discuss fully and freely, in censure as in praise, the public measures of their rulers, and the principles of their political and religious institutions'. These ideals are contrasted with the English reactionary propaganda which classed them as 'doctrines of anarchy and confusion'.

Peacock's affinity with both Jefferson and the English radicals is particularly evident in his attitude to the French Revolution. Praising Jefferson's integrity, Peacock states: 'He was less dismayed by the temporary excesses of the French Revolution, than fixed in his abhorrence of the inflictions of the unrestrained power which had preceded and caused it'. He makes it clear in the essay that he

40 H IX 144-145
41 H IX 155-156
regards emphasis on the excesses of the Revolution as a trick by which statesmen attempted to alienate popular sympathy from the movement.42

Peacock continually reveals a total lack of understanding of the causes which moved Southey, Wordsworth and Coleridge to abandon their support of the French Revolution. It is his constant criticism of Southey and Wordsworth that their volte-face was motivated by self-interest. Southey, whom in a letter of 1809 he called 'incomparable',43 is satirised in Sir Proteus for his Carmen Triumphale for the Year 1814.44 In the novels he appears as Nightshade in Headlong Hall; as Feathernest, 'a celebrated poet...to whom the Marquis had recently given a place in exchange for his conscience',45 in Melincourt; as Sackbut in Nightmare Abbey; as Harpiton, 'a creeping thing',46 in Maid Marian; and as Shantsee in Crochet Castle. Peacock continually attacks him for apostasy from the cause of liberty in accepting Tory patronage when he became Poet Laureate and in renouncing his earlier support of the reform movement and the French Revolution. In a note to  

42 H IX 144
43 H VIII 164
44 H VI 282n
45 H II 81
46 H III 88
Nightmare Abbey he classes Southey with Burke: 'he very much astonished some persons when he sold his birthright for a pot of sack'.

It is evident that Peacock admired such early poems as The Complaints of the Poor, History and Hymn to the Penates, in which Southey had championed the popular demands for social justice. Peacock was disgusted, however, by his acceptance of the Laureateship in October 1813 and his later alarmist support of the government's repressive measures in his Quarterly Review articles on 'Parliamentary reform' and 'Rise and progress of popular disaffection'.

Wordsworth is similarly attacked in Sir Proteus for his acceptance of the sinecure of Distributor of Stamps for Westmorland in 1813. In the novels he appears as Paperstamp in Melincourt and as Wontsee in Crotchet Castle. As with Southey, Peacock's charge is that his change of heart was motivated by self-interest: 'A poet will write Odes to Independence and become the obsequious parasite of any great man who will hire him'. In a letter to Shelley in 1818 he

47 H III 90m
48 Quarterly Review, XVI, 1816-17, 225-278
49 Quarterly Review, XVI, 1816-17, 511-552
50 H VI 285
51 H II 228
states his conviction that Wordsworth and Southey 'have sold themselves, body and soul' to 'the holy and almighty seat-selling aristocracy'.

Peacock is less harsh in his treatment of Coleridge. While he still feels that the reasons for his opposition to the French Revolution are inadequate he does not see him as motivated so much by self-interest as by lack of common sense. This is particularly well expressed in Nightmare Abbey. Flosky 'had been in his youth an enthusiast for liberty, and had hailed the dawn of the French Revolution as the promise of a day that was to banish war and slavery, and every form of vice and misery, from the face of the earth. Because all this was not done, he deduced that nothing was done; and from this deduction, according to his system of logic, he drew a conclusion that worse than nothing was done; that the overthrow of the feudal fortresses of tyranny and superstition was the greatest calamity that had ever befallen mankind'.

Peacock is hostile, too, towards Burke. In Melincourt, Antijack's claim that 'the sublime Burke altered his mind, from the most disinterested motives' is answered by Forester: 'Yet there are some persons, and those not the lowest in the scale of moral philosophy, who have called the sublime Burke a

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52 H VIII 201
53 H III 10
pensioned apostate'. 54 Like Hazlitt, 55 Peacock deplored Burke's hostility to the French Revolution, contrasting this strongly with his attitude to the War of American Independence. His acceptance by the Tories, the praise lavished on his Reflections on the Revolution in France, and his receipt of a pension from the government, all convinced Peacock that he had betrayed the cause of liberty from motives of self-interest. In a footnote to Nightmare Abbey Peacock wittily plays upon the technical meaning of the epithet 'sublime' as used in Burke's Essay on the Sublime and the Beautiful and its popular meaning as applied to Burke by 'the whole honourable band of gentlemen-pensioners'. Peacock comments that Burke 'prostituted his own soul, and betrayed his country and mankind, for £200 a year: yet he does not appear to have been a very terrible personage, and certainly went off with a very small portion of human respect, though he contrived to excite, in a great degree, the astonishment of all honest men'. 56

Inevitably, Peacock had no sympathy with the view expressed by Coleridge in chapter X of Biographia Literaria that Burke's attitudes to the American War and the French Revolution were determined by consistent principles and

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54 II 401
55 E.g. Works, ed. Howe, VII, 231-232; XVI, 130-132
56 III 89-90
deductions applied to different situations. Coleridge claims that the enquirer into Burke's thought on these issues 'will find the principles exactly the same and the deductions the same; but the practical inferences almost opposite in the one case from those drawn in the other; yet in both equally legitimate and in both equally confirmed by the results'.

There is an apparent inconsistency in Peacock's thought between his lifelong support of the violent revolutionary methods employed in France and his hostility to manifestations of the same spirit in English riots. On the one hand, he argued that violent actions were justified in France. On the other hand, he condemned such actions in England because the mob was not sufficiently enlightened to assume leadership. It would seem either that he applied a double standard to events in France and England or that he believed that the French revolutionaries possessed an enlightenment which their English counterparts had not attained.

Throughout his works Peacock constantly praises the French Revolution and attacks its opponents. He was too young to have been dismayed by the Reign of Terror, 'that scarecrow of well-meaning simplicity'. Later in life, however, he acknowledged 'the regular succession of disappointments which

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57 *Biographia Literaria*, ed. Shawcross, I, 124

58 H IX 186
have been inflicted on the friends of liberty, in the persons of Robespierre, Napoleon, the Bourbons, and Louis Philippe'.

Unlike Hazlitt, he did not indulge in praise of Napoleon.

He saw the enthronement of Louis Philippe after the July Revolution of 1830 as a symbol of the weariness of the French people with political struggles and a constantly changing government. The contrast between this weariness and the political enthusiasm of the Revolutionary period is examined in some detail in French Comic Romances and The Epicier.

In the fragment, The Lord of the Hills, Peacock briefly traces the changing ideals of the French people in the narrative of the old officer at the inn. The officer dreams successively of the benefits to be achieved by the French Revolution, the Napoleonic campaigns and the July Revolution. On each occasion his dream is greeted by a loud laugh of derision from the mysterious echo in the hills.

If Peacock became disillusioned with the progress of the French nation, however, the Revolution itself remained for him a symbol of positive action taken against tyranny and oppression - a major attempt to establish a genuinely republican state.

59 H IX 257
60 Cf. H. Baker, William Hazlitt, 328-331
SLAVERY

Peacock's political convictions inevitably involved opposition to slavery. Predictably, this opposition was most eloquently expressed in Melincourt. The passage of an Act in 1807, prohibiting the slave trade to British subjects and to ships flying the British flag, had resulted in some diminution in the traffic in slaves. However, smuggling remained profitable and widespread. No Act for the emancipation of slaves by the abolition of slavery itself throughout the British colonies was passed until 1833, when Thomas Fowell Buxton was at last successful in raising the issue in Parliament.

In Melincourt Forester is a fervent advocate of the responsibility of the individual to oppose the slave trade. He abstains from the use of colonial produce, especially sugar, and is an ardent supporter of the Anti-saccharine Society, in aid of which he organises an Anti-saccharine fête. It is recorded that abstinence from sugar was a form of protest against slavery which Peacock himself adopted as a matter of principle.

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62 H II 42-43
63 H II 290-299
64 Novels of Peacock, ed. Garnett, 122n
Peacock's later works display little ostensible concern with the question of slavery. In *Crotchet Castle* slave-drivers are one of the three classes which flourish in Dotandcarryoney-town. In *Gryll Grange* Dr. Opimian attacks politicians who pretend to suppress the slave trade but in practice encourage it. When Falconer cites the white slavery in English factories Dr. Opimian expresses his belief that conditions in England will improve, whereas 'The Americans do nothing to amend their system'. There is here, however, no suggestion that the individual can take any practical steps to alleviate the evil. Indeed, it is not clear how far Peacock himself supports the views of any of the speakers.

WAR

There is no indication that Peacock ever shared Shelley's doctrinaire pacifism as expressed in the *Essay on Christianity* and the *Mask of Anarchy*. The depiction of Robert Owen as Toogood in *Crotchet Castle* reveals no sympathy for his doctrine of 'neither fighting nor praying'. Nevertheless, in *The

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65 H IV 134
66 H V 193
67 H V 195
68 Cf. A.M.D. Hughes, *The Nascent Mind of Shelley*, 204-205
69 H IV 60-61
Misfortunes of Elphin, Peacock frequently displays his aversion to military aggrandisement and wars of acquisition rather than of defence. The satiric War-Song of Dinas Vawr, which is 'put upon record as being the quintessence of all the war-songs that ever were written, and the sum and substance of all the appetencies, tendencies, and consequences of military glory', is, despite its humour, a harsh criticism of the cynical disregard for human life and property which typifies the conduct of armies. King Melvas, leader of the army, 'had a total and most complacent indifference to everything but his own will and pleasure'.

Elsewhere in The Misfortunes of Elphin Peacock satirises the idea that acts of personal violence and destruction of property belong 'not to the department of murder and robbery, but to that of legitimate war, of which all the practitioners are gentlemen, and entitled to be treated like gentlemen'. He satirises, too, the cynicism of rulers who 'called something or other sacred and glorious, when they wanted the people to fight for them'.

70 H IV 89
71 H IV 125
72 H IV 58
73 H IV 52
HENRY BROUGHAM

Critics have often interpreted Peacock's attacks upon Henry Brougham as 'the learned friend' in Crotchet Castle and as Lord Facing-both-ways in Gryll Grange as indications of a consistently reactionary approach to political and social events. Peacock's revulsion against Brougham certainly owed something to his own increasingly conservative attitude to contemporary change. It was, however, at least equally due to a growing mistrust of Brougham's personality as this was revealed during the progress of his political career. It seems clear that by 1831 Peacock had come to regard Brougham as the embodiment of all that was least admirable in active political life.

As the author of Melincourt Peacock would certainly have sympathised with Brougham's early work in opposing the slave trade. Before he entered Parliament in 1810, Brougham had attacked slave traffic in An Inquiry into the Colonial Policy of European Powers in 1803, a work which brought him into active membership of the Abolition Committee.\textsuperscript{74} In 1818 Peacock wrote two letters to Shelley in terms which leave no doubt that he had hoped for Brougham's success in the Westmorland election which he fought against the Lowther family,

\textsuperscript{74} Cf. A. Aspinall, Lord Brougham and the Whig Party, 7-11; C.W. New, Life of Brougham, 21-31
headed by Lord Lonsdale, one of the most conspicuous owners of pocket boroughs. Peacock was disgusted by the support offered to the Lowthers by Wordsworth and Southey.

By 1831, however, Peacock had turned against Brougham and was violently satirising him as 'the learned friend'. There can be little doubt that the attack was inspired immediately by the events of 1830. In this year Brougham conducted a successful campaign in Yorkshire which he fought on the issues of parliamentary reform and the abolition of slavery. He stated publicly that he had no desire to join Lord Grey's Cabinet, preferring to press for reforms as an independent Member of the Commons. In fact, after one refusal, he was persuaded to accept the office of Lord Chancellor and the barony that went with it.

Peacock's interpretation of these events is clear from the final chapter of Crotchet Castle. Dr. Folliott's reaction to the news of the learned friend's peerage - 'Thank heaven for that! he is disarmed from further mischief' - accurately reflects one opinion of Brougham's contemporaries. Mary Wordsworth wrote of the event to a friend: 'It is thought

75 C.W. New, Life of Brougham, 183-184
76 H VIII 199, 201
77 C.W. New, Life of Brougham, 402-418
78 H IV 194
that the motive for making him Lord Chancellor was merely to get rid of him in the House of Commons - a worthy one, we must allow'.79

If Peacock, like Dr. Folliott, felt that it was preferable to have Brougham removed from influence by placing him in the House of Lords, this was only an admission that he regarded Brougham's acceptance of the Chancellorship as the final proof of his untrustworthy nature. Sir John Bowring reports that Bentham once said to Brougham: 'Harry! when you want to study insincerity, stand opposite a looking glass'.80

A. Aspinall summarises the defects of Brougham's character as perceived by his contemporaries: 'his versatile gifts excited general admiration; but no confidence was placed in his character, in which there was neither steadiness nor simplicity. His conceit and arrogance were unpleasant even when they were not profoundly irritating'.81 As C.E. Jones notes: 'To Peacock he is an embodiment of shallowness, officiousness, self-advertisement and instability. His disappointment of Peacock's earlier expectations from him as a Radical is undoubtedly responsible for the severity with which he is attacked'.82 Brougham 'symbolised for him all that was

79 Letters, ed. Burton, 131-132
80 Autobiographical Recollections, 294
81 Lord Brougham and the Whig Party, 5
82 Life and Works of Peacock, I, 303
least admirable in the advance of democracy'.

Peacock does, of course, specifically attack Brougham's educational and social work. The significance of the satire of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in Crotchett Castle and the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science in Gryll Grange is discussed below in chapter 8. The work of the Charity Commissioners, established in response to a Bill introduced by Brougham in 1818, is satirised in Crotchett Castle.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming impression of the two novels is that, while Peacock is strongly opposed to Brougham's work, his specific target is the character of the man himself. In Gryll Grange Lord Facing-both-ways is described as 'a distinguished meddler with everything, who has been for half a century the merry-andrew of a vast arena, which he calls moral and political science, but which has in it a dash of everything that has ever occupied human thought'. Peacock's verses, published in the Examiner in 1831 and later reprinted in Crotchett Castle, on The Fate of a Broom: An Anticipation, neatly summarise his mistrust of Brougham's 'favour-currying

83 Times Literary Supplement, 5 June 1948, 316
84 C.W. New, Life of Brougham, 213-218
85 H IV 106-111
86 H V 137
gabble' and his

Projects of plausible beginning,
Whereof said sconce did ne'er intend
That any one should have an end;
Yet still, by shifts and quaint inventions,
Got credit for its good intentions. 87

87 H IV 194-195m
CHAPTER 6

ECONOMIC ISSUES

MONEY

Peacock's works reveal a constant preoccupation with the controversy about the use of paper money. He was considerably disturbed by contemporary debates about the value of inconvertible bank notes, the relationship between the country's gold reserves and its paper currency, the rise in the national debt and the spread of small country banks. Although Peacock was certainly in no sense an astute economic theorist his attitudes to economic questions do indicate the concern of an intelligent layman for important contemporary issues.

The majority of commentators have tended either to ignore Peacock's attacks upon paper money or to dismiss them as mere prejudices. Thus Carl Van Doren declares that 'Peacock's opposition to paper money was a conservative prejudice which appeared early and lasted late'. J.B. Priestley refers to

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1 Life of Peacock, 157
'that ubiquitous crotchet of his, the mistrust of bank notes'. Raymond Wright dismisses his treatment of the subject in *Crotchet Castle* as merely another manifestation of 'his stock objection to paper money'. Even Howard Mills, although he recognises that Peacock is not simply voicing an irrational prejudice, makes no more than a cursory reference to the subject.

To dismiss Peacock's opinions on the financial situation as 'crotchets' is to fail to take account of the historical significance of the period during which he was writing. Peacock himself was certainly moved by a serious purpose. The Bank of England, founded in 1694, had, because of its size and close relationship with the government, gradually established itself during the eighteenth century as the keeper of the only large reserve of gold in the country. It acted as the permanent financial agent of the government and managed the national debt. In the economy of the City of London the Bank of England assumed central importance since its notes were used there as a means of payment for virtually all transactions.

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2 *Peacock*, 63
3 'Nightmare Abbey'; 'Crotchet Castle', ed. Wright, 26
4 *Peacock: His Circle and His Age*, 120
6 R. Cameron, *Banking in the Early Stages of Industrialization*, 21
The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed a rapid growth in the number of small country banks. In 1750 not more than a dozen firms in the whole of England and Wales, outside London, specialised in banking. By 1800 there were more than three hundred. The figure continued to increase rapidly until 1810, stabilised for a few years until 1815, after which it dropped slightly, to rise to a new peak in 1825. The country banks were restricted by law to partnerships of not more than six persons but were entitled to issue their own notes. Entry into country banking was facilitated by the low capital requirements. 7

Peacock's attacks upon the practice of issuing paper notes may be considered at two levels. At the national level he was opposed to the official policy of the Bank of England. He believed that notes were valueless unless they were directly convertible into gold or silver. This situation had, in fact, obtained in England until the expenses of the war with France and the subsequent rise in prices at home and the fall in the external value of the currency reduced the gold reserve of the Bank of England to a dangerously low level. In February 1797 rumours of a French invasion caused a run on the Bank of England and the government ordered that repayment of its own notes in coin should be suspended. This suspension, which

7 Ibid., 23-25
la ste d from 1797 to 1821, was the country's first experience of an inconvertible paper currency. 8

These historical facts indicate how serious is Peacock's satire in Calidore. This fragment of a novel was written in 1816, probably shortly before Melincourt. 9 In chapter IV Calidore, on his arrival in London, exchanges his gold for 'the circulating medium of this city'. 10 He receives a number of slips of paper bearing promises to pay. When he enquires where he is to look for 'the performance of these very liberal promises' the banker explains the system:

"Oh! the performance, sir, - very true, sir, - as you say; but, sir, promises are of two kinds, those which are meant to be performed, and those which are not, the latter being forms used for convenience and dispatch of business." - "Then, sir, these promises are not meant to be performed," - "Pardon me, sir, they are meant to be performed, not literally, but in a manner. They used to be performed by giving gold to the bearer, but that having been found peculiarly inconvenient has been laid aside by act of parliament ever since the year ninety-seven, and we now pay paper with paper, which simplifies business exceedingly". 11

Later, in Maid Marian, Peacock refers to 'the happy invention of paper machinery, by which one promise to pay is satisfactorily paid with another promise to pay, and that again with another in infinite series'. 12

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8 E.V. Morgan, A History of Money, 117
9 H I lxvii
10 H VIII 336
11 H VIII 337-338
12 H III 49
In his diary for 1718 Peacock recorded that he read an article in the Pamphleteer 'on the disappearance of gold coin'. The final entry in the diary notes that he was 'writing part of a pamphlet on the probable results of the present state of things investigating the South-sea Bubble, etc.' The financial crisis of 1720 had occurred as a result of speculation when the South Sea Company negotiated an arrangement with the government to convert thirty-one million pounds of the national debt into South Sea Stock. Peacock clearly felt, as also did Cobbett in Rural Rides, that the contemporary situation involved similar dangers. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars the national debt had risen to eight hundred and twenty million pounds. Peacock's disapproval of the national debt is expressed satirically in the narrative version of The Pilgrim of Provence. Count Raimond Berenger's ambition 'led him into greater profusion than his revenues could bear. The blessings of national debt and paper-currency being unknown to those barbarous times, he could not recruit his treasury by those felicitous expedients.'

13 H VIII 440. The pamphlet is Sir John Sinclair, 'On the approaching crisis: or, on the impracticability and injuriousness of resuming cash payments at the bank,' Pamphleteer

14 H VIII 444. This pamphlet was never completed and no text has survived.

15 E.V. Morgan, A History of Money, 115-116

16 Rural Rides, I, 10-11

17 H VIII 345-346
At the local level Peacock was perturbed by the absence of legislation to control the activities of the country banks. His most powerful description of the misery caused by the failure of such banks occurs in chapter XXX of Melincourt when Fax and Forester witness the effects of 'the stoppage of the country-bank of Messieurs Smokeshadow, Airbubble, Hopthetwig, and Company'. The country people's savings have been converted into promissory notes from this bank which are now rendered valueless. In addition to depicting the local situation, however, Peacock emphasises the impossibility of exchanging notes for gold and strongly criticises the whole national system of paper currency. The divine who believes that a Bank of England note 'is the same thing as cash' and who argues that 'the system of paper-money is inseparably interwoven with the present order of things' is harshly satirised. Peacock's sympathies are clearly with the 'sturdy farmer' who laments: 'O the good old days o' goulden guineas, when I used to ride whoame vrom market wi' a great heavy bag in my pocket; and when I wapped it down on the old oak teable, it used to make such a sound as did one's heart good to hear it'.

18 H II 318
19 H II 320
20 H II 321
21 H II 325
Peacock's attitude to the growth of paper currency, the suspension of metal payment, the spread of country banks and the increase in the national debt are all reminiscent of Cobbett's views. Cobbett states his position most forcibly in his Paper Against Gold and Glory Against Prosperity, published in two volumes in 1815. While there is no definite proof that Peacock read this work there is strong evidence of his high regard for Cobbett's writings. His letters and diary contain frequent references to Cobbett and he certainly read his Grammar of the English Language, Political Register and A Year's Residence in the United States of America.\(^\text{22}\)

In Paper Against Gold Cobbett anticipates many of the ideas about money which pervade Melincourt. His argument is based on the belief that 'it is Debt and not Wealth, that generates promissory notes, of whatever sort they may be, or by whomsoever issued'.\(^\text{23}\) In the Political Register for 1821 he echoes Peacock's lifelong belief that 'a paper-money, while it removes things from one possessor to another, is a false measure of value. It is always a false measure; but, it is, in some states of it, more false than in other states of it. When not convertible into gold at the will of the holder, it is false altogether'.\(^\text{24}\)

\(^{22}\) Cf. H VIII 192-221; H VIII 443-444; New Shelley Letters, ed. Scott, 98, 114, 119, 126

\(^{23}\) Paper Against Gold, I, 125

\(^{24}\) Cobbett's Weekly Political Register, 26 May 1821, col. 509
The farmer in Melincourt believes that the country bankers are operating a confidence trick with no intention of paying real money for their notes. In Crotchet Castle the banker Touchandgo disappears with the contents of his till, an action repeated later in the novel by young Crotchet, a partner in the firm of Catchflat and Company. Peacock evidently felt that the use of paper money offered considerable opportunities for fraud and misrepresentation. During 1818 he included reports of forgeries of bank notes in two letters to Shelley. As in Melincourt, he predicted the total failure of the system of paper currency: 'Every new step of the sounding foot of Time makes the pillars of their rotten edifice tremble; it is dislocated in all its joints, and will very soon fall to pieces, amidst the shouts of the world'.

Between Melincourt and Crotchet Castle England was plunged into the severe financial crisis of 1825 which was caused by the restriction of lending by the Bank of England and the subsequent run on banks. The panic caused by lack of public confidence led to the failure of over seventy banks.

25 H IV 7
26 H IV 211
27 H VIII 201, 211-212
28 H VIII 212
29 E.V. Morgan, A History of Money, 210
During the winter of 1825-26 Peacock wrote his *Paper Money Lyrics*, which, however, he did not publish until 1837, probably, as Brett-Smith suggests, lest they should cause offence to James Mill, Peacock's superior at the East India Company.\(^{30}\)

The *Paper Money Lyrics* combine economic and literary satire. Their subject is the financial situation but the individual poems parody the style of contemporary poets.

In his preface to *Paper Money Lyrics* Peacock provides an unequivocal statement of his own view of paper currency:

> The Lyrics shadow out, in their order, the symptoms of the epidemic in its several stages; the infallible nostrums, remedial and preventive, proposed by every variety of that arch class of quacks, who call themselves political economists; the orders, counter-orders, and disorders, at the head of affairs, with respect to joint-stock banks, and the extinction of one-pound notes, inclusive of Scotland, and exclusive of Scotland; till the final patching up of the uncured malady by a series of false palliatives, which only nourished for another eruption the seeds of the original disease.\(^{31}\)

Peacock states his own conviction that paper promises are 'made with the deliberate purpose, that the promise shall always be a payment, and the payment shall always be a promise'.\(^{32}\)

Peacock lived at a critical period in the history of English banking. He witnessed the growth of those tendencies

\(^{30\:\text{H I cxxxii}}\)

\(^{31\:\text{H VII 99}}\)

\(^{32\:\text{H VII 100}}\)
that were to lead to the modern situation in which, for internal payments, 'there is nothing with which the Bank of England can repay its notes except other notes'. It is clear from his writings that he viewed such developments with apprehension. He appears to have desired the total abolition of paper money and a return to a purely metallic currency. Failing this, he required that notes should be redeemable in a fixed quantity of gold. In this he was in agreement with Adam Smith, who had 'discussed inconvertible paper only as something to be avoided', and with Ricardo, too, he was opposed to the often irresponsible issuing of paper currency by small private banks which were relatively free from government control. The Report of the Select Committee on the High Price of Gold Bullion in 1810, which was strongly influenced by Ricardo, had argued that the standard of value should be gold and that the issue of notes should be controlled to ensure a stable rate of exchange. Parliament rejected the Committee's recommendations. There is no record of Peacock's views on the Report but the arguments advanced by the Committee and its opponents were important subjects of debate in the

33 E.V. Morgan, A History of Money, 28
34 F.W. Fetter, Development of British Monetary Orthodoxy, 10
35 E. Heimann, History of Economic Doctrines, 101; F.W. Fetter, Development of British Monetary Orthodoxy, 68
36 E.V. Morgan, A History of Money, 186-187
following years. Peacock entered seriously into the argument about the relationship between the nation's gold reserves and its paper currency. His own position was based on a firm belief in gold as the ultimate standard of value. The issue of paper currency in excess of gold reserves was a 'chimerical symbol of imaginary riches'.

POPULATION

The very important character of Fax in Melincourt has been generally interpreted by commentators as a depiction of Robert Malthus. Recently, however, a professional economist, William F. Kennedy, has argued cogently against too close an identification. Kennedy asserts that, although Fax advances Malthusian views on the question of population, the rest of his social philosophising differs from Malthus's opinions. Malthus himself remained a Tory, even though the strongest supporters of his population theory were the Philosophical Radicals. Kennedy sees Fax, not as a depiction of Malthus himself, but as an embodiment of the ideas and ideals of the Philosophical Radicals of the period.

There is no reason to quarrel with this informed criticism of the traditional interpretation of Fax. It

37 H II 323

38 Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XXI, 1966-67, 185-191
explains, for example, why Fax is a perfectibilian who believes that the human intellect is improving and why Peacock treats him with considerable sympathy. It is significant that, in the scene at Mainchance Villa in chapter XXXIX of Melincourt, Fax joins Forester in opposing the Tories of the 'Legitimate Review'.

Fax is, in fact, a developing character. Such a development is unusual in Peacock's novels. As the book progresses he becomes increasingly a discussion partner for Forester, enabling Peacock to present two contemporary types of radical attitude, which may be classified as the coldly rational and the more ardently and romantically idealistic. Chapter XL - 'The Hopes of the World' - reveals at once the similarity and the divergence of the two viewpoints. While both hope for the betterment of society Fax believes optimistically that society will improve with 'the general diffusion of moral and political truth' whereas Forester views pessimistically the growth of avarice and falsehood.

Peacock's earliest intention, however, may well have been specifically to satirise Malthus. Certainly, Fax's

39 H II 381, 425-426, 433
40 H II 394-419
41 H II 421
42 H II 420-434
first appearance in chapter VII - 'The Principle of Population' -
indicates a close identification with Malthus. His arguments
are based closely on Malthus's *Essay on Population*.

Malthus's book was first published in 1798. A second
edition appeared in 1803 and four subsequent editions were
published during the author's lifetime, in 1806, 1807 and
1826. G.F. McCleary has emphasised that the second edition
should be considered as a new work: 'The first edition is a
polemic, a spirited exercise in "debunking", intended to show
the futility of the utopian visions inspired by the French
Revolution. Its argument is mainly *a priori*. The second
dition is a painstaking inductive study, designed, not to
demolish a false optimism based on nothing more than "wishful
thinking", but to find a means of preventing the vice and
misery arising from the tendency of population to outrun the
means of subsistence'.

On his first appearance in chapter VII of *Melincourt*
Fax voices several of the basic propositions advanced in the
second and later editions of Malthus's *Essay*. He states the
central Malthusian argument: 'The cause of all the evils of
human society is single, obvious, reducible to the most exact
mathematical calculation; and of course susceptible not only
of remedy, but even of utter annihilation. The cause is the

43 *The Malthusian Population Theory*, 38
tendency of population to increase beyond the means of subsistence." This echoes Malthus's statement that 'population has [a] constant tendency to increase beyond the means of subsistence'. Fax also here alludes to Malthus's attempt to demonstrate that 'population when unchecked goes on doubling itself every twenty-five years, or increases in a geometrical ratio' while, 'considering the present average state of the earth, the means of subsistence, under circumstances the most favourable to human industry, could not possibly be made to increase faster than in an arithmetical ratio'.

Like Malthus Fax attacks 'the baleful influence of the poor laws' which lead the lower classes to 'marry by wholesale, without scruple or compunction, and commit the future care of their family to Providence and the overseer'. Malthus devotes a large part of the third and fourth books of his Essay to an analysis of the effect of the poor laws on the attitude of the poor towards procreation, concluding that the expectation of charity produces more evil than benefit for society as a whole. His conception of virtue is based on the

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44 H II 76
45 Essay on Population, 2nd edition, 3
46 Ibid., 5
47 Ibid., 7
48 H II 78-79
principle that 'It is clearly the duty of an individual not to marry till he has a prospect of supporting his children'. Malthus demanded that old maids should receive equal respect with married women. Peacock, however, makes Fax overstate the Malthusian argument when he declares: 'some must marry, that the world may be peopled: many must abstain, that it may not be overstocked'.

Peacock's own attitude to the Malthusian theory of population seems sceptical but not markedly hostile. Shortly before he wrote Melincourt he had treated Malthusian ideas humorously in Calidore. In this fragment Merlin assumes, 'by means of a pure anticipated cognition', the figure of Malthus and preaches against too rapid an increase in population, 'expatiating with great eloquence on the virtue of moral restraint'. Fax's attempt in chapter XXXV of Melincourt to persuade the rustic groom and bride not to marry is comically unsuccessful. It is clear that counsels of 'general reason' will make little impact on the healthy optimism and warm affection exhibited by the country lovers. The tone of

50 Ibid., 551
51 H II 76
52 H VIII 327
53 H II 364-373
the narrative, together with Forester's action in giving a present to the couple, indicates Peacock's fundamental disagreement with the Malthusian arguments.

The narrative of the misfortunes of the Desmonds in chapter XII - XIV equally confirms the reader's sense of Peacock's disagreement with the Malthusian demands that the poorer classes should abstain from marriage. Despite their extreme poverty and misfortune the Desmonds do not repent their marriage. As Forester asserts: 'The participation of love communicates a luxury to sorrow, that all the splendour of selfishness can never bestow'.

The argument that the ratios of growth in population and increase in subsistence are capable of exact mathematical definition is countered by Forester's sceptical remark: 'The arithmetic of futurity has been found in a more than equal number of instances to baffle human skill'. Forester's own beliefs are, in fact, opposed to those of Fax. When the party visits Forester's estate Fax is 'perfectly aghast to perceive the principle of population in such a fearful state of activity'. Forester, as Peacock's footnotes demonstrate, follows Monboddo in his attacks on the depopulation of the

54 H II 152
55 H II 77
56 H II 284
country estates and in his political creed: 'The three great points of every political system are the health, the morals, and the number of the people. Without health and morals, the people cannot be happy; but without numbers they cannot be a great and powerful nation, nor even exist for any considerable time'.

In his preface to *The Revolt of Islam*, published in 1818, Shelley refers to 'sophisms like those of Mr. Malthus, calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph'. There is little evidence in *Melincourt* that Peacock saw Malthus as a powerful force for evil. His objections are expressed with moderation and without any of the sense of urgency that marks his attacks upon the Tories of the 'Legitimate Revd'. The idea that Malthus's proposal that the poor should not marry was taking away from them their basic human right to love is stated by Forester in chapter XII - 'Love and Poverty': 'It seems...peculiarly hard, that all the blessings of life should be confined to the rich. If you banish the smiles of love from the cottage of poverty, what remains to cheer its dreariness?'

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57 II 287
58 II 289
59 *Works*, ed. Ingpen and Peck, I, 242
60 II 127
The moderate tone of this may be contrasted with the violent indignation voiced by Cobbett and Shelley. In 1819 Cobbett published in the *Political Register* his open letter 'To Parson Malthus' with its vehement opening: 'Parson, I have, during my life, detested many men; but never any one so much as you'. Cobbett saw the *Essay on Population* as 'written for the sole purpose of preparing before-hand a justification for...deeds of injustice and cruelty'. He declared that 'The bare idea of a law to punish a labourer and artisan for marrying; the bare idea is enough to fill one with indignation and horror'.

Shelley similarly attacked 'The abominable doctrine of Malthus' in *A Philosophical View of Reform*, written in 1819-20:

A writer of the present day (a priest of course, for his doctrines are those of a eunuch and of a tyrant) has stated that the evils of the poor arise from an excess of population, and after they have been stript naked by the tax-gatherer and reduced to bread and tea and fourteen hours of hard labour by their masters, and after the frost has bitten their defenceless limbs, and the cramp has wrung like a disease within their bones, and hunger and the suppressed revenge of hunger has stamped the ferocity of want like the mark of Cain upon their countenance, that the last tie by which Nature holds them to the benignant earth whose plenty is garnered up in the strongholds of their tyrants, is to be divided; that the single alleviation of their sufferings and their scorns, the one thing which made it impossible to degrade them below the beasts, which amid all their crimes and miseries yet separated a cynical and unmanly contamination, an anti-social cruelty, from all the soothing, elevating and harmonious gentleness of the sexual intercourse and the humanizing

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61 *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, XXXIV, 1819, col. 1019
charities of domestic life which are its appendages —
that this is to be obliterated. They are required to
abstain from marrying under penalty of starvation. 62

The moderate tone of Melincourt and the fact that through­
out much of the novel Fax is made to represent, not Malthus
himself, but a general Philosophical Radical position, invites
the conclusion that the attack upon Malthusian ideas is
incidental rather than central to the satiric purpose of the
novel. Hostile satire in Melincourt is directed primarily
against the Tory position. Unlike Cobbett and Shelley,
Peacock does not identify Malthus with the principles of
political repression which are the target for violent attacks
throughout the book, culminating in the scene at Mainchance
Villa in chapter XXXIX.

OTHER ECONOMIC THEORIES

In the preface to his Poetical Works of 1832 Leigh Hunt
grouped Peacock with the Utilitarians: 'and last, not least,
the Utilitarians themselves are poetical! ...if you want a
proper Bacchanalian uproar in a song, you must go to the
author of 'Headlong Hall', who will not advance utility it­
self, unless it be jovial. It is a moot point which he admires
most, Bentham or Rossini'. 63 In his diary for 10 November 1853

62 R.J. White, Political Tracts of Wordsworth, Coleridge and
Shelley, 239
63 Poetical Works, xxix
Grant Duff noted: 'Mr. Peacock talked to me to-day at much length about Jeremy Bentham, with whom he had been extremely intimate - dining with him tête à tête once a week for many years together'.

It is clear from the letters between Peacock and Hogg during 1819 and 1826 that Peacock was at that time in fairly close friendship with James Mill.

Certainly, the references in these letters modify Brett-Smith's assertion that 'Peacock's relations with James Mill seem never to have become cordial'.

That Peacock possessed some sympathy with the ideas of the Utilitarians seems probable from his willingness to contribute to the Westminster Review and the London Review. Nevertheless, it seems clear that he was never closely involved with the movement. As K.N. Cameron notes: 'he was too amused by some aspects of their philosophy and practice to fully identify himself with them'.

Nowhere is Peacock more openly critical of the Utilitarians than in his treatment of their economic ideas. In Headlong Hall and Crotchet Castle he satirises political economists. Mac Laurel in Headlong Hall is introduced as a

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64 Notes from a Diary, I, 60
65 New Shelley Letters, ed. Scott, passim
66 H I cxxix
67 Shelley and His Circle, I, 112
poet and critic in the train of Gall. In chapter V, however, he emerges as an exponent of the ideas of 'the phelosophers of Edinbroo', advancing the notion that all men are inevitably governed by self-interest.  

This slight sketch is amplified in Crotchet Castle in the depiction of Mac Quedy. William F. Kennedy has argued that Mac Quedy is not, as has been generally supposed, a satiric portrait of the economist J.R. McCulloch but 'a composite character formed from the ideas of several Utilitarian economists', including McCulloch, James Mill and Robert Mushet. Although the theories of political economy advanced by Mac Quedy are clearly satirised, however, there is little of the harshness that inspired Peacock's attacks upon Brougham in Crotchet Castle or the Tories in Melincourt. Much of the ridicule is light-hearted, as when Dr. Polliott objects to Mac Quedy's use of the phrase 'in the infancy of society', possibly, as Kennedy suggests, alluding to Adam Smith's fondness for the phrase 'the rude state of society'. A more serious disagreement is revealed when Mac Quedy quotes the opening sentence of James Mill's Elements of Political

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68 Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XXI, 1966-67, 188-190
69 Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XXI, 1966-67, 189
Economy: 'Political economy is to the state what domestic economy is to the family'. This statement is attacked, not because of its theoretical truth or falsehood but because it represents an inadequate definition of the manner in which the economic affairs of the state are managed. There is a satiric reference, too, to Mac Quedy's theory that 'the essence of a safe and economical currency [is] an interminable series of broken promises'.

Probably the most significant attack upon the methods of the political economists is registered by Dr. Polliott in chapter IX of Crotchet Castle when he opposes the doctrine that 'you increase the wealth of a nation by increasing in it the quantity of things which are produced by labour: no matter what they are, no matter how produced, no matter how distributed'. Dr. Polliott is here attacking the theory of Ricardo and his disciple James Mill that political economy is concerned with production by human labour. In his Elements of Political Economy Mill stated his basic principle that political economy, like domestic economy, is concerned with consumption and supply: 'The consumption being a quantity

72 H IV 73; J. Mill, Selected Economic Writings, ed. Winch, 210
73 H IV 73-74
74 H IV 184
75 H IV 127
always indefinite, for there is no end to the desire for enjoyment, the grand concern is, to increase supply'.

Following Ricardo, Mill argued that general over-production was impossible. Dr. Folliott is concerned to emphasise the need for an evaluation of the worth to human society of the commodities produced and for a more equitable distribution of these commodities. Against the concept that an increase in the quantity of production of all items involves an increase in wealth he argues in favour of an emphasis on the production of 'the common necessaries of life distributed among the greatest number of persons'.

The opinions advanced by Dr. Folliott are not worked out in detail, however, and the reader's final impression is that Peacock is merely fencing with a few selected ideas of contemporary Utilitarians rather than engaging in a serious analysis of their thought. Throughout Crotchet Castle Peacock's main emphasis is on the need for a sense of human values. The satire in the novel implies that, in their search for scientific principles to support their theories, the political economists have abandoned the basic principle that the rulers of the state are responsible for the welfare of the whole population.

76 J. Mill, Selected Economic Writings, ed. Winch, 210
77 E. Roll, A History of Economic Thought, 201-203
78 H IV 127
In his final novel, *Gryll Grange*, Peacock seems to have made his peace with the political economists. MacBorrowdale is 'a gentleman who comprised in himself all that Scotland had ever been supposed to possess of mental, moral, and political philosophy'.

His ideas, however, are not recognisably related to those of Mac Qudy. No serious discussion of economic theory disturbs the calm atmosphere of the novel. In his attitude to parliamentary reform and popular education MacBorrowdale reveals himself as a convert from radicalism.

Peacock has no illusions about the utopian vision of universal equality. In *Crotchet Castle* Dr. Polliott declares that the common principles of human action are 'to take as much as I can get, and to pay no more than I can help'.

Toogood, 'the co-operationist, who...wants to parcel out the world into squares like a chess-board, with a community on each, raising everything for one another, with a great steam-engine to serve them in common for tailor and hosier, kitchen and cook' is mercilessly satirised. This is clearly an attack upon Robert Owen who from 1800 organised his New Lanark cotton mills on increasingly democratic principles.

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79 H V 113
80 H IV 17
81 H IV 60-61
Again, Peacock implies that the theory involves a process of de-humanisation. A forceful contrast might be drawn between Toogood's egalitarianism and Forester's organisation of his estate in Melincourt. Forester's system rests upon benevolent personal contact between the landowner and his tenants while Toogood's ideal is diagrammatic and lacks the recognition of human values and differences.
The most notable feature of the society depicted in Peacock's novels is its essentially rural character. This expresses a fundamental belief about the nature of the social order and indicates something of Peacock's attitude to the development of industrial society and contemporary ideas of progress. The country house setting of Headlong Hall, Melincourt, Nightmare Abbey, Crotchet Castle and Gryll Grange ensures physical remoteness from the problems of industrial communities. Maid Marian and The Misfortunes of Elphin offer fanciful evocations of pre-industrial society. Despite the wide range of characters presented and topics discussed in the novels, Peacock often seems uninvolved with the concerns of urban life. It is certainly true that he nowhere reveals more conservative attitudes than in his adherence to the established order of rural society, an order which depends on the hierarchical relationship between wealthy landowners and tenant farmers, whose welfare is entirely
dependent on the benevolence of their masters.

It is, of course, unjust to accuse Peacock in the early novels, written during the initial period of industrial expansion, of lack of foresight of the inevitability of a change to urban life and the impossibility of retaining the agricultural society of the eighteenth century. It is important to note that Peacock's three earliest novels were written within a very short period from 1815 to 1818, at which time 'Most Englishmen...still worked on the land or in trades connected with agriculture, though within the next generation most Englishmen became townsmen engaged in industry'. By the time of Crotchet Castle, published in 1831, it has been estimated that 'probably half the population lived under urban conditions'. Even at this time, however, when the inevitability of the transition was becoming increasingly evident, Peacock's concern with the rural community indicates not so much an escapist attitude to problems of industrialisation as a constant criticism of the compulsory imposition, in the name of progress, of factory life on the mass of the population.

References in the works to the expansion of industry reveal Peacock's instinctive disapproval and his unchanging conviction that mechanical improvement did not ensure greater health or happiness for the majority. In Headlong Hall Escot

1 D. Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, 11
voices the belief, frequently reiterated in the novels, that industrial expansion is solely due to the tyranny of avarice. Foster, while agreeing that some evils need to be eliminated, sees the manufacturing system as fundamentally beneficial: 'employment and existence [are] thus given to innumerable families, and the multiplied comforts and conveniences of life diffused over the whole community'. Escot, however, believes that the result will be, not progress for the many, but increased luxury for the few. He contrasts the life of labourers employed in rural occupations with that of workers in factories, the independence of 'the industrious cottager' and his children with the servitude of 'the little human machines' and 'mere automata' of the cotton-mills.²

It is significant that when Peacock wrote the fragment of Calidore, probably only shortly before he commenced work on Melincourt,³ he opened with an ironic reference to the progress of machinery: 'Notwithstanding the great improvements of machinery in this rapidly improving age, which is so much wiser, better, and happier than all that went before it...'.⁴ This satiric theme, which provides merely a passing reference in Calidore, is central in Melincourt. Forester denounces

² H I 77-79
³ H I lxvii
⁴ H VIII 303
the spread of roads, 'the overflowing corruption of cities' and 'the blighting imprisonment of manufactories'. Once again industrial expansion is attributed to the rapacity of 'Insatiable accumulators, overgrown capitalists, fatteners on public spoil'.

Clearly Forester voices Peacock's own Rousseauistic conviction that life in a manufacturing town is a 'departure from natural life', resulting inevitably in increased disease and mortality. Forester's speech to Feathernest, depicting in detail the 'rags and wretchedness' that lie beneath the 'golden surface' of urban life indicates, more forcibly than any other passage in Peacock's works, his vivid perception of the ills of contemporary society. Here, for the first and last time, Peacock pictures 'those narrow districts of our overgrown cities, which the affluent never see - where thousands and thousands of families are compressed within limits not sufficient for the pleasure-ground of a simple squire'.

For Peacock, the sole answer to the overwhelming problems of poverty and disease lies in active benevolence by the rich.
In this, his similarity to the early Dickens is immediately apparent. It must be noted, however, that Anthelia and Forester differ from the Cheeryble brothers in one important respect. Peacock's benefactors are firmly established in a rural context, while Dickens's are engaged in the business of the city. Forester himself asserts: 'in estimating the power and the riches of a country I take my only criterion from its agricultural population'.

Peacock displays no sympathy for an ideal of suburban happiness, though he himself was later to lead an increasingly suburban life, travelling to the India House in London from his home at Lower Halliford.

For Peacock, the identifiable villains of contemporary life are those rapacious landlords who establish large farms and enclosures which compel men who were formerly tenant farmers to seek work in the cities. Forester attacks landlords who, because large farms bring increased rent, 'make no scruple to increase their rents by depopulating their estates'.

Peacock is here once more advancing ideas expressed by Monboddo in his Ancient Metaphysics, as he acknowledges in a footnote. There can be no doubt that Forester here voices Peacock's own conviction, a fact which forcibly

9 II 289
10 II 287
indicates his fundamentally serious approach to at least one aspect of Monboddo's work, and disproves the assumptions of those commentators, such as David Garnett, who have seen the *Ancient Metaphysics* solely as a target for Peacock's satire.

If Peacock nowhere portrays the tyrannical industrialist, he presents two examples of the rapacious landlord. In *Melincourt* Lawrence Litigate appears briefly as the persecutor of the Desmonds. In *Crotchet Castle* the picture is drawn in more detail. Sir Simon Steeltrap 'has enclosed commons and woodlands; abolished cottage-gardens; taken the village cricket-ground into his own park, out of pure regard to the sanctity of Sunday' and subjected the peasantry to 'a wholesome course of prison discipline'. He exemplifies those widespread characteristics of 'game-bagging, poacher-shooting, trespasser-pounding, footpath-stopping, common-enclosing, rack-renting, and all the other liberal pursuits and pastimes which make a country gentleman an ornament to the world, and a blessing to the poor'.

H. Steuert has noted 'Peacock's insistence on agriculture

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11 Novels of Peacock, 98
12 H II 150, 157-158
13 H IV 65-66
14 H IV 5-6
and village community life as the sound basis of a well-ordered country'. The theme, forcibly expressed in Melin-court, is repeated in Peacock's other works. In this, as in his opposition to the use of paper money and to the political economists, he recalls Cobbett. That he read Cobbett regularly during 1817-21 is evident from his diary and his letters to Shelley and Hogg. Although, after 1821, there is no further explicit reference to Cobbett in Peacock's writings, his concept of the right relationship between landlords and tenants, his praise of an agricultural rather than an industrial society, and his advocacy of parliamentary reform, are all very similar to Cobbett's own ideals. The description by G.D.H. and Margaret Cole of Cobbett's 'vision of an idyllic relationship between squires and farmers, farmers and labourers, in a social order in which wealth came from the land, and not from stock-jobbing or the employment of factory slaves' could be applied with equal aptness to Peacock. Lack of evidence makes it impossible to determine exactly the extent of Cobbett's influence on Peacock but the similarity of their attitudes is evident. Peacock, however, does not follow Cobbett, in his History of the Protestant

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15 Dublin Review, CCXVI, 1945, 69
17 The Opinions of William Cobbett, 24
Reformation in England and Ireland, in idealising the Middle Ages as representing a perfect social system, though he gives brief expression to the ideal in Crotchet Castle in Chainmail's defence of 'the religious charity of the twelfth century'.

Although no critic appears to have noted the fact, the character of Chainmail surely owes something to Cobbett who declared 'not only that the people were better off, better fed and clad, before the "Reformation" than they ever have been since; but, that the nation was more populous, wealthy, powerful and free before, than it ever has been since that event'.

In Maid Marian, however, Robin Hood defies an avaricious and illiberal society when, like Anthelia Melincourt, he acts as a benefactor to a young couple.

By the time of writing Crotchet Castle and Gryll Grange Peacock had moved far from an extreme radical position. His theory of social relationships, however, remained constant throughout his works. In Gryll Grange, as in Melincourt over forty years earlier, the right ordering of society depends upon the establishment of a satisfactory relationship between landowners and tenants. Throughout his works the ideal society is depicted as a small community dependent upon the

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18 H IV 123
19 History of the Protestant Reformation, I, 452
20 H III 136
active benevolence of a wealthy landlord. This is the ideal advocated by Escot in Headlong Hall and by Forester in Melincourt. The dwellings of Gryll's 'numerous light-rented and well-conditioned tenantry' conform to the same pattern. This is partly reminiscent of Godwin's perfect society as depicted in Political Justice, but it differs significantly in the fact that Peacock's peasantry has no right to education and no outlet for mental accomplishments. As Basil Willey notes: 'Godwin's ideal society would have been a small community or parish inhabited by a cultured peasantry, each family subsisting upon small holdings of equal size, and attending with equal devotion to the husbandry of the soil and of the mind'.

It seems clear from Peacock's works that he regarded the husbandry of the mind as the prerogative of the rich. It is significant that Desmond, although intelligent and highly literate, seems to have abjured study as a natural condition of tenantry: 'I have ever thought agriculture the noblest of human pursuits: to the theory and practice of it I now devote my whole attention'. There is no indication

21 H I 46
22 H II 281
23 H V 13
24 The Eighteenth Century Background, 233
25 H II 159
that the tenants of Forester and Gryll, or Chainmail's ideal peasantry of the twelfth century, have any intellectual pretensions.

It is important to emphasise that belief in the traditional hierarchical ordering of society forms an integral part of Peacock's social theory throughout his works. In Forester he expressed his own most radical sentiments at the time of his closest friendship with Shelley, yet it is Forester who declares: 'I am no revolutionist. I am no advocate for violent and arbitrary changes in the state of society. I care not in what proportions property is divided (though I think there are certain limits which it ought never to pass, and approve the wisdom of the American laws in restricting the fortune of a private citizen to twenty thousand a year), provided the rich can be made to know that they are but the stewards of the poor'.

The philosophical justification for this concept of the rich as stewards of the poor lies in the doctrine that the human race forms a single family unit. In Melincourt this theory is expressed, with Utilitarian implications, by Forester: 'Yet what is human society, but one great family? What is moral duty, but that precise line of conduct which tends to promote the greatest degree of general happiness?'

26 H II 269-270
27 H II 266
Forester's appeal to 'that bond of brotherhood which nature weaves and civilization breaks' is supported by a quotation from Weld's *Travels in Canada* on the social conscience of the Canadian savages. The idea is perhaps also partly derived from Rousseau's assertion, in the *Discours sur l'Origine de l'Inégalité*, of the strength of compassion among men in the state of nature: 'Compassion must, in fact, be the stronger, the more the animal beholding any kind of distress identifies himself with the animal that suffers. Now, it is plain that such identification must have been much more perfect in a state of nature than it was in a state of reason'.

The concept of the state as a family is voiced in Crotchet Castle by Chainmail who appeals to the 'kindly feeling' which, in the twelfth century, 'bound the several classes of society together'. Mac Quedy's assertion that 'Political economy is to the state what domestic economy is to the family' allows Dr. Folliott, in disputing the analogy, to emphasise the weakness of contemporary society which lacks 'a paterfamilias, who regulates the distribution'. Peacock's ideal of such a public benefactor acting as head of a community is Thomas

28 *H II 432*
30 *H IV 123*
31 *H IV 73*
Jefferson, as is evident from his review of Jefferson's Memoirs.

At no point in his writings does Peacock attempt to foment agitation among the poor. His argument is wholly directed at the rich. He never seriously considers the question of what action should be pursued if the rich fail to reform themselves. Because of this, J.P. Smith has stated that 'He has no real compassion for the victims of social inequality or injustice'. This seems unfair. If Peacock has no final answer to the problems of social disintegration, he is certainly not lacking in compassion. Even in the comfortably remote atmosphere of Gryll Grange Falconer must 'look with feelings of immense pain on the mass of poverty and crime; of unhealthy, unavailing, unremunerated toil, blighting childhood in its blossom, and womanhood in its prime; of "all the oppressions that are done under the sun"'.

A.E. Dyson sees Peacock's early radicalism as a luxury supported by lack of foresight: 'In the early novels Peacock's serenity rested in the unchanging pattern of English life; given this, radicalism was a luxury he could well afford. Only later, when social change turned out to be in full flood, did he see the threat contained in it to all that he valued

32 A Critical Study of Peacock, 173
33 H V 92
It is certainly true that Peacock instinctively lacks sympathy with any idea of revolution in English society, though he offers no philosophical or practical arguments either against revolutionary methods or in favour of the existing hierarchical order. Indeed, there seems to be an inconsistency between his attitude towards the idea of revolution in England and France. Despite the contemporary evils — itemised by Toobad in *Nightmare Abbey* — of hanging, transportation, workhouses, manufactories and avaricious landlords, and despite the sins of such landowners as Sir Simon Steeltap, Peacock's final answer to the Swing riots of 1830, which must certainly have inspired the last chapter of *Crotchet Castle*, is to label the rioters as a 'rabble-rout'.

Peacock's reaction in *Crotchet Castle* to the widespread rising of agricultural labourers which reached a climax late in 1830 is of special interest since it almost certainly represents his first encounter with any form of mob violence. E.J. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé describe him as a sympathetic urban observer whose ignorance led him to overemphasise the extent of the violence threatened by the rioters. It is certain,

34 *The Crazy Fabric*, 68
35 H III 106
36 H IV 203
37 *Captain Swing*, 17n
however, that several disturbances took place in the vicinity of Peacock's home at Lower Halliford, which he owned from 1823. The table of Swing incidents compiled by Hobsbawm and Rudé reveals that during 1830, within a ten mile radius of Lower Halliford, there were cases of arson at Englefield Green, Bedfont, Egham (twice), Woking, Oxshott, Cheam and Hampton. Threatening letters were received at Colnbrook, Langley, Windsor, Hounslow, Slough, Heston, Staines and Bedfont. In addition, there were tithe riots at Woking and seditious speeches against the government at Hillingdon. Although there is no proof that Peacock himself witnessed any of the riots it is extremely probable that they caused him some concern, if only for the safety of his personal property.

The social and economic aims of the rioters were such as might have been expected to arouse Peacock's sympathies. Their chief demands were for fair wages, a better system of social security, restriction of the spread of machinery and, as a wider objective, the restoration of a stable social order. There is, indeed, some evidence of sympathy towards the rioters in the last chapter of *Crotchet Castle*. Chain mail

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38 H I cxxi
39 *Captain Swing*, 311-358
40 *Captain Swing*, 16
defines the cause of the disturbances as 'poverty in despair'; and Mac Quedy perceives that such riots are the result of Steeltrap's acquisitive acts; and Folliott analyses the basic cause of the movement as the selfish lack of sympathy displayed by the governing classes: 'Putting the crew on short allowance, and doubling the rations of the officers, is a sure way to make a mutiny on board a ship in distress.'

Nevertheless, the final impression of Crotchet Castle is not of active sympathy. Peacock is clearly hostile to the indiscriminate reprisals practised by the rioters. His commitment to a hierarchical ideal in the ordering of society precludes any possibility that he will accept the principle of violent revolt. The rioters are efficiently dispatched and the book immediately reverts to an atmosphere of comedy and good humour. One's final impression is that Peacock evades the question of what action can justifiably be taken by the lower classes if their social superiors refuse to act in a benevolent or even a fair manner.

It is clear that Peacock's failure to come to terms with contemporary social developments results directly from the fact that, throughout his works, his appeal for positive
action is directed solely to the landowning class. It is significant that, although Cobbett and Peacock both desire a return to an agricultural social system, Cobbett's attention is directed to the establishment of a thriving peasantry, whereas the basis of Peacock's ideal is a benevolent squirearchy. Despite his enthusiasm for a healthy and happy populace he does not, in the final analysis, expect the poorer classes to take positive independent action on their own behalf. The devotion which the cottagers pay to Forester has something dog-like about it.\textsuperscript{44} A.E. Dyson notes that the charity of the rich is not offered without expectation of a return: 'The payment for charity is, of course, heartfelt gratitude'.\textsuperscript{45} It is here that Peacock's difference from the more extreme radicals is most marked. Independent revolutionary agitation by the poorer classes implicitly denies the absolute force of the traditional established hierarchy which is the principal article of his social faith.

\textsuperscript{44} H II 285

\textsuperscript{45} The Crazy Fabric, 67
CHAPTER 8

EDUCATION

Nothing so clearly demonstrates Peacock's theory of the hierarchical structure of social relationships as his attitude towards problems of education. He is certainly not a doctrinaire conservative, concerned merely to oppose all innovations and to uphold the merits of the traditional system. Indeed, his hostility to the spread of popular education is joined with a persistent criticism of the contemporary public school and university system. There is, in fact, very little approval in Peacock's works for any existing educational methods.

THE UPPER CLASSES

In the early works, Peacock's attention is naturally focussed on the existing system of upper class education in the public schools and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. He received his own education at a private
school which he attended between the ages of six and twelve.\(^1\) His subsequent knowledge was acquired by his own uninstructed reading. It is, therefore, understandable that he should display some prejudice towards the traditional educational system. His comments about public schools are chiefly notable for their dislike of brutality. In his youth Grovelgrub 'had been beaten black and blue in the capacity of fag (a practice which reflects so much honour on our public seminaries)'\(^2\). Similarly, Scythrop 'was sent, as usual, to a public school, where a little learning was painfully beaten into him, and from thence to the university, where it was carefully taken out of him'.\(^3\)

The attack upon the university in this passage is typical of Peacock. In *Nightmare Abbey* Oxford is 'the house of mental bondage';\(^4\) in *Headlong Hall* it is devoid of 'men of taste and philosophers';\(^5\) in *Melincourt* the university system of education appears to Desmond 'the result of a deep-laid conspiracy against the human understanding, a mighty effort of political and ecclesiastical machiavelism,

\(^{1\text{H I xxii-xxv}}\)
\(^{2\text{H II 252}}\)
\(^{3\text{H III 3-4}}\)
\(^{4\text{H III 30}}\)
\(^{5\text{H I 7}}\)
to turn the energies of inquiring minds into channels, where they will either stagnate in disgust, or waste themselves in nugatory labour.* Desmond attacks the universities because they do not seek to inculcate moral truths and to counter the forces of superstition and political imposture. Universities, he maintains, are the homes of vested interest. He condemns their emphasis on 'the microscopic inspection of philological minutiae' at the expense of critical and philosophical enquiry. In Crotchet Castle the undisturbed libraries of Oxford are 'great reservoirs of books whereof no man ever draws a sluice' and the university specialises in 'the system of dissuasion from all good learning'. Peacock's hostility towards university education was not unusual. He himself quotes a selection of similar attacks in his review of Moore's Letters and Journals of Lord Byron. Peacock's picture conforms with V.H.H. Green's description of the condition of Oxford at the end of the eighteenth century as 'for the most part sunk in a learned torpor'.

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6 H II 131
7 H II 132
8 H IV 113
9 H IV 114
10 H IX 100-107
11 Oxford Common Room, 1
It is much more surprising, however, that Peacock seems to have been opposed to the foundation of London University in 1828. Hogg favoured the plans and expressed to Peacock his opinion that 'although you sometimes show your ingenuity by arguing against that institution, you are equally glad'. Hogg, indeed, suggested that Peacock should 'canvass for the professorship of Greek, or of Roman Antiquities or of some such lore'. Peacock, however, seems never to have approved of the project. His translation of the Latin inscription for the university's foundation stone is sarcastic. In the absence of sufficient evidence his attitude may be partly explained by the close connection with the university of Brougham and McCulloch.

Peacock's own ideal of the aims of education is outlined in his Prospectus: Classical Education: 'The principal object of education is to communicate to the youthful mind that love of mental and moral improvement, which will continue to act with a steady and permanent impression when no longer directed by the hand of the preceptor'. He attacks the contemporary habit of concentrating on 'the words and rules of a language' and criticises the use of punishments and rewards rather than the effort to communicate the 'intrinsic advantages and

12 New Shelley Letters, ed. Scott, 165
13 H VII 240-241
pleasures' of knowledge.  

There is a constant insistence in Peacock's works on the right of women to be educated. He satirises the blue-stocking as Mrs. Comfit in *The Dilettanti* and again as Celinda Toobad in *Nightmare Abbey*. Danaretta Pinmoney in *Melincourt* and Lemma Crotchet in *Crotchet Castle* represent the type of woman produced by 'an expensive and complicated education'. Aspects of his own ideal are clearly indicated by the characters of Anthelia Melincourt, Lady Clarinda, Susannah Touchandgo, Morgana Gryll and Alice Niphet. All are intelligent and widely read, exemplifying Forester's 'Most heavenly of earthly things, an enlightened female mind'. In chapter XV of *Melincourt* Anthelia, Forester and Fax discuss the prevalent opposition to the education of women. Anthelia declares that 'To think is one of the most unpardonable errors a woman can commit in the eyes of society'. This analysis of contemporary prejudice agrees with Jane Austen's sarcastic statement in *Northanger Abbey*: 'A woman especially, if she have the misfortune of knowing anything, should conceal it as well as she can'.

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14 H VIII 429-430
15 H IV 10
16 H II 167
17 H II 166
18 *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Chapman, 111
A.H. Able asserts: 'A survey of the novel contemporary of his own time, the novel of Miss Austen, Miss Edgeworth, and Sir Walter Scott, shows nothing comparable to the self-sufficient women of Peacock's fiction. The honor then must be allowed Peacock of being one of the first, and certainly one of the most vigorous of the champions of free womankind'.\(^{19}\) If this is somewhat unjust to the creators of such self-reliant characters as Elinor in *Sense and Sensibility* and Jeanie Deans in *The Heart of Midlothian*, it remains generally true that Peacock's position is surprisingly modern. The novelty was recognised by the Athenaeum which, reviewing *Crotchet Castle*, declared: 'Lady Clarinda is an admirable character, and more natural than any young lady we have met with, in books or elsewhere, for some time'.\(^{20}\) Peacock would probably not have supported the extreme claims for the political emancipation of women advanced by Mary Wollstonecraft. The fact that he places a quotation from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in the mouth of Celinda Toobad\(^{21}\) probably indicates his critical attitude towards that work. Nevertheless, he would certainly sympathise with Mary Wollstonecraft's basic claim that women should not be excluded from the right to education.

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19 *Meredith and Peacock*, 88
20 *Athenaeum*, no. 175, 1831, 145
21 H III 92
POPPAR EDUCATION

It must be emphasised, however, that Peacock's enlightened attitude applies only to the wealthy. In Gryll Grange Dr. Opimian declares: 'If all the nonsense which, in the last quarter of a century, has been talked on all other subjects, were thrown into one scale, and all that has been talked on the subject of education alone were thrown into the other, I think the latter would preponderate'. This was published in 1860 and represents Peacock's attitude to the great debate on the spread of popular education which he had discussed earlier in Crotchet Castle in 1831. The crucial passage occurs early in Crotchet Castle when Dr. Folliott opposes the principles of general education on a national scale with his own theory of strictly functional instruction: 'law for lawyers, and cookery for cooks'. On this thesis, only those with private incomes, who were thus freed from the necessity to work, would logically be entitled to the luxury of a general education. Gryll seems to echo this opinion when he states: 'The art of teaching everything, except what will be of use to the recipient, is national education'.

22 H V 199
23 H IV 18
24 H V 2
It seems clear that Peacock feared the extension of education because it was likely to disturb the established hierarchical order of society. It is for this reason that a recent study of British social policy classes Peacock with Lord Eldon in his fear of popular knowledge, 'the extremity of his reactionary views' and his insensitivity 'to social wrongs which would have outraged Englishmen of later years'.

In Crotchet Castle Peacock oversimplifies the Morning Chronicle's analysis of the relationship between increased knowledge and the discontent of the working classes in MacQuedy's statement that 'Discontent increases with the increase of information'. If the naive belief 'that a scientific organization for teaching everybody everything, would cure all the evils of society' is justifiably satirised, it is nevertheless true that Peacock is both unsympathetic and unfair to the increasing demands for greater equality and social justice which resulted from the spread of education. In this, he contradicts the belief expressed in the scene at Mainchance Villa in Melincourt that the fact that 'the people read and think' will inevitably make them more aware of their legitimate grievances. Increase in knowledge is seen in Melincourt as

25 B. Rodgers, The Battle Against Poverty, I, 2
26 H IV 200
27 H V 114
28 H II 403
a beneficial social force. In Peacock's later works it is a social irritant.

The villain of Crotchet Castle is 'the learned friend', Henry Brougham. Brougham's activities in education, and especially his support of the mechanics' institutes movement and his leading part in the foundation of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in 1826, are satirised in the novel. Dr. Folliott's outburst at the opening of chapter II against the tract published by the Steam Intellect Society is clearly a reference to one of the publications of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, whose prospectus stated: 'The object of the Society is the imparting of useful information to all classes of the community, particularly to such as are unable to avail themselves of experienced teachers, or may prefer learning by themselves. The plan proposed for the attainment of this object is the periodical publication of treatises under the direction and with the sanction of a superintending committee'. 29 Disraeli had already attacked the Society in 1827 in Popanilla. Popanilla reads Useful Knowledge tracts on his idyllic Isle of Fantaisie. In Hubbabub, capital of Vraibleisia, representing Britain, a Society for the Diffusion of Fashionable Knowledge caters for the social needs of the nouveaux riches.

29 C.W. New, Life of Brougham, 348
In Gryll Grange Brougham is again satirised as Lord Facing-both-ways, together with Lord John Russell who appears as Lord Michin Malicho. The Pantopragmatic Society evidently represents the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, of which Brougham was the first president in 1857.

In Lord Curryfin, Peacock presents the only significant example in his novels of conversion of character and it is noteworthy that the change consists largely in the abandonment of educational activity.

As has been noted above in chapter 5, Peacock obviously felt strong antipathy towards Brougham. This certainly increased the violence of his attack upon the spread of popular education. His basic attitude, however, results naturally from his essentially static view of society and his opposition to any change in the class structure. His dismissal of the discontented working class as 'the rabble-rout' in Crotchet Castle and Gryll Grange contrasts sharply with his earlier satire of the Quarterly Review in Melincourt, where it is the Tory Antijack who describes the people as 'the swinish multitude'. That Peacock has changed his early opinions is clear but that such a change was inevitable in the light of
subsequent events is evident in his inherent conservatism towards problems of class and social organisation even in his most radical work, *Melincourt*.

It is not justifiable to dismiss Peacock in *Crotchet Castle* and *Gryll Grange* simply as a bigoted supporter of the established social order. His hostility towards the spread of popular education is at least partly due to the fact that he feels the process of change to be misdirected. This marks at times merely a personal reaction against Brougham, but it also arises from Peacock's conviction that mere facts do not constitute education. The relationship between factual knowledge and intelligent practical ability is explored in the attack on competitive examinations in *Gryll Grange*. The depiction of the youthful progeny, Hermogenes, as a crammed fowl symbolises the tendency to regard the accumulation of information as equivalent to the acquisition of wisdom. Lord Houghton evidently sympathised with Peacock's opinion that a 'factitious and momentary acquisition of knowledge' is 'altogether apart from general culture or original genius'.

Peacock's attitudes to popular education are, in general, merely one manifestation of his social outlook. The early sympathy with the aspirations of the people, displayed in

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33 H V 148, 283

34 *Works*, ed. Cole, I, xx-xxi
Melincourt, is part of his general desire for the improvement of their lot by the reform of the electoral system and by rousing the landowners to the recognition of their social responsibilities. The modification of this attitude later in life led Peacock to view the spread of popular education as either a disruptive social force or a ridiculous waste of energy. His later opinions, however obscurantist to the modern reader, are developed logically from his unswervingly hierarchical view of social relationships.
Throughout his life Peacock was a wide-ranging reader. In a letter to Thomas L'Estrange, dated 23 June 1862, he states: 'I passed many of my best years with my mother, taking more pleasure in reading than in society'. In his self-education he followed the plan outlined in his Prospectus: Classical Education, studying Greek, Latin, Italian and French and also acquiring an intimate knowledge of English literature. In his youth he read widely and diffusely, not only in literary works, but in natural history, travel and philosophy. His letters to Edward Hookham during the period 1807 to 1811 include frequent lists of books he wished to borrow. As he grew older he took 'more pleasure in reading through books which I have read and admired than in reading anything new', but he still found the energy to teach himself Spanish when he was

1 H VIII 259
2 H VIII 256
approaching his eightieth year and in the last year of his life he began reading Dickens. He also gave some attention to Welsh literature during a period of ten to twelve years after his marriage. There are, too, references to Scandinavian mythology in Melincourt and Gryll Grange and its influence is evident in his poems, Fiolfer, King of Norway and The Circle of Loda.

Peacock's reading, though regular, seems always to have been somewhat unsystematic, directed, when at all, only by the interests of his creative writing. V.S. Pritchett describes him as 'the quintessential amateur'. Although he contributed literary reviews and articles to the Westminster Review, the London Review and Fraser's Magazine, he remained a scholarly amateur of letters throughout his life. In part, of course, his duties at the East India Company during his mature life made this inevitable; in part it was due to his unsystematic education. There was also, however, a habit of mind which made it difficult for him to be objective in criticism. His natural tendency, as J.B. Priestley notes, was 'to become a disciple

3 R. Buchanan, A Look Round Literature, 179
4 Works, ed. Cole, I, 1
5 H I cxxxv; C.E. Jones, Life and Works of Peacock, I, 288
6 H II 387-388; H V 339
7 New Statesman, XLV, 1953, 586
not a student, an enthusiast not an authority'. Nevertheless, if his judgement was not always correct, and though he sometimes based his criticism on prejudice rather than on analysis, his comments frequently reveal an intelligent mind which makes his literary criticism worthy of examination.

'THE FOUR AGES OF POETRY'

In many ways The Four Ages of Poetry is the most enigmatic of all Peacock's works. Although it represents his most sustained piece of literary criticism it poses serious problems of interpretation, for it is extremely difficult to determine how far he is in earnest and how far he is indulging his taste for provocative irony. It seems clear that Peacock's primary purpose in the essay is to satirise contemporary developments in poetry. Some of the charges levelled against modern poets - such as the attack upon Coleridge's reliance on 'the dreams of crazy theologians and the mysticisms of German metaphysics' - echo similar criticisms which are made seriously elsewhere in his works. Such criticisms of contemporary writers are discussed below in chapter 11.

To support his attack upon modern poetry Peacock constructs a lengthy argument, partly serious and partly whimsical.

8 Peacock, 12
9 H VIII 19-20
The argument is founded upon two basic generalisations.

Firstly, Peacock propounds a cyclic theory of poetic development which asserts that the history of a nation's poetry follows a regular sequence of periods of growth and decline, which he terms the ages of iron, gold, silver and brass.

Secondly, he asserts that poetry has no useful function to perform in contemporary society. He argues that in a primitive society poetry serves an immediate panegyrical purpose in glorifying the deeds of rulers and heroes. The fresh vision of the poet in this unsophisticated society produces works whose characteristic excellences are 'energy and power'. The success of poetry in the primitive ages of iron and gold leaves for the poet of a more civilised society only the art of refinement and the cultivation of 'studied and elaborate magnificence'. These are the characteristics of poetry in the silver age. This is in turn succeeded by the age of brass, a highly sophisticated, rational and fact-conscious age in which poetry no longer has any useful function.

A crucial thesis in The Four Ages of Poetry is that civilisation, as it advances, becomes less reliant on myth and more rational and 'scientific' in outlook. Peacock makes a sharp distinction between 'Feeling and passion [which] are best painted in, and roused by, ornamental and figurative
language' and 'the reason and the understanding [which] are best addressed in the simplest and most unvarnished phrase'. Verse is unsuitable for the expression of dispassionate reasoning: 'as the sciences of morals and of mind advance towards perfection, as they become more enlarged and comprehensive in their views, as reason gains the ascendancy in them over imagination and feeling, poetry can no longer accompany them in their progress, but drops into the background, and leaves them to advance alone'.

In part, as R.D. Altick asserts, Peacock is here probably satirising the Benthamite objection to poetry as having no practical utility. F.L. Jones, in an essay on 'Macaulay's theory of poetry in Milton', argues that Macaulay derived from Peacock his idea that 'He who, in an enlightened and literary society, aspires to be a great poet... must unlearn much of that knowledge which has perhaps hitherto constituted his chief title to superiority'. Jones suggests that 'It is to be regretted that Macaulay took Peacock's essay as a serious development of a theory of poetry instead of what it is: a very clever satire with a sting in its tail.'

11 H VIII 11
12 The English Common Reader, 134
directed against contemporary poetry'. In this judgement of Peacock's essay he agrees with J.I.M. Stewart, who describes The Four Ages of Poetry as 'a kind of poker-faced joke' and with W.K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks, who see the essay as 'only whimsical' and 'waggishly provocative'.

Before it is too readily assumed that Peacock's intention in propounding the cyclic theory is wholly humorous, however, it should be noted that the theory had, at least in part, been seriously propounded by Hazlitt shortly before the appearance of The Four Ages of Poetry. In his lecture 'On Shakespeare and Milton' in Lectures on the English Poets, published in 1818, Hazlitt argued that the greatest artists lived 'in a state of society which was, in other respects, comparatively barbarous'. In his lecture 'On Poetry in General' he stated further that 'the progress of knowledge and refinement has a tendency to circumscribe the limits of the imagination, and to clip the wings of poetry'. This, like The Four Ages of Poetry, recalls Imlac's conclusion in Rasselas: "Whatever be the reason, it is commonly observed that the early writers are

16 Peacock, 32
17 Literary Criticism, 416-417
18 Works, ed. Howe, V, 45
19 Works, ed. Howe, V, 9
in possession of nature, and their followers of art: that the first excel in strength and imagination, and the latter in elegance and refinement'.

Peacock himself voiced the cyclic theory again with apparent conviction, nearly forty years after *The Four Ages of Poetry*, in his review of Müller and Donaldson's *History of Greek Literature*. In this review he asserts that 'In all ages and nations, poetry rises, reaches its acme, and declines; and as it declines, passes more and more from the substantial to the adventitious'.

Whatever the extent of Peacock's adherence to the cyclic theory in *The Four Ages of Poetry*, however, the idea is so extravagantly developed that the reader finds it difficult to believe that he is wholly in earnest. Moreover, by the close of the essay, Peacock switches the target of his attack from the poets themselves to the audience which they are addressing, 'that...portion of the reading public, whose minds are not awakened to the desire of valuable knowledge, and who are indifferent to any thing beyond being charmed, moved, excited, affected, and exalted'. Again, the reader finds it difficult to assess accurately Peacock's position. In a letter

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21 H X 201

22 H VIII 23
to Shelley, written in December 1820, which he sent with a copy of *The Four Ages of Poetry*, he declares: 'The truth, I am convinced, is, that there is no longer a poetical audience among the higher class of minds; that moral, political, and physical science have entirely withdrawn from poetry the attention of all whose attention is worth having; and that the poetical reading public, being composed of the mere dregs of the intellectual community, the most sufficing passport to their favour must rest on the mixture of a little easily-intelligible portion of mawkish sentiment with an absolute negation of reason and knowledge'. This has the ring of sincerity and it may well be that, in both the letter and the essay, Peacock is in part justifying his own recent abandonment of serious poetic activity.

One's final impression of *The Four Ages of Poetry* is of a witty and thought-provoking *jeu d'esprit*. Throughout the essay Peacock deliberately distances himself from his readers. While the essay provides a notable illustration of his mental agility, it offers comparatively little reliable insight into his real attitude to literature. For most readers its chief value will continue to lie in the fact that its overt argument was sufficiently persuasive to prompt Shelley to answer it in his *Defence of Poetry*.

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23 H VIII 219-220
'TRUTH TO NATURE'

In The Misfortunes of Elphin Peacock quotes a 'Triad of Poetry': 'The three primary requisites of poetical genius: an eye, that can see nature; a heart, that can feel nature; and a resolution, that dares follow nature'. Throughout his writings he places great emphasis on the concept of 'truth to nature' in literature. For Peacock this phrase primarily denotes meticulous accuracy of observation. In Gryll Grange, Miss Ilex declares: 'Truth to nature is essential to poetry. Few may perceive an inaccuracy: but to those who do, it causes a great diminution, if not a total destruction, of pleasure in perusal'. Dr. Opimian, too, states that 'The old Greek poetry is always true to nature, and will bear any degree of critical analysis. I must say, I take no pleasure in poetry that will not'.

Peacock's mature praise is generally reserved for those poets who accurately observe and describe natural scenes and aspects of human character. His works are full of references to Shakespeare, who, Miss Ilex declares, 'never makes a flower blossom out of season'. He has evidently read widely in

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24 H IV 50
25 H V 239–240
26 H V 239
Milton. In *The Four Ages of Poetry* he describes him as 'the greatest of English poets', who 'may be said to stand alone between the ages of gold and silver, combining the excellencies of both; for with all the energy, and power, and freshness of the first, he united all the studied and elaborate magnificence of the second'.  

27 In *Gryll Grange* Miss Ilex defends the combination in *Lycidas* 'of flowers that never blossom in the same season' by asserting that 'Milton might have thought himself justified in making this combination in Arcadia. Generally he is strictly accurate, to a degree that is in itself a beauty'.  

28 It is notable, too, that Peacock shows a considerable acquaintance with Milton's prose works. The value which he attaches to them seems to be founded chiefly upon respect for the constructive and revolutionary power of Milton's thought. Thus, in *The Épicier*, he contrasts Milton and Scott as writers who represent respectively the disposition and disinclination of their age to think seriously.  

29 Peacock's 1818 diary includes the entry: 'read various poets: Cowper and Burns principally'.  

30 Although he never offers any detailed discussion, such as Hazlitt provided in
his Lectures on the English Poets, his occasional comments on Cowper and Burns and also on Thomson indicate a conviction that these poets possessed particularly perceptive and truthful powers of observation and description. In The Four Ages of Poetry he remarks: 'Thomson and Cowper looked at the trees and hills which so many ingenious gentlemen had rhymed about so long without looking at them at all, and the effect of the operation on poetry was like the discovery of a new world'.31 This again recalls Imlac's dissertation on poetry: 'no man was ever great by imitation. My desire of excellence impelled me to transfer my attention to nature and to life. Nature was to be my subject, and men to be my auditors: I could never describe what I had not seen'.32

Robert Buchanan reported that Peacock liked Burns 'and of Burns' poems his favourite was "Tam o'Shanter" '.33 This appreciation of Burns is implied in Gryll Grange where MacBorrowdale declares that 'No poet is truer to nature than Burns';34 and Dr. Opimian agrees that 'Burns was not a scholar, but he was always master of his subject. All the scholarship of the world would not have produced Tam O'Shanter: but in the

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31 H VIII 17
33 A Look Round Literature, 174
34 H V 240
whole of that poem, there is not a false image or a misused word. 35

For Peacock, close and accurate observation should be combined with simplicity of expression. In Crotchet Castle Chainmail defends the poetry of the twelfth century against modern poetry: 'It has, at any rate, what ours wants, truth to nature and simplicity of diction'. 36 The reader might, indeed, here question exactly what specimens of the poetry of the twelfth century were likely to be known to Chainmail— or to Peacock. In his review of Edgcumbe's Musical Reminiscences Peacock attacks the false imagery of modern English songs. 37 The same criteria determine his attack upon Moore's prose imagery in The Epicurean. 38 In his review of this work he declares: 'Fiction should regard probability even in trifles'. 39 In his review of Moore's Letters and Journals of Lord Byron he notes that the author 'seems often to aim at simplicity: a good aim'. 40

Peacock's criterion of 'truth to nature', in the sense

35 H V 242
36 H IV 125
37 H IX 230, 234
38 H IX 31-32
39 H IX 36
40 H IX 136
of accurate observation and simple and comprehensible expression, as the basis of critical judgement is evident in his reviews of Moore's works, in the discussion of literature in the novels and in his unfinished Essay on Fashionable Literature. In this essay he defends Coleridge against the attacks of the Edinburgh Review, basing his defence upon a careful reading of Christabel, which he finds accurate, coherent in structure and credible in effect. His careful analysis of the alleged defects in the poem rather surprisingly reveals considerable sympathy with Coleridge's sense of mystery and wonder. A similar short appreciation of Kubla Khan leads him to the conclusion: 'I do not believe that to any person of ordinary comprehension, who will take the pains to read this poem twice over, there will appear any thing unintelligible or incoherent in it: indeed there are very few specimens of lyrical poetry so plain, so consistent, so completely simplex et unum from first to last'.

The essay is of great interest in any discussion of Peacock's attitude to Coleridge and will be considered later. Here it is necessary to note only Peacock's insistence on accuracy in observation and simplicity and coherence in expression as the marks of literary merit. His frequent condemnations of Moore were founded upon the belief that his work failed to satisfy these conditions. It was presumably this aspect of Peacock's
taste that Shelley criticised when he described him as 'a
nursling of the exact & superficial school of poetry'.

THE PURPOSE AND PRACTICE OF RIDICULE

In 1833-36 Peacock published two essays in the London
Review as a prelude to an article on the French novelist
Paul de Kock. Although the final article appears never to
have been written, the essays are of interest as the only
direct statement of his ideas on comic fiction. In French
Comic Romances he distinguishes between two kinds of comic
fiction. The first class of comic writers, among whom he
includes Aristophanes, Petronius Arbiter, Rabelais, Swift and
Voltaire, uses ridicule to express ideas. The second class,
which includes Fielding, except in Jonathan Wild, and Pigault
le Brun, comprises comic writers to whom ideas are merely
incidental and not integral to the main purpose of their work.
'Ridicule, in the first case, the honest development of the
ridiculous ab intra, is very justly denominated the test of
truth'. Thus Rabelais, 'one of the wisest and most learned,
as well as wittiest of men, put on the robe of the all-
licensed fool, that he might, like the court-jester, convey

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42 Letters, ed. Jones, II, 126
43 H IX 258
44 H IX 261
bitter truths under the semblance of simple buffoonery. For Peacock, as for Shaftesbury, the highest purpose of ridicule is the testing of standards of truth: 'an intense love of truth, and a clear apprehension of truth, are both essential to comic writing of the first class'. In The Epicer he argues that the lack of moral purpose in contemporary French fiction is due to the indisposition of the public to think: 'Among a people disposed to think, their every-day literature will bear the impress of thought; among a people not so disposed, the absence or negation of thought will be equally conspicuous in their literature.'

In a letter to Hogg in 1818 Peacock declares that Rabelais 'is the court fool of Olympus, the chief jester of Jupiter'. His attitude towards Voltaire was similar. As Van Doren notes: 'In Voltaire he took great delight as a modern satirist who united to a genuine moral purpose a dexterity of wit not invariably associated with reformers.'

In his review of Müller and Donaldson's History of Greek

45 H IX 258-259
46 Cf. R.L. Brett, The Third Earl of Shaftesbury, 168
47 H IX 262
48 H IX 294
49 New Shelley Letters, ed. Scott, 115
50 Life of Peacock, 20
Literature he compares Voltaire and Lucian: 'To clear the ground of falsehood is to leave room for the introduction of truth. Lucian decidedly held that moral certainty, a complete code of duty founded upon reason, existed in the writings of Epicurus; and Voltaire's theism, the belief in a pervading spirit of good, was clear and consistent throughout. The main object of both was, by sweeping away false dogmas, to teach toleration. Voltaire warred against opinions which sustained themselves by persecution'. In Chapelle and Bachaumont he includes Voltaire and La Fontaine 'in the highest ranks of French literature'. In French Comic Romances he notes that the ridicule in Voltaire's comic tales appears 'to force itself up obviously and spontaneously'. He values Voltaire because, with other unconventional thinkers, such as Hume, Gibbon and Rousseau, he has led readers to question authority and has reasserted the value of intellectual inquiry. In Melincourt both Forester and Desmond admire Rousseau and Voltaire who are attacked by Anyside Antijack.
It is evident in *French Comic Romances* and *The Epicier* that Peacock expected ridicule to be allied to positive and constructive thought. Among English writers his favourite satirist was certainly Samuel Butler, the author of *Hudibras*. This preference is illustrated chiefly by the frequency with which he is quoted. In his diary for 1818 Peacock notes that he has 'read some of Butler's minor poems, on the abuse of learning, on plagiaries etc., for the fourth or fifth time'.

Like his mother, Peacock admired 'the solemn irony of Gibbon', an author whose works the Rev. Mr. Grovelgrub in *Malincourt* said 'ought to be burned in foro by the hands of Carnifex'.

Although he recognised the power of constructive thought in Swift's works there are comparatively few references to him in his writings.

It is perhaps strange that Peacock nowhere discussed the celebrated preface to *Joseph Andrews*. Fielding's interesting distinction between the comic, which imitates nature, and the burlesque, which exhibits what is monstrous and unnatural, might have been expected to interest him. Fielding's argument that the only genuine source of the

57 H VIII 437
58 H VIII 16
59 H II 441
60 Cf. H IX 258
ridiculous is affectation implies a strong moral purpose in the exposure of vice masquerading as virtue. In his reading of the novels, however, Peacock found that Fielding's concern was much more with characters and incidents than with opinions and ideas. The exception is Jonathan Wild, where 'Jonathan and his gang are at once abstractions and individuals'. It seems legitimate to conclude that Peacock valued the satire of false opinions more highly than the satire of affected manners.

Peacock's own intention as a satirist seems to have been the same as that which he ascribes to Rabelais and Voltaire. J.B. Priestley asserts that 'intense moral earnestness left him uncomfortable'. It is, of course, true that he disliked the earnestness of the religious bigot. Nevertheless, his own view of the purpose of comic fiction was essentially moral: 'among the most illustrious authors of comic fiction are some of the most illustrious specimens of political honesty and heroic self-devotion. We are here speaking, however, solely of the authors of the highest order of comic fiction - that which limits itself, in the exposure of abuses, to turning up into full daylight their intrinsic absurdities'.

61 H IX 258
62 Peacock, 100
63 H IX 261
perception and demonstration of absurdity implies the recognition of standards of reason and truth. For Peacock, both as critic and creative writer, the significance of ridicule lay in its inherent positive assumptions.

ITALIAN AND GERMAN LITERATURE

In the Prospectus: Classical Education Peacock declares that 'The harmonious language and delightful poetry of Italy are admirably adapted to form the taste of youth, and must be regarded as an indispensable requirement of elegant education'. It is significant that Anthelia Melincourt and Forester are both ardent admirers of Italian poetry, Susannah Touchandgo reads it, and Gryll Grange is pervaded with quotations and references, especially to the poetry of Boiardo. In Melincourt Forester declares that Italian poetry 'combines the magnificent simplicity of ancient Greece with the mysterious grandeur of the feudal ages'. In Gryll Grange Boiardo is praised for his 'truth and simplicity' and for 'his faith in his narrative'. From the references in his works it seems that Peacock admires Italian poetry chiefly for its delicate romantic atmosphere and its graceful use of

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64 H VIII 430
65 H II 164
66 H V 206
language. Thus Forester declares that 'Italian poetry is all fairyland'. The emphasis on these aspects leads Peacock to admire especially Tasso, Boiardo, Berni and Ariosto. It is clear that, despite the fairly frequent references in his works, Dante was not one of his favourite poets, though by the time he wrote *Gryll Grange* he seems to have acquired a more genuine interest in his writings and links his name with Homer and Shakespeare.

Peacock never expressed any sympathy for German manifestations of romanticism. In *Gryll Grange* Falconer quotes the 'dictum of Porson, that "Life is too short to learn German"', a sentiment with which Peacock appears to have agreed. Apart from the frequent attacks in the novels upon Kantian metaphysics, *Nightmare Abbey* satirises the *Horrid Mysteries* of the Marquis of Grosse, a 'tragedy on the German model', and Goethe's *Sorrows of Werter* and *Stella*. Scythrop's 'distempered ideas of metaphysical romance and

67 H II 164
68 H V 12
69 H V 24
70 E.g. H III 14, 24
71 H III 125-126
72 H III 13, 137
73 H III 92
romantic metaphysics' are treated with evident contempt but no critical analysis is offered. It seems clear, however, that Peacock viewed German literature as one of the chief corrupting influences on the development of contemporary literature.

**FASHIONABLE TASTE**

In *Sir Proteus* Peacock declares that 'the great desideratum in fashionable literature is novelty'. In *An Essay on Fashionable Literature* he states: 'as the soul of fashion is novelty, the books and dress of the season go out of date together'. The attack upon contemporary literary fashions runs throughout his works. For Peacock, reading is a serious and demanding occupation, requiring concentrated effort. He is fond of quoting Horne Tooke's dictum that 'The utility of reading...depends not on the swallow, but on the digestion'. He dislikes phrases such as 'the most popular literary production of the day', as he despises slovenly habits of 'scouting through books, which some people call reading'.

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74 H III 14
75 H VI 298-299
76 H VIII 264
77 E.g. H V 2; H IX 98
78 H IV 69
79 H IX 96
Allied to his mistrust of mere fashionable taste is a hatred of literary gossip. In the Memoirs of Shelley he deprecates 'gossip about notorieties', asserting that a biographer 'is bound to keep to himself whatever may injure the interests or hurt the feelings of the living...Neither if there be in the life of the subject of the biography any event which he himself would willingly have blotted from the tablet of his own memory, can it possibly be the duty of a survivor to drag it into daylight'. In his review of Jefferson's Memoirs he asserts the principle of 'The sanctity of private life'. In Crotchet Castle he depicts the typical purveyor of journalistic gossip in the character of Eavesdrop. Peacock's own practice in his Memoirs of Shelley agrees perfectly with his precepts.

**PEACOCK'S ERUDITION**

There is common agreement among critics that Peacock achieved a remarkable degree of self-education. His critical works display a passion for factual accuracy. J.P. Smith, indeed, asserts that 'he never attempts a careful examination or assessment of any literary work of importance, save such
as could be treated on the basis of factual correctness'.

It has been noted above that Shelley, writing to Maria Gisborne in 1819, described Peacock as 'a nurling of the exact & superficial school of poetry'. His habit of careful and accurate reading is certainly displayed at its best in his defence of Christabel in An Essay on Fashionable Literature. His apparently devastating attack upon the inaccuracy of Moore's The Epicurean is rendered less effective by the fact that he himself, like Moore, made little attempt at factual accuracy in his own semi-historical novel, Maid Marian.

The charge of pedantry has frequently been brought against Peacock. J.B. Priestley notes 'the carping pedantic strain' which he ascribes to his never having attended a university. Kingsley Amis refers to 'those erudition-exercises which will wring a repeated groan from any but the most addicted reader'. Peacock certainly delights in learned digressions such as that on classical poetic metres in the article on Bellini or the note on the image of the spider weaving its web in suspended armour in The Misfortunes of Elphin. In his poetry and

83 A Critical Study of Peacock, 166
84 Letters, ed. Jones, II, 126
85 Peacock, 10
86 Spectator, no. 6614, 1 April 1955, 403
87 H IX 333-334
88 H IV 77-78n
earlier novels the notes sometimes appear to be manufactured: indeed, in a letter to Hookham in 1809 he requests various books for the purpose of 'manufacturing notes' for The Genius of the Thames.\(^{89}\) In the later novels, however, the learning becomes integral to the mood of the work. A contemporary reviewer of Gryll Grange found that 'He has so thoroughly identified himself with his favourite authors, that he can write about them or refer to them so simply and naturally as to escape any strong tinge of pedantry and antiquarian tiresomeness'.\(^{90}\) Van Doren notes perceptively that 'The minute learning of Gryll Grange is but a sign of its author, an example of the attraction facts have for restless minds which have tried all theories, been satisfied with none, and come back to the safe ground of the facts from which all theories take a beginning'.\(^{91}\) There are, of course, occasional inaccuracies, as when, in Crotchet Castle, Brougham is described as 'the true Mr. Facing-both-ways of Vanity Fair'.\(^{92}\) Mr. Facing-both-ways is, in fact, an inhabitant of the Town of Fair-speech.\(^{93}\)

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\(^{89}\) H VIII 176

\(^{90}\) Saturday Review, XI, 1861, 274

\(^{91}\) Life of Peacock, 242

\(^{92}\) H IV 13

\(^{93}\) Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress, ed. Sharrock, 219
James Davies described Peacock as 'rather a reader of curious research and endless capacity for classical notes and queries than a critical or grammatical scholar'. This is a fair judgement of some of his criticism. The review of Müller and Donaldson's History of Greek Literature, for example, though lengthy and precise, hardly succeeds in coming to life critically. In much of his critical writing, however, and in all the novels, he displays an enthusiastic appreciation of literature and ideas which is evidence of the immense gusto which characterised his reading. If he was concerned with factual accuracy, he was also concerned with the pursuit of truth. Thus, in An Essay on Fashionable Literature, he asserts: 'Works of mere amusement, that teach nothing, may have an accidental and transient success, but cannot of course have influence on their own times, and will certainly not pass to posterity'. His inclination to quotation in the novels and his insistence on accuracy in his criticism is the natural expression of his view of the significance of literature in the formation of ideas.

LITERATURE AS ESCAPISM

Despite his emphasis upon the instructive moral purposes of literature, Peacock, like most readers, was also prepared

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94 *Contemporary Review*, XXV, 1875, 736

95 H VIII 275
to use literature as a means of escape from the realities of daily life. This is especially true of his reading of classical literature. As J.I.M. Stewart notes: 'A lover of Athens and Rome, and a wanderer amid all the literatures to which the Mediterranean basin has given birth, Peacock remained an untravelled hyperborean to the end. It is an index of the extent to which he recognised that the ideal world of his literary and historical imagination was an ideal world only'. The nature of Peacock's attachment to classical literature is discussed in chapter 10 below. It is certainly true that, as he grew older and adopted more whole-heartedly the philosophy of Epicurus, his interest in new ideas about contemporary society and its problems decreased. He concentrated increasingly on the vision of the good life, emphasising the pleasures of tranquillity and freedom from care. The philosophical change from his early radical sympathies to a more conservative approach to social problems has its counterpart in the development of his reading habits.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that Peacock was at any time of his life merely an escapist. Although not so ardently enthusiastic as Shelley, his early writings, and especially Melincourt, display a keen interest in problems of political reform and social amelioration. His review of

96 Peacock, 11
Jefferson's Memoirs in 1830 demonstrates his continuing sympathy with the cause of political liberty. After a distinguished career in the administration of the East India Company it was fitting that Peacock should close his life's work with Gryll Grange in which, by constant reference to his reading, he expressed his ideal of life lived according to the principles of Epicurus. Gryll Grange is much more than a work of escape into an idyllic and cultured fantasy-world: it is a positive and persuasive statement of the view of human existence and the continuing value of literature at which Peacock had arrived at the close of his life.
In a letter to Thomas L'Estrange in 1862 Peacock described the origin and course of his self-education in the classics:

I was early impressed with the words of Harris: "To be completely skilled in ancient learning is by no means a work of such insuperable pains. The very progress itself is attended with delight, and resembles a journey through some pleasant country, where, every mile we advance, new charms arise. It is certainly as easy to be a scholar as a gamester, or many other characters equally illiberal and low. The same application, the same quantity of habit, will fit us for one as completely as for the other." Thus encouraged, I took to reading the best books, illustrated by the best critics; and amongst the latter I feel especially indebted to Heyne and Hermann.

This passage indicates two aspects of Peacock's scholarship. The use of Harris's image of the reading of classical literature as a journey through a pleasant country - a progress
full of charms - expresses the essentially amateur and
romantic aspect of Peacock's approach to the ancient world.
In his review of Müller and Donaldson's History of Greek
Literature Peacock similarly compares Greek literature to 'a
stream which, rising in full volume from its source, passes
through valleys of diversified beauty'. In a note on
Rhododaphne, M.L. Clarke, having quoted Shelley's praise -
'This it is to be a scholar; this it is to have read Homer
and Sophocles and Plato' - remarks drily: 'In truth there is
little of Homer, Sophocles or Plato in the poem, but there is
much feeling for the picturesque, for the beauties of the
Mediterranean scene, and the charms of ancient mythology and
ancient superstitions. Hurd in the eighteenth century had
found the superstitions of the Middle Ages "more awakening
to the imagination" than those of Greece. Peacock reading
the ancients with an imagination already awakened found a
world of romantic charm that had been hidden from the previous
century'.

In his approach to classical literature Peacock was both
an enthusiastic amateur and a romantic dreamer. The extent to
which he used the classics as an escape into a dream-world of
his own imagination is discussed below. There is, however, a

2 H X 166

3 Greek Studies in England, 1700-1830, 165
further aspect to his classical reading. He pursued a course of disciplined self-education which made him, if not, as Sir Henry Cole enthusiastically claimed, 'one of the profoundest and most accurate of classical scholars of his time', at least a man who had read widely and carefully in all the major and many of the minor authors of the ancient world. In his Journal for 31 December 1851 Macaulay described Peacock as 'a clever fellow, and a good scholar'. Shortly after his death he was cited as 'one of the men best read in the classics, of his generation'. The quotations and allusions in his works indicate that he had read many of the best classical scholars. Even when every allowance has been made for the argument that he probably had not studied deeply all the authorities to whom he refers, the roll of scholars cited remains extremely impressive.

References to the classics pervade Peacock's works. The novels are full of allusions to and quotations from classical literature. His early attempts at poetry included translations from the Greek dramatists. His interest in classical mythology crystallised in 1817-18 in his best poem

4 Peacock: Biographical Notes, 6
5 G.O. Trevelyan, The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay, 556
6 North British Review, XLV, 1866, 86
7 H VII 413-419
Rhododaphne. Among his essays the *Prospectus: Classical Education*, the review of Moore's *The Epicurean*, the review of Müller and Donaldson's *History of Greek Literature*, the *Horae Dramaticae* and the attempt to solve the enigma *Aelia Laelia Crispis* are almost wholly devoted to the discussion of classical subjects. There is, however, little of his writing that does not indicate his classical tastes. The diary which he kept during 1818 gives evidence of his almost daily reading of the classics and it is probable that this practice persisted throughout his life.

Peacock did not contribute any new ideas or facts to the development of classical scholarship, though his imaginative reconstruction of the value of Epicurean philosophy within the context of contemporary life possessed positive value. His attitude to Epicureanism is discussed above in chapter 4. In his criticisms of writings about the classics Peacock reveals his customary emphasis on accuracy and his delight in the discussion of prosody. At times there is more than a trace of pedantry in his remarks, as in the discussion of Moore's Greek ode which he inserts in his review of *The Epicurean*, or in his note on the theory of the origin of the pentameter in his review of Müller and Donaldson. It is

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8 H IX 61-64.
9 H X 177
interesting to observe that the charge, which he gravely brings against Moore, of not having undertaken sufficient research into the classics, might be brought with equal justice against his own treatment of the Middle Ages in Maid Marian.

REALITY AND IDEALISATION

In an illuminating essay on Peacock Edmund Wilson remarks: 'The editors of the Halliford Edition of Peacock have included in his best novel, Gryll Grange, a peculiarly appropriate frontispiece which shows a spun-glass bust of Homer that Peacock had hung in his library. It makes us reflect that the classics in Peacock's hands do a little take on the aspect of having been deftly spun into glass'. 10 There is no doubt that, in his depiction of classical life, Peacock almost totally ignored its unpleasant aspects. From his reading he constructed an image of a society at once sophisticated and close to nature, intelligent, open-minded and dedicated to freedom of thought and action. Against this he contrasted the corruptions and degeneracy of contemporary life. He never attempted to depict the whole scene of classical life. It is evident that his culture is an expression of the influence of Graeco-Roman civilisation on

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10 Classics and Commercials, 411
later European thought rather than an exact reproduction of the culture of an earlier period. As Clive Bell remarks:
'The very culture that he inherited from a Graeco-Roman civilization, his bookishness, his archaeology, his conscious Paganism, would have looked queer in an Athenian of the fifth century B.C.'.

In Melincourt Forester says: 'Read ancient books, the only source of permanent happiness left in this degenerate world'. Later in the novel he asserts: 'In a state of society so corrupted as that in which we live, the best instructors and companions are ancient books'. There is a sense of unreality about such dogmatic assertions. Nevertheless, Peacock himself constantly stressed the centrality of the classics in the civilised life. In his essay, The Phaethon of Euripides, in the series Horae Dramaticae, he expressed his agreement with Harris that 'the "golden period" of Grecian greatness, within which the Athenian tragic theatre flourished, was "a providential event in honour of human nature, to show to what perfection the species might ascend"'. The idea of the degeneration of the human race, which runs through his

11 Pot-boilers, 56
12 H II 272
13 H II 384
14 H X 64
writings, is nowhere more clearly expressed than in his acceptance of the superiority of 'the bards and sages of departed Greece' over later generations. In Nightmare Abbey 'the cheerful and solid wisdom of antiquity' provides a striking contrast to the morbidity of modern literature. In Gryll Grange the follies of the contemporary world are set in perspective by means of an Aristophanic comedy.

CLASSICAL EDUCATION

It is evident from references throughout his works that Peacock regarded the proper study of the classics as being concerned primarily with the philosophical search for truth. Howard Mills oversimplifies Peacock's attitude when he states that 'Peacock studied [the classics] for exercise and comfort, not exertion and expansion'. In An Essay on Fashionable Literature he declares that in the study of classical literature 'There would be too much philosophy...for the purposes of public education, were it not happily neutralised by the very ingenious process of academical chemistry which separates reason from grammar, taste from prosody, philosophy

15 H VII 8
16 H III 105
17 H V 277-292
18 Peacock: His Circle and His Age, 28
from philology, and absorbs all perception of the charms of the former in tedium and disgust at the drudgery of the latter'. 19 The Prospectus: Classical Education contains a similar attack upon contemporary methods of teaching and a statement of the value of 'an intimate acquaintance with the poets, philosophers, and historians of antiquity' in the process of education. 20

In Melincourt Desmond declares: 'I studied Greek, as a means of understanding Homer and Aeschylus: I did not look on them as mere secondary instruments to the attainment of a knowledge of their language. I had no conception of the taste that could prefer Lycophron to Sophocles, because he had the singular advantage of being obscure'. 21 Despite his own occasional lapses into pedantry, Peacock constantly maintained the doctrine that classical authors should be read both for delight and instruction. Education is designed to instil in the student's mind a love of beauty and truth: 'The youthful mind should be taught from the beginning to take pleasure in the acquisition of knowledge, and to pursue it for its own sake'. 22
CRITICISMS OF SPECIFIC AUTHORS

Peacock's comments on classical authors do not reveal any remarkable critical perception. Indeed, it is remarkable how little real literary criticism is contained in his writings on classical literature. The essay which offered most scope for such criticism - his long review of Müller and Donaldson - is composed almost wholly of discussions about questions of fact. Peacock seems determined to confine his remarks to questions capable of rational solution and to eschew completely any attempt to analyse the emotional and philosophical impact of classical works. Thus he declares that Aeschylus represents 'the most interesting point in the history, not only of Greek literature, but of all literature'.

In the following paragraphs, however, he contents himself with purely factual discussions of the action of the major plays and of methods of textual emendation adopted by editors. In his note on Pindar he briefly summarises the characteristics of Pindar's work: 'His consummate art of arrangement, preparation, and transition; his wonderful command of diction and imagery; his vivid power of presenting pictures in words; his high-toned morality, and his exalted religious feeling'.

23 H X 190

24 H X 184-185
Even here, however, he reveals greater interest in Pindar's metres than in his thought and style.

Occasionally, and especially in the novels, Peacock's comments provide a guide to his view of the peculiar distinction of classical literature. In *Melincourt* Forester contrasts Homer with Shakespeare: 'Shakespeare is the great phaenomenon of the modern world, but his men and women are beings like ourselves; whereas those of Homer are of a nobler and mightier race; and his poetry is worthy of his characters: it is the language of the gods'. 25 It is Forester who declares that there is no comparison between a modern poet and Homer. 26 Occasionally, too, Peacock's comments on classical literature provide further evidence of his general literary attitudes. Writing to Shelley in 1818 he noted that, although it contains many fine passages, the *Thebais* of Statius is 'too ornate and inflated'. 27 In the review of Müller and Donaldson he stressed the similarity of aims in Lucian and Voltaire: 'The main object of both was, by sweeping away false dogmas, to teach toleration'. 28 In a brief paragraph in this review Peacock echoed the doctrine of ridicule which he pronounced at greater length in *French Comic Romances*: 'To clear

25 H II 382
26 H II 381
27 H VIII 203
28 H X 225
the ground of falsehood is to leave room for the introduction of truth'.

Perhaps the most curious manifestation of Peacock's taste is his praise of the Dionysiaca, a vast rambling poem in forty-eight books written in the fifth century A.D. by the Greek poet Nonnus. H.P.B. Brett-Smith thinks that Peacock may have made his first serious acquaintance with this work in 1817. C.E. Jones notes that, although Nonnus is quoted via Southey in Sir Proteus, he is first quoted independently in Nightmare Abbey. A quotation from the Dionysiaca heads Peacock's diary of 1818 and the same quotation, with a verse translation by Peacock, appears at the beginning of chapter VIII of The Misfortunes of Elphin. In a letter to Shelley in 1818 Peacock noted: 'I read Nonnus occasionally. The twelfth book, which contains the Metamorphosis of Ampelus, is very beautiful'. In The Four Ages of Poetry he states that the Dionysiaca 'contains many passages of exceeding beauty in the midst of masses of amplification and repetition'.

29 H X 225
30 H I lxxx
31 Life and Works of Peacock, I, 144
32 H VIII 435
33 H IV 70
34 H VIII 203
35 H VIII 13
Although Cole declares that Peacock wrote a paper on Nonnus for volume six of the London Magazine, Van Doren and the editors of the Halliford Edition have agreed that this article is not, in fact, by him. The only extensive criticism of the Dionysiaca occurs in the review of Müller and Donaldson. Peacock claims that the poem 'is on a clear, systematical plan'. More significantly, he comments specifically on the style of the work: it abounds 'with sentiments, descriptions, images, comprising every form and colour of poetical beauty; the whole conveyed in verses of singular harmony and elegance'. The poem is 'a very brilliant sunset' of Greek literature. The emphasis on the imagery and the versification is both typical of Peacock's taste and a fair judgement of Nonnus's particular merit as a poet.

36 Peacock: Biographical Notes, 21
37 Life of Peacock, 155
38 H VIII 471
39 H X 227
40 H X 227
41 Cf. A. Lesky, A History of Greek Literature, 817-818; Nonnus, Dionysiaca, ed. Rouse, Rose and Lind, I, vii
Peacock has frequently been praised for his criticism of the romantic movement. Humphry House stated of the conversation novels that 'the major strain and drift of opinion running through them all is the critique of romanticism'.

E.M.W. Tillyard described Peacock as 'the [romantic] movement's most consistent satirist', in this echoing Carl Van Doren who declared that 'he was perhaps the keenest satirist the English romantic movement had to endure'. J.I.M. Stewart similarly stated: 'If there is anything to which Peacock may be claimed as addressing himself with seriousness and pertinacity, it is a critique of Romanticism'.

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1. *Listener*, XLII, 1949, 997
2. *Essays Literary and Educational*, 132
3. *Life of Peacock*, 280
4. Introduction to J.B. Priestley, *Peacock*, xvii
There is no doubt that throughout his life Peacock was a serious commentator on certain aspects of romanticism. In his treatment of contemporary English literature, however, his attack was directed principally against a few well-chosen but strictly limited targets, of which the most notable was the taste for morbidity and mystery displayed in much romantic literature. His standpoint was that of a common-sense 'realist' who used ridicule as a means of exposing not only the Gothic excesses of Mrs. Radcliffe and 'Monk' Lewis but also the morbid introspection of Byron and the metaphysics of Coleridge.

The general principles of critical judgement noted above in chapter 9 are evident in Peacock's assessments of writings by his contemporaries. Although some of his comments, such as those on Shelley, were extremely perceptive, his criticisms tended to be partial and he too frequently resorted to non-literary aspects of their work as the ground on which to base his disapproval. His attacks upon Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge, in the novels, *Sir Proteus* and *Paper Money Lyrics*, are often rendered valueless as literary criticism by his political prejudice against them as defectors from the cause of liberty by their withdrawal of support for the French Revolution. On this subject his viewpoint is very close to that of Byron, Shelley, Leigh Hunt and Hazlitt.

The following sections attempt to place in perspective Peacock's comments on his contemporaries. Despite the evident weaknesses of his criticism he clearly appreciated much in
their writings. His criticisms of Shelley have a special value because of Peacock's close personal knowledge of his subject. It is only fair to note, however, that in this case he had the benefit of hindsight, for he wrote his Memoirs of Shelley nearly forty years after the poet's death. Most of his other judgements were written at a much earlier period and suffer accordingly from the inevitable disadvantages which attend the contemporary observer. He dismissed Keats on inadequate grounds but, as J.B. Priestley noted: 'if he sometimes mistook a swan for a goose, he never fell into the opposing error of mistaking geese for swans: the Campbells and Tom Moores and Barry Cornwalls never received any of Peacock's suffrages'.

SHELLEY

In Nightmare Abbey Peacock satirised Shelley's 'passion for reforming the world', in this employing a phrase used by Shelley himself in the preface to Prometheus Unbound. It is clear, nevertheless, that, at the time when he was writing Melincourt, Peacock had himself been influenced by Shelley's enthusiasm for reform. If Nightmare Abbey ridicules some of

5 Peacock, 99
6 III 14
7 Works, ed. Ingpen and Peck, II, 174
Shelley's ideas, however, it contains little criticism of his literary abilities. Peacock's only significant literary criticism of Shelley is found in the Memoirs of Percy Bysshe Shelley which he contributed to Fraser's Magazine during 1858-62.

The Memoirs of Shelley are notable for their fair-minded honesty as a record of Shelley's life and for the critical acumen displayed in the brief literary judgements. Peacock praises Shelley for his ability as a descriptive poet of 'scenes of beauty and grandeur', for the strength of his emotional writing, and for his idealism and metrical skill. His adverse criticism is centred in 'the want of reality in the characters with which he peopled his splendid scenes, and to which he addressed or imparted the utterance of his impassioned feelings'. Shelley's letters and poetry written in Italy, including Prometheus Unbound, are notable for 'extraordinary power of language' in the descriptions of 'the grand aspects of nature', but the poetry is peopled with 'phantoms of virtue and beauty, such as never existed on earth'.

Only in The Cenci does Peacock find Shelley moving
'into the arena of reality'. Although he felt that this drama was not suited to the contemporary English stage Peacock thought that in later life Shelley might have succeeded as a dramatist: 'If the gorgeous scenery of his poetry could have been peopled from actual life, if the deep thoughts and strong feelings which he was so capable of expressing, had been accommodated to characters such as have been and may be, however exceptional in the greatness of passions, he would have added his own name to those of the masters of the art'.

Closely related to Peacock's conviction that Shelley's poetry lacked human reality is his judgement that he did not sufficiently consider his audience when he wrote. John Buxton has claimed that 'it was the characteristic Romantic failing to be inconsiderate of the readers of poetry; to expect the unawakened earth to respond gratefully to the trumpet of a prophecy, instead of realising that it would be far more likely to grumble, or to pull the blanket up over its ears'. Peacock made this point clearly to Shelley in a letter of 22 February 1822: 'The poetry of your Adonais is very beautiful; but when you write you never think of your audience. The number who understand you, and sympathise with you, is very small. If you would consider who and what the

11 H VIII 119

12 Byron and Shelley, 179
readers of poetry are, and adapt your considerations to the depth of their understandings and the current of their sympathies, you would attain the highest degree of poetical fame'.

In his analysis of the defects of Shelley's poetry Peacock echoed the criticisms of several contemporaries. Byron declared that 'if Shelley cast off the slough of his mystifying metaphysics he would want no puffing'. The sample of contemporary reviews collected by Newman Ivey White in his anthology, The Unextinguished Hearth, indicates how frequently Shelley was criticised for obscurity. Many of these reviews use the charge of obscurity in the manner which Peacock himself wittily analysed in An Essay on Fashionable Literature. In this Essay he describes the standard jokes regularly employed in periodical criticism, noting that one of the most frequent is to accuse a new work of unintelligibility. Nevertheless, the charge of obscurity and lack of concern for the reader was also brought against Shelley by sympathetic reviewers. Thus in 1819 John Wilson, writing in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, praised Alastor but criticised Shelley for his use of allegory, 'a species of poetry in which

13 H VIII 228
14 Quoted in J. Buxton, Byron and Shelley, 179
15 H VIII 279
the difficulties of the art may be so conveniently blinked, and weakness find so easy a refuge in obscurity'. The London Magazine voiced its criticism in 1821 in the course of a very enthusiastic article 'On the Philosophy and Poetry of Shelley': 'But with all the combined attractions of mind and verse, we feel that Mr. Shelley can never become a popular poet. He does not sufficiently link himself with man; he is too visionary for the intellect of the generality of his readers, and is ever immersed in the clouds of religious and metaphysical speculations. His opinions are but skeletons, and he does not sufficiently embody them to render them intelligible. They are magnificent abstractions of mind, - the outpourings of a spirit "steeped to the very full" in humanity and religious enthusiasm'.

In Nightmare Abbey Peacock effectively satirised Shelley's impotence as a practical reformer, thus anticipating Matthew Arnold's judgement that Shelley was fundamentally ineffectual: 'The Shelley of actual life is a vision of beauty and radiance, indeed, but availing nothing, effecting nothing'. Despite his idealism, Scythrop is incapable of

16 Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, VI, 1819, 148-154; reprinted in N.I. White, The Unextinguished Hearth, 110
17 London Magazine, III, 1821, 122-127; reprinted in N.I. White, The Unextinguished Hearth, 262
18 Essays in Criticism (second series), 351
effective action. Although he builds 'many castles in the
air', his only practical action is the construction of
secret passages in the Abbey.

Although Scythrop is evidently based on Shelley, however,
the chief satire in *Nightmare Abbey* is reserved not for the
exaggerated enthusiasm for reform which typified *Queen Mab*
and *The Revolt of Islam* but for the morbid self-absorption
and posturing delight in melancholy which marked much con-
temporary literature. In a letter written to Hogg in April
1818 Peacock declared: 'At present I am writing a comic
romance with a title of "Nightmare Abbey", and amusing myself
with the darkness and misanthropy of modern literature, from
the lantern jaw of which I shall endeavour to elicit a
laugh'. He wrote in similar vein to Shelley in September
1818: 'I thought I had fully explained to you the object of
*Nightmare Abbey*, which was merely to bring to a sort of
philosophical focus a few of the morbidities of modern
literature, and to let in a little daylight on its
atrabilarious complexion'. The quotation from Butler on
the title-page emphasises Peacock's target. In so far as
Shelley was himself guilty of morbidity and self-absorption

19 H III 14
20 *New Shelley Letters*, ed. Scott, 112
21 H VIII 204
he was, of course, a subject for satire, but it would seem that Scythrop is not merely a depiction of Shelley but serves a wider purpose as a type of those elements of romanticism to which Peacock was most strongly opposed.

**BYRON**

The immediate impulse to the writing of *Nightmare Abbey* was the publication in 1818 of the fourth canto of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*. As Peacock wrote to Shelley: 'I think it necessary to "make a stand" against the "encroachments" of black bile. The fourth canto of *Childe Harold* is really too bad'. After the clumsy mockery of the dedication of *Sir Proteus* the brilliant satire of chapter XI of *Nightmare Abbey* is extremely effective. Howard Mills notes: 'It is a sign of Peacock's quickness and insight that he seized on *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (particularly canto iv, which had only recently appeared) as the work that both focused and exploited one of the spirits of the age; and that he made about it the central criticism that most later critics have made'.

The prose paraphrase of passages from *Childe Harold* produces a clear satiric effect, while Mr. Cypress's song is

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22 H VIII 193

23 *Peacock: His Circle and His Age*, 16
described by S.C. Chew as 'better than parody - it is triple-distilled Byronism'.\(^{24}\) In a letter to Peacock, written in December 1818, Shelley declared: 'I entirely agree with what you say about Childe Harold. The spirit in which it is written is, if insane, the most wicked & mischievous insanity that ever was given forth. It is a kind of obstinate & selfwilled folly in which he hardens himself'.\(^{25}\) Earlier, in his preface to The Revolt of Islam, Shelley had declared: 'gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair'.\(^{26}\)

When Peacock reviewed Moore's Letters and Journals of Lord Byron in the Westminster Review in 1830 he commented pertinently that 'Lord Byron was always "himself the great sublime he drew". Whatever figures filled up the middle and back ground of his pictures, the fore-ground was invariably consecrated to his own'.\(^{27}\) He noted Byron's delight in 'mystification'\(^{28}\) and 'his disposition to aim always at

\(^{24}\) A Literary History of England, ed. Baugh, 1271
\(^{25}\) Letters of Shelley, ed. Jones, II, 57-58
\(^{26}\) Works, ed. Ingpen and Peck, I, 242
\(^{27}\) H IX 73
\(^{28}\) Ibid.
Although he declared that 'Byron's sole standard of judgment of persons was in his own personal feelings of favour and resentment', he found 'his general observations, and especially his local descriptions...often valuable, and always amusing'.

In a letter to Shelley in February 1822 Peacock stated: 'Cain is very fine; Sardanapalus I think finer; Don Juan is best of all'. This brief judgement is nowhere expanded but the several references to and quotations from Don Juan in his later works perhaps indicate that the 'badinage' of this poem especially appealed to him. It is to be regretted that Peacock did not attempt the serious assessment of Byron's later poetry which he would probably have undertaken had Bowring, the editor of the Westminster Review, offered him Moore's second volume for review.

Throughout his life Peacock read widely in Wordsworth and his works contain many quotations from and references to

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29 H IX 94
30 H IX 109
31 H IX 113
32 H VIII 228
33 H IX 74
his poetry. As Van Doren notes, Peacock 'quotes him again and again, and pays him a notable number of times the homage of misquotation'. His adverse criticism is usually based not on literary but on political criteria. Thus Wordsworth appears in Melincourt as Paperstamp of Mainchance Villa, a direct sneer at his acceptance in 1813 of the office of Distributor of Stamps for Westmorland. In Crotchet Castle he reappears as Mr. Wilful Wontsee. For Peacock the political volte-face of the Lake Poets was unforgivable. He constantly criticised their abandonment of the radical principles of the French Revolution and their adoption of a reactionary position.

In a letter to Shelley in July 1818, after Brougham's defeat in the Westmorland election, he wrote: 'The Cumberland Poets, by their own conduct on this occasion, have put the finishing stroke to their own disgrace. I am persuaded there is nothing in the way of dirty work that these men are not abject enough to do, if the blessed Lord (Lonsdale) commanded it, or any other blessed member of the holy and almighty seat-selling aristocracy to which they have sold themselves, body and soul'. The idea that Wordsworth had sold his integrity recurs in An Essay on Fashionable Literature, in which Peacock states: 'Personal or political alliance being the only passports
to critical notice, the independence and high thinking, that keeps an individual aloof from all the petty subdivisions of faction, makes every several gang his foe: and of this the late Mr. Wordsworth is a striking example.\textsuperscript{36}

Despite his political censure, however, Peacock frequently praises Wordsworth for his 'truth to nature'. When, in his review of Moore's \textit{The Epicurean}, he wishes to attack Moore's inaccurate observation of nature, he chooses a passage from Wordsworth to illustrate 'picturesqueness, simplicity, and truth'.\textsuperscript{37} In \textit{Gryll Grange Miss Ilex}, having declared that 'Truth to nature is essential to poetry', notes that 'Shakespeare never makes a flower blossom out of season. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey are true to nature, in this and in all other respects: even in their wildest imaginings'.\textsuperscript{38}

The reference to 'wildest imaginings' provides the keynote for Peacock's attacks upon Wordsworth's poetic achievement. In \textit{The Four Ages of Poetry} he notes that, although the Lake Poets 'had retreated from the world for the express purpose of seeing nature as she was', they continued to people nature 'with mysticisms and chimaeras'.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{H VIII} 273
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{H IX} 32
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{H V} 239
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{H VIII} 18
Thus 'Mr. Wordsworth, the great leader of the returners to
nature, cannot describe a scene under his own eyes without
putting into it the shadow of a Danish boy or the living
ghost of Lucy Gray, or some similar phantastical parturition
of the moods of his own mind'. It is clear that Peacock
is here adopting a 'rational' position which demands close
observation without the superimposition of the mysterious
and the supernatural, qualities which make Wordsworth merely
a 'morbid dreamer'. He is sceptical, too, of any attribution
of special insight to those who live in the country. In
Melincourt Peter Gray 'trotted slowly off towards the mountains,
philosophizing all the way in the usual poetical style of a
Cumberland peasant'. Throughout his works Peacock
attributes a beneficial effect to the countryside but he
always asserts the necessity for the study of nature to be
allied to the study of the best literature. Anthelia
Melincourt, Susannah Touchandgo and Algernon Falconer all
gain insight from nature by using it to reinforce the lessons
learnt in the study of literature and the idea is forcibly
expressed in the Prospectus: Classical Education.

40 H VIII 18-19
41 H VIII 21
42 H II 30
43 H VIII 430
Critics have frequently expressed dissatisfaction with Peacock's treatment of Coleridge. Humphry House declares that on the evidence of the novels 'we are forced to the conclusion that Peacock had never really tried to understand one of his works; he was writing too plainly from hearsay'.  

J.I.M. Stewart notes that 'Coleridge, if we have at all studied him, comes to us, as does Henry James, pre-eminently as a voice - and here is not the voice we knew as Coleridge's.'  

G.D. Klingopulos finds that 'one's sense of Peacock's limitations defines itself around his treatment of Coleridge'.  

Peacock's assessment of Coleridge is found chiefly in four of the novels and in An Essay on Fashionable Literature. In the novels Coleridge is depicted as Panscope in Headlong Hall, Mystic in Melincourt, Flosky in Nightmare Abbey and Skionar in Crotchet Castle. It is significant that in the novels Peacock's chief concern is with Coleridge as prose-writer rather than as poet. The criticisms of Panscope in the earliest novel form the basis of the attacks in the later novels. Panscope's thought is distinguished by reliance on

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44 Listener, XLII, 1949, 998
45 Peacock, 16
46 From Blake to Byron, ed. Ford, 135
established authority rather than by the free exercise of rational analysis. His enormous reading is discursive rather than penetrating. Stylistically, he is notable for a wilful obscurity of expression. These charges are repeated in the characterisation of Mystic, Flosky and Skionar. To the initial criticisms are added the charges of Kantian 'transcendentalism', the reliance on faith and intuition rather than on analysis and induction, the love of mystery, the advocacy of a repressive system of popular education and the stylistic sin of jargon. There is, too, as in Peacock's satire of Wordsworth and Southey, a regular repetition of the charge of Coleridge's political *volte-face* over the French Revolution.

Although Peacock's quotations from and parodies of Coleridge's own phrases often achieve a satiric effect he fails to appreciate the immense significance of Coleridge's thought. He never reveals any sympathetic recognition, such as Carlyle displayed in his *Life of John Sterling*, that 'there was here, in his pious, ever-labouring, subtle mind, a precious truth, or prefigurement of truth...that, in spite of beaver sciences and temporary spiritual hebetude and cecity, man and his Universe were eternally divine'. Still less is there ever in Peacock's works an appreciation, such as John Stuart

47 *Life of Sterling*, 52
Mill expressed, of Coleridge's position with Bentham, as 'the two great seminal minds of England in their age'.

As a contemporary commentator Peacock inevitably lacked the perspective of history to modify his judgement of Coleridge. For this reason attacks by modern critics upon his lack of insight into the value of Coleridge's thought often appear unjustifiably harsh. Many of his criticisms were echoed by his contemporaries. There are frequent parallels in the writings of Hazlitt. Peacock's attacks on Coleridge's discipleship of Kant are partly anticipated by Hazlitt in his review of *Biographia Literaria* in the *Edinburgh Review*. The charge of dillettantism is echoed in *The Spirit of the Age*: 'There is no subject on which he has not touched, none on which he has rested'. Hazlitt, like Peacock, frequently expresses the view that Coleridge inhabited a visionary world divorced from reality. The charge that Coleridge was either unwilling or unable to make himself understood is brought against him by Hazlitt. The accusation that he was capable of uttering nonsense as truth is also levelled by Hazlitt.

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48 *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, ed. Leavis, 40
49 *Works*, ed. Howe, XVI, 123-124
50 *The Spirit of the Age*, 40
51 *Works*, ed. Howe, VII, 123; XIX, 33
In the absence of documentary evidence about mutual influence one can only note a general similarity of viewpoint between Peacock and Hazlitt. It is clear that both shared a very strong prejudice against Coleridge's claims as a philosopher. In this they agreed with other contemporaries. In the Dedication to Don Juan Byron taunts the philosophic Coleridge:

And Coleridge, too, has lately taken wing,

But like a hawk encumber'd with his hood,-

Explaining metaphysics to the nation -

I wish he would explain his Explanation.\(^{54}\)

Even Henry Crabb Robinson was aware of the inconsistencies and confusions in Coleridge's thought, though, over a longer period, he arrived at a more balanced assessment. In 1811 he noted: 'There are many I know who deem Coleridge a decided hypocrite; I believe him to be only inconsistent'.\(^{55}\) His accounts of Coleridge's lectures refer frequently to their confusion and repetition.

The charge of frequent unintelligibility was later levelled against Coleridge by Carlyle. Recalling Coleridge in conversation Carlyle asserts:

He had knowledge about many things and topics, much curious reading; but generally all topics led him,

\(^{54}\) Poetical Works, 635

\(^{55}\) On Books and Their Writers, I, 55
after a pass or two, into the high seas of theosophic philosophy, the hazy infinitude of Kantean transcendentalism, with its 'sum-m-m-jects' and 'om-m-m-jects.' Sad enough; for with such indolent impatience of the claims and ignorances of others, he had not the least talent for explaining this or anything unknown to them; and you swam and fluttered in the mistiest wide unintelligible deluge of things, for most part [sic] in a rather profitless uncomfortable manner. 56

This defect in communication has been marked by more modern critics. J. Colmer has noted Coleridge's 'serious psychological maladjustment towards his public', his 'characteristic note of pontification which is evident in early and late works alike' and his frequent 'air of mystery through the use of out of the way allusions, erudite quotations, unfamiliar words, and technical terms'. 57

Comparison with his contemporaries reveals Peacock's attacks upon Coleridge as a prose writer as more than the mere petulant outbursts of prejudice. For certain aspects of his criticism there was undoubtedly considerable justification. In his treatment of Coleridge, however, Peacock was finally inadequate on grounds of intellectual laziness. He refused to make a sufficiently strenuous effort of understanding and was too willing to accept a partial criticism as a total judgement. He was surely unjust in attributing Coleridge's difficulties of communication to a wilful delight

56 Life of Sterling, 49
57 Coleridge, Critic of Society, 173
in mystification. Coleridge himself recognised a problem here and sought to justify his practice in chapter XII of

**Biographia Literaria:**

Every system, which is under the necessity of using terms not familiarized by the metaphysicks in fashion, will be described as written in an unintelligible style, and the author must expect the charge of having substituted learned jargon for clear conception... Critics, who are most ready to bring this charge of pedantry and unintelligibility, are the most apt to overlook the important fact, that, besides the language of words, there is a language of spirits (sermo interior) and that the former is only the vehicle of the latter. Consequently their assurance, that they do not understand the philosophic writer, instead of proving any thing against the philosophy, may furnish an equal, and (caeteris paribus) even a stronger presumption against their own philosophic talent.  

Whatever Peacock's deficiencies as a critic of Coleridge's prose, he was certainly well aware of the importance of his poetry. Predictably, he was sceptical of Coleridge's account of the origin in a dream of *Kubla Khan*. He objected to the mystery and morbidity of such poems as *The Ancient Mariner*, which he described in *Sir Proteus* as an 'irresistably comic ballad', and *The Three Graves*, which is 'a very exquisite piece of tragical mirth'. Nevertheless, in *An Essay on Fashionable Literature* he defended Christabel at length against

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58 *Biographia Literaria*, ed. Shawcross, I, 189-191
59 E.g. H III 76; H VIII 290
60 H VI 290n
61 Ibid.
the attack by the Edinburgh Review in September 1816. In his review of Moore's Letters and Journals of Lord Byron he described Christabel as 'this most beautiful little poem' and he was quick to note in Moore's The Epicurean an imitation of Kubla Khan.

An Essay on Fashionable Literature finds the style of Christabel 'at once simple and energetic, unincumbered with extraneous ornaments; the natural expression of distinctly conceived imagery, rising and falling with the elevation or homeliness of the subject'. In his appreciation Peacock is able to express approval for the construction and style of 'a tale of magic and mystery'. Similarly, he finds Kubla Khan intelligible and coherent: 'Indeed there are very few specimens of lyrical poetry so plain, so consistent, so completely simplex et unum from first to last'.

An Essay on Fashionable Literature offers a direct insight into the qualities which Peacock admired in Coleridge's poetry. It is notable that he especially praises Christabel for its correct imagery, freedom from unnecessary ornamentation,

62 Edinburgh Review, XXVII, 1816, 58-67. This article has been variously attributed to Moore and Hazlitt, possibly with heavy revisions by Jeffrey; Cf. Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, I, 455

63 H IX 135

64 H IX 37-38

65 H VIII 281

66 H VIII 282

67 H VIII 291
simplicity and energy. Coleridge's truth to nature in his imagery is again praised in *Gryll Grange*. In this novel, too, Peacock quotes with approval from the *Ode to Tranquillity*. In his review of Moore's *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* he noted that the *Edinburgh Review* article 'has not destroyed Mr. Coleridge's poetical fame: that was, and is, beyond its reach: but it destroyed his chance of popularity by extinguishing curiosity towards his poem at the time of its publication, at a time especially, when to have assisted him to that share of public attention which he has always merited as a poet, would, though nothing more than an act of justice, have had the effect of an act of generosity'.

The limitations of Peacock's criticism are apparent but it is clear that he paid Coleridge the compliment of reading his poetry with care. The attack in *The Four Ages of Poetry* is directed against 'the dreams of crazy theologians and the mysticisms of German metaphysics'. If he was unable to appreciate the range of Coleridge's speculative imagination he could nevertheless agree with many of his attitudes to contemporary literature. Thus, in *Nightmare Abbey*, Flosky

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68 H V 239
69 H V 210
70 H IX 135-136
71 H VIII 19-20
appears at his best - and, in terms of the overall effect of his character throughout the novel, his most surprising - when he attacks contemporary romantic novels and plays, although he is made to acknowledge his own part in encouraging the taste for morbidity and mystery. Much of Flosky's criticism, with which Peacock obviously agrees, is, in fact, condensed from chapter XXIII of *Biographia Literaria*.

**SOUTHEY**

Although Peacock frequently quotes from Southey he offers scarcely any literary judgement of his works. In a letter to Hookham in 1809 he asks: 'Is anything new expected from the pen of the incomparable Southey?' Quoting Southey's *Epistle to Amos Cottle* in a footnote to *The Last Day of Windsor Forest* he notes: 'It is strange, that this Epistle was not included in Southey's collected works. It is one of the best of his minor poems, and would alone suffice to show, that he had "looked on nature with a poet's eye".' Southey's accurate observation of nature is again alluded to in *Gryll Grange*.

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72 H III 41, 51
73 H VIII 164
74 H VIII 148n
75 H V 239
In general, however, Peacock followed the Examiner in violently denouncing Southey's political change of heart which was symbolised by his acceptance of the Laureateship in 1813. Much of the satire in Sir Proteus is directed against Southey and he appears as Nightshade in Headlong Hall, Feathernest in Melincourt, Sackbut in Nightmare Abbey, Harpiton in Maid Marian and Shantsee in Crotchet Castle. Peacock's hostility towards him is noticeably more marked and persistent than his satire of any other literary figure except Moore. Like Byron, he found the 'Epic Renegade' a symbol of political and literary apostasy.

SCOTT

Despite his constant mockery of Scotsmen, Peacock obviously valued Scott both as poet and novelist. An Essay on Fashionable Literature pays eloquent tribute to Scott's powers as a popular writer: 'He has the rare talent of pleasing all ranks and classes of men, from the peer to the peasant, and all orders and degrees of mind from the philosopher to the man-miller'. Despite Dr. Folliott's preference in Crotchet Castle for pantomimes over 'the northern enchanter's romances', the Essay notes that Scott

76 H VIII 266
77 H IV 116
offers more than mere amusement: 'He is a painter of manners.
He is the historian of a peculiar and remote class of our own
countrymen, who within a few years have completely passed away.
He offers materials to the philosopher in depicting, with the
truth of life, the features of human nature in a peculiar
state of society, before comparatively little known'.

In *The Epicier*, however, Peacock regrets the lack of constructive
thought in Scott which, he thinks, is a direct result of the
unwillingness of contemporary readers to make any intellectual
effort. Nevertheless, there seems to be no justification
for L.C. Hartley's assertion that Peacock detested Scott.

When he satirises him in *Sir Proteus* and as Derrydown in
*Melincourt* his attacks lack virulence, though the poem does
contain a criticism of Scott's inaccurate observation of
nature in *Rokeby*. Peacock's comments make it clear that he
appreciated Scott's skilful characterisation in the novels and
his ability to delight a wide variety of readers.

**OTHER CONTEMPORARY WRITERS**

Peacock expressed greater contempt for Moore than for
any other contemporary writer. It is evident that Moore

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78 H VIII 275
79 H IX 294
80 *Manchester Quarterly*, XXXIV, 1915, 266
81 H VI 306-307
epitomised many of the characteristics which Peacock most disliked in the literature of the period. That his contempt lasted into old age is clear from a letter to Claire Clairmont in 1858 in which he describes Moore as a 'little dirty, paltry, pitiful rascal'. In his reviews of *The Epicurean* and the *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron* Peacock voices specific criticisms of Moore's literary abilities. He attacks the superficiality of his reading, the technical ignorance displayed in his pretended knowledge of Greek, his misrepresentations of classical philosophy and history throughout *The Epicurean* and his constant posturing: 'Every page, every sentence, is written manifestly *ad captandum*. We always see the actor with his eye on the audience'.

The majority of Peacock's criticisms are, in fact, attacks upon Moore's inaccuracies. This is especially evident in his criticisms of Moore's observation of nature which, in the review of *The Epicurean*, is contrasted with Wordsworth's. In this book, too, he finds Moore echoing Coleridge. In *Gryll Grange* MacBorrowdale declares: 'No

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82 H VIII 248
83 H IX 99
84 E.g. H IX 61-65
85 H IX 57
86 H IX 31-32
87 H IX 37-38
poet is truer to nature than Burns, and no one less so than Moore. His imagery is almost always false. From the frequent attacks upon Moore's imagery it is evident that this represents Peacock's own view. Moore's inaccurate observations of nature and his false imagery offended against one of Peacock's principal critical canons.

If he had adequate critical justification for his hostility to Moore, however, his antipathy to Keats seems to have been founded purely on prejudice. Although Edward Clodd reports Meredith as saying 'Keats is a greater poet than Shelley; in this Peacock agreed', there is nothing in Peacock's works to substantiate this opinion. Robert Buchanan notes that 'he had little or no appreciation for John Keats' and that he objected strongly to Keats's departure from the authentic classical notion 'that the sleep of Endymion was eternal'. In a letter to Shelley in December 1820 Peacock declared: 'If I should live to the age of Methusalem, and have uninterrupted literary leisure, I should not find time to read Keats's Hyperion'. Even his hostility to the Quarterly Review could not persuade him to join in the accusation that it

88 H V 240-241
89 Cf. H IX 13-15, 124-125, 136-137
90 Fortnightly Review, new series LXXXVI, 1909, 24
91 A Look Round Literature, 175
92 H VIII 219
had hastened Keats's death. In the Memoirs of Shelley he echoes Byron in asserting that "His was not the spirit "to let itself be snuffed out by an article" '.

There is little further literary criticism of contemporaries in Peacock. His opposition to merely fashionable literature led him to attack Mrs. Opie as Miss Philomela Poppyseed in Headlong Hall. In Gryll Grange he criticised Tennyson for his description of Cleopatra in A Dream of Fair Women. According to Edith Nicolls he read Dickens at the end of his life as 'a rest from more serious study', enjoying especially The Pickwick Papers and Our Mutual Friend. He attacked the 'drivelling doggrel published under the name of Barry Cornwall' (B.W. Procter). It is interesting to note that he never revealed any acquaintance with the novels of Jane Austen, whose style and thought would surely have been congenial to him.

CONTEMPORARY PERIODICAL LITERATURE

In Headlong Hall Escot declares: 'I conceive that periodical criticism disseminates superficial knowledge, and its perpetual adjunct, vanity; that it checks in the youthful

93 H VIII 123
94 H V 242-243; Cf. J.L. Madden, 'Peacock, Tennyson and Cleopatra', Notes and Queries, new series XV, 1968, 416-417
95 Works, ed. Cole, I, 1
96 H VIII 219-220
mind the habit of thinking for itself; that it delivers partial opinions, and thereby misleads the judgment; that it is never conducted with a view to the general interests of literature, but to serve the interested ends of individuals, and the miserable purposes of party. 97 This attack upon 'a trade which I consider pregnant with mischief,' 98 is, of course, an extreme statement by a very prejudiced character. Although Peacock was himself a contributor to periodicals, however, he fully recognised the actual and potential evils resulting from the influence of the periodical press and these are conveniently summarised in Escot's virulent attack.

For Peacock periodicals exercise a malignant influence on literature when they foster merely fashionable taste and when their judgements are delivered not impartially but in conformity to the dictates of party or personal interest. This is clear from An Essay on Fashionable Literature, in which Peacock criticises the major contemporary periodicals, and especially the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly Review, for their lack of integrity. Periodical criticism is 'merely a fraudulent and exclusive tool of party and partiality'; new works succeed according to the interest which the publisher

97 H I 44
98 H I 43
has with the editors of periodicals; in their judgements of literature 'few have the courage to push enquiry to its limits'. The attack by the Edinburgh Review upon Christabel in the issue for September 1816 is analysed in detail as an example of prejudiced judgement and lack of thought.

In 1830 Peacock reverted to this theme in his review of Moore's *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, noting that Byron tried to persuade Jeffrey to review Christabel favourably in the Edinburgh Review: 'But Mr. Jeffrey knew better than to compromise the character of his publication, by giving a true and just account of any literary work'. Peacock asserts that the work was given to a reviewer 'who combined the most profound ignorance, and the grossest obtuseness of intellect, with the most rancorous malignity, and the most unblushing literary dishonesty'. He notes, too, that Moore gives 'some peeps behind the curtain of the Edinburgh Review, for which the parties principally implicated in that shallow and dishonest publication will scarcely thank the exhibitor'. In *Crotchet Castle* Dr. Folliott attacks the Edinburgh Reviewers for their ignorance and dishonesty in literary criticism and in politics.

99 H VIII 272-273
100 H IX 135
101 H IX 128
102 H IV 52-54
If Peacock came to attack violently the Whig Edinburgh Review, which in a letter to Hookham in 1810 he had found quite satisfactory, his hostility towards the Tory Quarterly Review was even more vehement. It is most obvious in Melincourt, reaching its climax in the scene in Mainchance Villa. Ian Jack states that in the periodicals of the period 'political feeling often unfairly influenced literary judgements.—though this is much more evident in the Quarterly than the Edinburgh'. Writing under the influence of radical sympathies Peacock attacks the editor, Gifford, and his contributors for their political corruption, their support of organised religion at the expense of free enquiry and their opposition to parliamentary reform. The title of 'Legitimate Review' for the Quarterly is appropriate. Peacock's attack is very similar to that of Hazlitt in his criticisms of Gifford and the Quarterly in the Examiner for 25 August 1816 and 14 June 1818. In The Spirit of the Age Hazlitt wrote of the Quarterly: 'This Journal, then, is a depository for every species of political sophistry and personal calumny. There is no abuse or corruption that does not there find a jesuitical palliation or a bare-faced vindication...The

103 H VIII 186
104 English Literature, 1815–32, 11
105 E.g. H II 400–417
106 Works, ed. Howe, XIX, 154, 210–211
intention is to poison the sources of public opinion and of individual fame, to pervert literature from being the natural ally of freedom and humanity into an engine of priestcraft and despotism'.

In An Essay on Fashionable Literature Peacock declares that the contributors to the Quarterly are 'all more or less hired slaves of the Government'. In his articles in the Examiner Hazlitt had described Gifford as 'the Paymaster of the band of Gentlemen Pensioners': 'He is the Government Critic, a character nicely differentiated from that of a government spy - the invisible link that connects literature with the police'. It is interesting to note that Hazlitt and Peacock, whose views on a wide variety of subjects were so similar, seem never to have met. Peacock mentions Hazlitt by name only once very briefly in The Epicier and Hazlitt's works contain only two references to Peacock. None of these references shows any significant recognition of the merits of the other writer. Brett-Smith thinks that the

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107 The Spirit of the Age, 204-205
108 H VIII 269
109 Works, ed. Howe, XIX, 154, 210-211
110 H I xcvii
111 H IX 291
112 Works, ed. Howe, XII, 186; XX, 258
character of Eavesdrop in Crotchet Castle 'may conceivably be Hazlitt', but there is no supporting evidence for this theory. It seems more likely that Eavesdrop is simply a representative of those writers in periodicals and elsewhere who are prepared to divulge to the public 'the confidences of private life'. The 'appetite for gossip about notorieties' is similarly attacked in the Memoirs of Shelley.

That Peacock, like Hazlitt, was firmly opposed to theological as to political prejudice in literary judgements is clear from the Memoirs of Shelley where he notes that in the Quarterly's review of Leaon and Cythna 'the opportunity was readily seized of pouring out on it one of the most malignant effusions of the odium theologicum that ever appeared even in those days, and in that periodical'.

The general principles of Peacock's criticisms of the periodical press are clear. He valued the free play of intellect, honesty of judgement and sound learning. He was hostile to the corruption of judgement by political, theological and personal influences. Perhaps his most bitter attack upon such corruption is found in chapter XIII of

113 H I exlix
114 H IV 186
115 H VIII 39–40
116 H VIII 107
Melincourt, where Desmond narrates his experiences with editors of periodicals, of whom 'every one was the organ of some division or subdivision of a faction; and had entrenched himself in a narrow circle, within the pale of which all was honour, consistency, integrity, generosity, and justice; while all without it was villany [sic], hypocrisy, selfishness, corruption, and lies'.

117 H II 137-138
CHAPTER 12

MUSIC CRITICISM

Peacock's music criticism is contained chiefly in the notices which he contributed to the Globe in 1830 and the Examiner in 1831-34. During this period he was a regular critic of the operas performed at the King's Theatre and an occasional reviewer of performances of operas and plays at other London theatres. Cuttings of many of these notices are preserved among the papers of his granddaughter, Mrs. Clarke, formerly Edith Nicolls. From these and from an examination of other notices in the periodicals the editors of the Halliford Edition established a canon of Peacock's journalistic writings. An analysis of these notices is included as Appendix B to the present study. The list includes five notices contributed to the Globe and eighty-three to the Examiner.

1 H IX 402-420
In 1835 Peacock contributed to the *London Review* an essay on the fourth edition of Lord Mount Edgcumbe's *Musical Reminiscences*. In 1836 he contributed an article on *Bellini* to the same periodical.

Although his writings about music fall within a short period from 1830 to 1836, it is clear that Peacock's interest in the subject dates from much earlier. In the *Memoirs of Shelley* he states that in 1817 he induced Shelley to accompany him to a performance of *Don Giovanni* and 'From this time until he left England he was an assiduous frequenter of the Italian Opera'. On Shelley's last evening in England, on 10 March 1818, Peacock accompanied him and Mary to the first performance in England of *II Barbiere di Siviglia*.

There are many references to music in the novels and these alone, as Lord Houghton notes, would be sufficient to indicate that 'music seems to have occupied no small place in Mr. Peacock's amusements'. Although music is still important as a domestic amusement in his last novel, *Gryll Grange* - Falconer's drawing-room, for instance, is equipped with organ,

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2 *H* IX 221-252
3 *H* IX 313-338
4 *H* VIII 82
5 *H* VIII 114-115
6 *Works*, ed. Cole, I, xxi
piano and harp\(^7\) - Peacock seems to have ceased to attend public performances after 1834 and the musical preferences which he exhibits towards the end of his life are those which he voiced in the 1830s.

**PEACOCK'S MUSICAL TASTE**

The most outstanding characteristic of Peacock's musical taste is that it is essentially melodic. There is frequent emphasis in his writings on the supreme importance of expressive melody. In *Gryll Grange* he contrasts Falconer with Minim. Falconer favours expression while Minim is impressed by brilliancy of execution.\(^8\) This is a usual contrast in the novels and it is clear that Peacock's own sympathies are with Falconer's viewpoint. In *Headlong Hall* Chromatic believes that the words of a song are 'at the best only a species of pegs, for the more convenient suspension of crochets and quavers'.\(^9\) Panscope 'could...fiddle with tolerable dexterity, though by no means so quick as Mr. Chromatic (for our readers are of course aware that rapidity of execution, not delicacy of expression, constitutes the scientific perfection of modern music)'.\(^10\) In *Bellini* Peacock speaks of 'the deep and touching
pathos of the simple ballad'. In *Gryll Grange* Falconer declares: 'There is a beauty and an appeal to the heart in ballads which will never lose its effect except on those with whom the pretence of fashion overpowers the feelings of nature'. He and Miss Ilex listen to 'a brilliant symphony... in which runs and crossings of demisemiquavers in *tempo prestissimo* occupied the principal share'. Miss Ilex describes the performance as 'a splendid piece of legerdemain; but it expresses nothing'. Falconer declares: 'when we have reached the extreme complications of art, we may hope to return to nature and simplicity'.

For Peacock music - and especially vocal music - was a means of dramatic expression. He did not admire virtuosity for its own sake. His musical heroines sing ballads to simple accompaniments. In his review of Edgcumbe he states: 'Our old English songs were models of simplicity, but our modern songs are almost all false sentiment, overwhelmed with imagery utterly false to nature'. In *Melincourt* Miss Fliant is described as 'a very scientific musician, without any soul in her performance'. Peacock's preference was for the expressive
singing of a simple dramatic theme rather than for the exhibition of technical accomplishment. As will be seen in his operatic criticism, he applied this canon of taste to operatic as to domestic performance.

Peacock seems to have had relatively little interest in orchestral music except as an accompaniment to singing. His view of the rôle of orchestral accompaniment is well expressed by Falconer in *Gryll Grange*: 'to my taste a simple accompaniment, in strict subordination to the melody, is far more agreeable than the Niagara of sound under which it is now the fashion to bury it'. Peacock did not express much interest in orchestral music when divorced from dramatic expression. It is interesting to note that, when Miss Ilex speaks of Haydn's music, she describes it as 'essentially dramatic. It is a full stream of perfect harmony in subjection to exquisite melody'.

The only instrumental virtuoso described by Peacock was Paganini. In 1831 he described the violinist's performance at the King's Theatre:

The triumph of mechanical skill, astonishing as it is in itself, is the smallest part of the wonder. The real magic is not the novelty of the feat, but the surpassing beauty of the effect. It is the same with his performance on a single string (the fourth, or G string), as with his performance on four. New

16 H V 128

17 H V 143
and surprising as is every point of the process, none of the phenomena of his execution appear to be exhibited for the sake of their own display: they appear as means, not ends. Novelty, of course, enters into the charm of the effect: but the great charm lies deeper than novelty: the perception of surpassing beauty would remain, if that of rarity and strangeness were withdrawn.

Paganini's manners exhibit 'natural and unaffected simplicity' and he plays 'as if his mind were an inexhaustible treasury of deep thoughts and thrilling emotions, which he was pouring forth through the medium of "all sweet sounds and harmonies"'.

It is clear that Peacock is here applying to the violinist's performance the same criteria of judgement as he would apply to a singer. For him music seems, as E.D. Mackerness asserts, 'an extension of the possibilities of language'. This will explain his interest both in opera and in the music of the ancient Greeks. Nowhere does he reveal any very significant interest in the rules of musical art or in the mechanics of technical accomplishment.

**OPERA**

Peacock's abilities as a music critic are seen most clearly in his writings about opera. Only here is his thought sufficiently well-documented to allow a judgement of his knowledge and insight. In his reviews and articles certain

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18 *Examiner*, 12 June 1831, 373-374

19 *The Wind and the Rain*, IV, 1948, 179-180
criteria emerge as basic critical standpoints which determine his attitudes to composers, performers and producers.

The Idea of the Opera

In Crotchett Castle Trillo believes that 'opera in perfection, being the union of all the beautiful arts - music, painting, dancing, poetry, - exhibiting female beauty in its most attractive aspects, and in its most becoming costume, - [is]...the most efficient instrument of civilisation'.

Trillo evidently holds the view that opera is more than a concert. It is a union of several arts which must be fully integrated before any opera can be successful. That this is Peacock's own opinion is evident from a most important passage in his review of Edgcumbe. In this passage Peacock enumerates the essentials of good opera:

The object proposed by the Italian Opera is to present the musical drama in the most perfect possible form. To this end there must be, in the first place, a good drama: an interesting story, intelligibly told in good poetry, and affording ample scope for strong and diversified expression: good music, adapting the sound to the sense, and expressing all the changes and trains of feeling that belong to the ideas and images of the drama: good performers - persons of good figures and features - picturesque in action, and expressive in countenance - with voices of fine tone and great power, having true intonation, scientific execution, and above all, or rather as the crown of all, expression - expression - expression: the one all-pervading and paramount quality, without which
dramatic music is but as a tinkling cymbal: elegant and appropriate dresses - beautiful scenery - a chorus, each of whom should seem as if he knew that he had some business of his own in the scene, and not as if he were a mere unit among thirty or forty automatons, all going like clock-work by the vibrations of the conductor's pendulum: a full orchestra of accomplished musicians, with a good leader. 21

In addition to these essential requirements there should be 'an audience regulating its costume and its conduct by the common courtesies of evening society'. 22

Peacock frequently reiterated the idea that an opera must be composed and produced as a unified whole. Sometimes he condemned the composition. Rossini's L'Assedio de Corinto was criticised because 'it wants two essentials of an effective opera - an interesting libretto, and rememberable melodies'. 23 In Spontini's Vestale the music is 'dull, dismal, and monotonous, like an eternal funeral march; passionless, melodyless, and unrememberable'. 24 In Bellini's Norma 'the melody was too much buried in harmony, often more ambitious than appropriate'. 25 More frequently, however, Peacock criticised productions and performances which destroyed the integrity of the operas which were presented.

21 H IX 225-226
22 H IX 226
23 Examiner, 15 June 1834, 374
24 Examiner, 1 April 1832, 213
25 H IX 320
Production

In his reviews Peacock placed great emphasis on the necessity for fidelity to the score. In 1832 he declared: 'Der Freyschutz is in truth the first performance of this year, which has been really given as a drama'. In his review of Edgcumbe he asserted: 'A good opera is a whole, as much in the music as in the poetry, and cannot be dislocated and disfigured by omissions and interpolations, without destruction to its general effect'.

Peacock constantly demanded accuracy in all aspects of the performance. In 1831 he praised David because 'he has the good taste to take comparatively few liberties with Cimarosa's music'. During 1832 he regularly praised the German company for its fidelity to the score without additions and changes. He frequently criticised performances of Don Giovanni for the liberties which were taken with the close of the work. Thus, in 1833, he noted: 'The end was spoiled, as usual, by the substitution of two or three dancing devils for Mozart's own noble conclusion'. It is noteworthy that

26 *Examiner*, 20 May 1832, 324
27 *HIX* 247
28 *Examiner*, 6 March 1831, 148
29 *Examiner*, 23 June 1833, 389; see also: *Globe*, 5 July 1830; *Examiner*, 19 June 1831, 389 [sic]; *Examiner*, 24 February 1833, 117
in this judgement he differed from the critic of the only wholly musical periodical of the early 1830s in London, the Harmonicon which was published from 1823-33. This journal voiced the popular opinion of the day when it supported the common practice of omitting the final scene of Don Giovanni. In 1830 it stated: 'The interest of the piece ceases with the disappearance of the hero: all that follows is theatrically tame and redundant'. Three years later it reiterated the judgement: 'the manager has, and very wisely, omitted the last scene, which, splendid as is the concluding chorus, is injurious to the effect of the opera as a whole'.

Peacock frequently attacked the practice, common in the 1830s, of producing several parts of different operas on the same evening. In 1831 he wrote: 'The abominable barbarism, which was perpetrated so often in the latter half of the last season, of performing two first acts of different operas, seems likely to be repeated in this'. The barbarism was, in fact, repeated many times. In 1833 he was present at a performance of 'a bit of Gli Arabi, a bit of Tancredi, a bit of something else: one of those outrages on the musical drama which seldom

30 Cf. N. Temperley, 'MT and musical journalism, 1844'. Musical Times, CX, 1969, 583
31 Harmonicon, VIII, 1830, 354
32 Harmonicon, XI, 1833, 66
33 Examiner, 29 May 1831, 342
find, and never ought to find, favour with any portion of the public'. In 1830 he described one such performance as a 'dramatic concert'. After a satisfactory performance of Paër's Agnese in 1832 he congratulated the management on remembering 'at the eleventh hour, that this is a theatre, and not an overgrown concert-room'. Peacock felt that the faults lay primarily not with the composers but with the management. In his review of Edgcumbe he asserted: 'Good operas there are in abundance; but there are seldom either sense or knowledge in the management to select them, or power or good-will in the company to do them justice'. Among the offending managers was Monck Mason, whose assumption of control over the King's Theatre in 1832 seemed to Peacock disastrous.

His demand for accuracy frequently led Peacock to criticise the scenery at the King's Theatre. At a performance of Norma in 1833 he declared: 'the scenery is, as usual at this theatre, an ostentatious display of profound ignorance'. In 1830, at the same theatre, he noted: 'We may take the

34 Examinier, 12 May 1833, 294
35 Globe, 21 June 1830
36 Examinier, 5 August 1832, 500
37 H IX 246
38 Examinier, 23 June 1833, 389
liberty of hinting to the stage manager, that Trajan's pillar was not standing in Rome in the time of the Horatii'.

The Singers

It was in accordance with Peacock's principles of the total effect of good opera that he should attack excessive displays of virtuosity by singers. In his review of Edgcumbe he asserted that 'the single star should not be worshipped exclusively to the sacrifice of the general effect'. The most common faults of singers were their habit of interpolating arias from other operas which particularly displayed their abilities, and their delight in excessive ornamentation. Thus he criticised Arrigotti's insertion of an air wholly out of keeping with the rest of Il Matrimonio Segreto. Mrs. Wood, though a fine prima-donna, 'goes intentionally astray in search of ornaments, in which she is far too exuberant'. Later he declared: 'Mrs. Wood must allow us to repeat, that an overlay of ornament is not often an exhibition of taste'. During a

39 Globe, 21 June 1830
40 H IX 242
41 Examiner, 6 May 1832, 294
42 Examiner, 13 March 1831, 165
43 Examiner, 18 December 1831, 804
performance of Il Barbiere di Siviglia Carradori 'introduced an air of Pacini, which we never heard before, and care not ever to hear again. It was all shakes and roulades. The melody, if it had any, was buried in them'.

As would be expected, Peacock placed great emphasis on expression in singing. Mme. Lalande, 'though highly skilful, has little of the soul of music, expression'. Mme. Cinti 'is still one of the sweetest and most correct, though unhappily not most expressive, of singers'. Mme. Wespermann is 'florid and inexpressive'. In Bellini Peacock stated that Rubini 'possesses, more than any singer we ever heard, the power of identifying the redundancies of ornament with the overflows of feeling'.

In 1832 Peacock declared that there was a singular dearth of soprano voices throughout Europe. Nevertheless, among prima-dononas, he expressed immense admiration for Malibran, Pasta, Grisi and Schroeder Devrient. It is notable that his highest praise was reserved for those singers whose

44 Examiner, 30 March 1834, 197
45 Examiner, 17 April 1831, 242
46 Examiner, 5 May 1833, 278
47 Examiner, 27 February 1831, 132
48 H IX 322. This comment also appears in Gryll Grange, (H V 141) and in Examiner, 12 May 1833, 294
49 Examiner, 22 January 1832, 53
art was most expressive of emotion. Grisi's voice was 'responsive to every gradation and change of feeling'.\(^{50}\) Schroeder Devrient, whose intensity of acting and great vocal powers exercised a considerable influence on Wagner, was found to possess 'every requisite of the highest order for the lyrical stage. Her action is perfect nature. Her voice is sweet, clear, powerful, flexible; and above all, it is, both in speaking and in singing, more pathetic and heart-touching than any we ever heard'.\(^{51}\) Among tenors, Peacock singled out for praise Rubini, because of 'his combination of the most masterly execution with the most touching expression'.\(^{52}\)

It is clear from Peacock's writings that he regarded singing chiefly as a means of expressing emotion. He was little interested in vocal technique or in virtuoso performance. His praise was reserved for those singers who could most fully identify themselves with the emotions of the drama which they were enacting and who could most faithfully follow the composer's score.

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50 *Examiner*, 13 April 1834, 230
51 *Examiner*, 27 May 1832, 340
52 *Examiner*, 12 May 1833, 294
Composers

As in his criticisms of singers, Peacock's praise or censure of composers was closely related to their ability to express emotion in their music. In particular, his comments on the operas of Mozart, Beethoven, Rossini and Bellini indicate simple but exacting criteria of judgement.

In Gryll Grange Miss Ilex declares that the music of Mozart 'requires only to be correctly interpreted to be universally recognised as the absolute perfection of melody, harmony, and expression'.\(^53\) Mozart's reputation was already established in England before the period of Peacock's music criticism. A Mozart opera - *La Clemenza di Tito* - was first performed in London in 1806.\(^54\) That Peacock entertained the highest enthusiasm for Mozart's work is evident from several passages in his writings. In 1833 he declared: 'There never has been any thing perfect under the sun except the compositions of Mozart'.\(^55\) In his review of Edgcumbe he described his art as, 'like Shakespeare's, identical with nature'.\(^56\)

The only assessment of any length, however, is contained in

\(^{53}\) *H V* 142

\(^{54}\) D. Arundell, *The Critic at the Opera*, 283-285

\(^{55}\) *Examiner*, 10 February 1833, 84

\(^{56}\) *H IX* 244
a review of 1833. Here Peacock asserts: 'There is nothing perfect in this world except Mozart's music. Criticism has nothing to do with it, but to admire'. In the paragraph which follows he emphasises Mozart's ability to express all gradations of comic and serious passion, noting the sweetness and tenderness which underlie all his compositions.

When he reviewed the first London performance of Fidelio in 1832 Peacock admired qualities curiously similar to those which he found in Mozart: 'Beethoven's Fidelio is the absolute perfection of dramatic music. It combines the profoundest harmony with melody that speaks to the soul. It carries to a pitch scarcely conceivable the true musical expression of the strongest passions, and the gentlest emotions, in all their shades and contrasts.' In this opera music becomes 'an intelligible language, possessing an illimitable power of pouring forth thought in sound'. It is notable that Peacock made no attempt to discuss Beethoven's orchestral methods. He was concerned, with Beethoven as with Mozart, to analyse the effect of the music rather than the means by which this is achieved.

The same emphasis is apparent in his comments on Rossini, many of whose operas had established themselves on

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57 Examiner, 2 June 1833, 343
58 Examiner, 27 May 1832, 340
the English stage during the decade before Peacock commenced his activities as a reviewer. He preferred Rossini's earlier works, which he found to be 'characterised by invention and simplicity'. His later operas, by contrast, were marked by 'less invention, and more elaborate and scientific combinations'. However, Matilde di Shabran, which belonged to the later group, was one of his favourites. Appropriately, it is a favourite of Trillo in Crotchet Castle, for he persuades Lady Clarinda and Miss Crotchet to sing parts of it. If the enforced brevity of his reviews compelled Peacock to concentrate on the effect of operas and to pay little attention to their musical technique, the essay on Bellini allowed him space to develop his ideas more fully.

The only significant technical discussion in the essay, however, is concerned not with Bellini's music but with the lyric metres of the classical poets and the way in which these might have been sung. There is, indeed, an attack upon the rigid adherence to artificial 'rules' in the composition and criticism of modern music but this does not involve Peacock in much technical language. Peacock found Bellini - whose works were introduced to London audiences with a

59 *Examiner*, 10 March 1833, 150

60 H IV 87
performance of Il Pirata in 1830\textsuperscript{61} - attractive because of his facility in composing delightful melodies. In his article on the composer he contrasts him with Mozart, Rossini and Beethoven, who have a genius for harmony, while Bellini has 'only genius for melody'.\textsuperscript{62} It seems certain that Peacock was here drawing attention to Bellini's inability to express a variety of emotions. In a review in 1833 he noted that although Bellini's operas abound in melody they do not always succeed in expressing dramatic emotion: 'We think all the operas of Bellini abound in melody; generally light and airy; now and then, though not so often as the subject requires, pathetic; and, in a few rare and happy instances, touchingly impassioned'.\textsuperscript{63} When treating a sublime theme, as in Norma, Bellini's genius is 'out of its element, and, in endeavouring to be sublime, he is too apt to become merely noisy'.\textsuperscript{64}

There is nothing in Peacock's opera criticisms to indicate that he possessed exceptional insight into the processes of musical composition. He was essentially concerned to record the impression which new and old works made

\textsuperscript{61} W. Brockway and H. Weinstock, The World of Opera, 576
\textsuperscript{62} H IX 321
\textsuperscript{63} Examiner, 2 June 1833, 343
\textsuperscript{64} Examiner, 23 June 1833, 389
on him. If his taste was rarely false, his judgement does not seem to have been notably acute. Nevertheless, the fundamental ideas which recur in his opera criticism reveal an intelligent attitude which was in advance of the times. In an age when it was common to treat an opera rather as a concert than a dramatic unity he argued sanely for the assessment of each opera as an independent work of art. He constantly stressed the importance of emotional simplicity in the composition and performance of songs. From the producer he demanded accuracy in all aspects of the presentation. Accurate himself, he attacked the critics of the Times and the Morning Chronicle for errors of fact. As an operatic critic he was a conscientious representative of the class of intelligent and informed amateurs, somewhat lacking in technical knowledge but capable of expressing sensitive appreciation in a concise and attractive style.

BALLET

Peacock advanced no theory of ballet. His comments were mostly confined to appraisals of individual dancers rather than to the assessment of the aesthetic significance of specific ballets. Among ballerinas, he had the highest praise for Taglioni, 'the absolute incarnation of the ideal

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65 Examiner, 4 March 1832, 149; 16 March 1834, 165
beauty of motion and form and 'la déesse de la danse'.

Of Taglioni's art he declared:

If we are to call it dancing, the practice which has hitherto been so called should have another name, for the first thought which strikes us is, that we never saw dancing before. Dancing, as we had before seen it, we now perceive to have answered to Ovid's description of "beating the ground alternately with the feet." If such has been dancing, Taglioni's is flowing into attitudes of grace, and making sensible the loveliness of motion, - it is on the music she seems to move, sporting (as Gay's song has it) "on seas of delight," waving, buoyant, and sparkling.

For Peacock ballet was essentially 'the ideal beauty of motion'. This was an impressionistic attitude, based, as were his judgements of opera, on the effect upon the audience rather than on technical considerations. Peacock nowhere described Taglioni's marvellous technique - especially the flexibility of her limbs and the muscular power which enabled her to remain suspended with extraordinary steadiness on the tips of her toes. Nevertheless, he admirably captured the effect of her art and, above all, the impression that she was always dancing on air, a quality to which other critics also testified. Similarly, in his criticisms of the Elsler sisters

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66 Examiner, 5 May 1833, 278
67 H IX 251; Examiner, 17 April 1831, 242
68 Examiner, 15 July 1832, 454
69 Examiner, 29 April 1832, 276
70 Cf. I. Guest, Romantic Ballet in Paris, 76-78
and of Pauline Leroux and Thérèse Heberlé, he concentrated on the impression produced by their dancing rather than on differences of technique. As in his opera criticism, he emphasised the importance of expression: Leroux exhibited 'deep feeling' in her performance of La Somnambule;71 Heberlé was 'graceful and expressive';72 the Elsler sisters revealed their ability to perform expressively in the demi-caractère style of dancing.73

MUSICAL ANTIQUARIANISM

In music, as in other subjects, Peacock's ultimate standard of excellence was the classical world. E.D. Mackerness has noted that 'classical antiquity is never far from his mind and he is always looking for the qualities in modern art which cause it to approximate most nearly to classical "perfection"'.74 Because he believed that the abilities of the ancients were at least the equal of those of his contemporaries, he was capable of indulging in make-believe about their practices. When he heard Paganini he was 'satisfied that Orpheus and Amphion played on the violin,

71 Examiner, 28 April 1833, 261
72 Examiner, 29 April 1832, 276
73 Examiner, 14 April 1833, 230
74 The Wind and the Rain, IV, 1948, 186
and that Paganani [sic], having launched his bark into "Cecilia's world of sound", has discovered, what is to us a new land, but in truth only the lost land of the ancients, the Atlantis of musical magic'.

Although he was not a musical scholar, however, it is clear that Peacock had acquired some knowledge of the technicalities of ancient music. His review of Müller and Donaldson's History of Greek Literature contains an erudite note on the Greek scales. The naming of Falconer and the seven sisters in Gryll Grange is explained by reference to the Greek diatonic scale. In Gryll Grange, too, Falconer expresses Peacock's own theory that the Greeks employed both the major and minor keys and that they may have sung, not only in unison and in octaves, but also in fifths, a view which is repeated without amplification in Bellini. Falconer asserts, without adducing evidence, that Greek music could compass 'every possible expression of feeling'.

Peacock's own emphasis on the necessity for the expression of emotion in music made it necessary for him to attribute this

75 Examiner, 12 June 1831, 373
76 IX 179-182
77 H V 52, 231
78 IX 334-335
79 H V 127
ability to his ideal musicians.

In Bellini Peacock developed an idea already expressed in a review of 1831 that an air in La Sonnambula is peculiarly classical in the correspondence of music with metre. Assuming that in classical compositions each syllable of text was set to a single note of music, he adapted the air 'Ah! non giunge uman pensiero' to the requirements of 'the Ionic à minori metre'. This allowed him to indulge his taste for metrical analysis and to attack the modern practice of ornamentation which results in 'complete independence of both metre and meaning'.

It is not necessary to examine the correctness of Peacock's judgement on such clouded questions of classical music. It is evident that, although he had acquired some knowledge of the subject, he was predetermined in favour of ancient practices in this as in other fields of activity. It is, perhaps, more important to note the way in which he applied his conviction of classical excellence in the criticism of modern taste. Because his taste inclined to the simple expression of basic emotions in music he

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80 Examiner, 7 August 1831, 501
81 H IX 331-334
82 H IX 331
criticated the absence of this characteristic in modern compositions, contrasting contemporary exhibitions of virtuosity with the direct simplicity which he attributed to the musical art of the ancients.

A NOTE ON PEACOCK'S DRAMATIC CRITICISM

During the period 1831-34, Peacock's duties for the Examiner included the reviewing of plays. He wrote, too, three articles on classical dramas under the title Horae Dramaticae for Fraser's Magazine in 1832 and 1837. In his essay on Querolus in this series he declares that drama 'has furnished to us, on many and many occasions, a refuge of light and tranquillity from the storms and darkness of everyday life', having 'combined the highest poetry with the highest wisdom'. Here, however, he is referring to the reading of dramatic works rather than to their actual performance. Of drama as a living art he has curiously little to say. In the Memoirs of Shelley he records that he attempted to overcome Shelley's prejudice against theatres by taking him to see The School for Scandal. In the Examiner he asserts a preference for the enclosed stage, which 'gives the appearance of a private chamber, infinitely better than the old contriv-

83 H X 3
84 H VIII 81
ance of wings’. In 1832 he is enthusiastic about the acting of Mile. Mars: ‘The only way to fancy her acting is to fancy no acting at all’. In his poem, *The Art of Modern Drama*, he attacks slap-stick farce:

Let trick and mirth nonsensically loud
Catch the perched rabble in its greasy cloud,
Whirled o’er the stage while humorous tables fly
And witty punch-bowls strike the canvas sky.

In *Croyl Grange* the inevitable contrast is drawn between the comic drama of the Greeks and contemporary comedies. As he grew older Peacock seems to have abandoned his visits to the theatre and concentrated increasingly on the private pleasures of music and the reading of dramatic works which had stood the test of time.

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85 *Examiner*, 24 February 1833, 118
86 *Examiner*, 15 July 1832, 454; see also 22 July 1832, 469
87 H VII 211
88 H V 336-337
CHAPTER 13

NATURE AND THE LANDSCAPE CONTROVERSY

THE CONTROVERSY AND THE DISPUTANTS

Peacock revealed his interest in the verbal discussion of landscape theory most clearly in an early unpublished play, The Three Doctors, and in his first novel, Headlong Hall. The basis for discussion was provided by the extremely confused controversy about the ideal landscape, which was waged from 1794 between Humphry Repton, Sir Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight. In both The Three Doctors and Headlong Hall Peacock introduces a landscape gardener, Marmaduke Milestone, who seems clearly intended as a satiric portrait of Humphry Repton. In Headlong Hall the fact that Milestone's name is derived from Repton's proposal to place the family arms on the milestones around Tatton Park is made explicit. The portfolio, with its plans for Lord Littlebrain's park,

1 E.W. Manwaring, Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England, 224 erroneously cites The Dilettanti
2 H I 23n; D. Stroud, Humphry Repton, 13
3 H I 63; H VII 410
is evidently based on Repton's 'Red Books' in which he outlined his proposals and sketched the scene as it was and as it would become after improvement.

Milestone in Headlong Hall echoes the speech of his precursor in The Three Doctors, most notably in the key passage on the art of landscape improvement. Both characters recall the epithet applied to Repton's predecessor, 'Capability' Brown, who died in 1783. Thus, in The Three Doctors, Milestone exclaims: 'Great capabilities here'.

In Headlong Hall 'Mr. Milestone observed, that there were great capabilities in the scenery'.

Despite the evidence for the identification of the two figures of Milestone with Repton some critics have seen them as depictions of Richard Payne Knight. There seems no real justification for this view, however, and most commentators have concluded that Milestone is intended as a satiric portrait of Repton.

As the mouthpiece for the attack upon Milestone Peacock creates O'Fir in The Three Doctors and O'Prism in Headlong

4 H I 30; H VII 405
5 H VII 404
6 H I 25
7 E.g. G. Saintsbury, 'Headlong Hall' and 'Nightmare Abbey', ix-x; G. Kitchin, A Survey of Burlesque and Parody in English, 258-259; R. Garnett, 'Headlong Hall' and 'Nightmare Abbey', 64n
8 E.g. C. Van Doren, Life of Peacock, 88; C.E. Jones, Life and Works of Peacock, I, 166; H I lxv; D. Stroud, Humphry Repton, 13
Hall. O'Fir is little more than a preliminary and very inadequate sketch of a picturesque tourist. O'Prism, 'a dilettante painter', draws some of his arguments from Sir Uvedale Price, as Peacock acknowledges in a footnote. When he refuses to distinguish between the beautiful and the picturesque, however, he seems to echo Repton's other adversary, Richard Payne Knight. O'Prism declares: 'For what is beautiful? That which pleases the eye. And what pleases the eye? Tints variously broken and blended constitute the picturesque'. In his Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste Knight refused to allow that Price's distinctions between the sublime, the beautiful and the picturesque represented differences existing in the objects themselves: 'The great fundamental error, which prevails throughout the otherwise able and elegant Essays on the Picturesque, is seeking for distinctions in external objects, which only exist in the modes and habits of viewing and considering them'. In his chapter 'Of Sight' Knight analyses 'visible beauty, abstracted from all mental sympathies or intellectual fitness' in terms similar to those used by Price

9 H I 27
10 H I 31n
11 H I 31
12 Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste, 2nd edition, 196
in his definition of the picturesque. This beauty 'consists...
in harmonious, but yet brilliant and contrasted combinations
of light, shade, and colour; blended, but not confused; and
broken, but not cut, into masses: and it is not peculiarly
in straight or curve, taper or spiral, long or short, little
or great objects, that we are to seek for these; but in such
as display to the eye intricacy of parts and variety of tint
or surface'.

Although Milestone is certainly satirised in The Three
Doctors and Headlong Hall there is no clear evidence that
Peacock supported the views of O'Fir and O'Prism. Certainly
there is no overwhelming verbal victory in the debates on
landscaping and the picturesque. Nor, indeed, is Milestone
in Headlong Hall always a derided figure. He scores a notable
point over Gall when he demolishes the criterion of unexpected­
ness in the laying out of grounds:

"Allow me," said Mr. Gall. "I distinguish the
picturesque and the beautiful, and I add to them, in
the laying out of grounds, a third and distinct
character, which I call unexpectedness."

"Pray, sir," said Mr. Milestone, "by what name
do you distinguish this character, when a person
walks round the grounds for the second time?" 14

Gall here clearly represents the editor of the Edinburgh
Review, Francis Jeffrey. Reviewing Knight's Analytical

13 Ibid., 67-68
14 H I 31-32
Inquiry, the Edinburgh Review declared:

There is a refined degree of novelty, which acts in a lively manner on the mind, and often, by sympathy, on the nerves; for which we shall venture to coin the name of unexpectedness. This character must necessarily consist in marked and sudden change, whether in the course of our sensations, or of our ideas. 15

In the third edition of the Analytical Inquiry Knight ridiculed this statement:

It would be amusing to hear them [the Edinburgh Reviewers] define...the particular modifications of colour, shape, and size, under which this distinct character appears to those, who do expect the objects, to which it is attributed: since if it really belong to the objects, and not to the minds of the observers, it must be equally perceptible to those who do, as to those who do not expect them; unless indeed prescience destroy perception, instead of rendering it more acute. 16

Peacock bases Milestone's attack upon Knight's comment without involving himself in a discussion of Knight's central thesis that the association of ideas rather than any intrinsic differences in external objects is the source and explanation of judgements about matters of taste.

D. Clifford has noted that, despite their claim to greater naturalness in their landscapes, 'Even Price and Knight were prepared to evolve a "system" and it was this that gave Repton an opportunity for one of the most successful thrusts in their prolonged duel when he referred to Price's

15 Edinburgh Review, VII, 1806, 310. Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals identifies the author of this article as Henry Hallam

16 Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste, 3rd edition, 1984
"new system of improving by neglect and accident". In his poem, *The Landscape*, Knight declared:

To adorn, arrange; - to separate, and select
With secret skill, and counterfeit neglect;
I sing. - Do thou, 0 Price, the song attend;

It is interesting to observe that in *Headlong Hall* when Milestone produces his plans for Lord Littlebrain's park, his adversary is not O'Prism but the simple Miss Tenorina. Her love of untamed nature is reminiscent of Emma in *The Dilettanti*, who 'actually prefers a forest to a landscape-garden, and a natural river to an artificial cascade'. The description in *Headlong Hall* of the walk to Tremadoc along the edge of Traeth Mawr perhaps indicates Peacock's desire to align himself with 'the admirers of the magnificence of nature' against 'improvements' justified on utilitarian grounds.

In *The Three Doctors* and *Headlong Hall*, however, Peacock seems to have used the controversy between Price, Knight and Repton primarily for comic effect without committing himself to more than a general opposition to landscape 'improvement'.

17 *A History of Garden Design*, 171-172
18 *The Landscape*, 2nd edition, Book I, lines 5-7
19 H VII 345
20 H I 74
That he viewed the debate chiefly as a subject for humour in *Headlong Hall* is perhaps implied by the fact that Tenorina Chromatic, the advocate of untamed nature, marries Squire Headlong, the enthusiast for Reptonian improvement, while her sister, Graziosa, the example of Reptonian good taste, marries O'Prism, the opponent of Milestone. There is, too, a constant irony, in both *The Three Doctors* and *Headlong Hall*, in the fact that Milestone is proposing to improve nature in Wales, on the borders of which both Knight and Price had their estates, the one in Shropshire and the other in Herefordshire.

**VISUAL EXCELLENCE AND MORAL INFLUENCE IN NATURE**

Peacock's evident, though at least partly humorous interest in discussions of the picturesque is revealed in a letter to Hookham in 1809. He asks: 'Are Knight and Price still at issue respecting the distinct characters of the picturesque and the beautiful? Has any thing on that subject made its appearance lately?' There is much justification, indeed, for F.E. Smith's assertion that 'For a large part of his young manhood he was a "picturesque tourist" with poetic intentions'. That he saw himself as a representative of picturesque standards seems to be implied by his description

21 H VIII 164
22 Thomas Love Peacock and the Romantic Era, 1
in 1809 of Sir John Carr as 'this ignorant intruder on the regions of the picturesque'.

C.P. Barbier has stated justly that 'It is doubtful whether the word Picturesque can be encompassed in a single definition'. However, for both Gilpin and Price, such qualities as roughness or ruggedness of texture, variety and irregularity would seem to be specifically 'picturesque'. Thus Price declared that the 'qualities of roughness, and of sudden variation, joined to that of irregularity, are the most efficient causes of the picturesque'. Peacock's attitude to landscape and buildings, though largely determined by his private judgement, shows the influence of the theorists. This is seen at its most conventional level in such lines as his invocation of melancholy in The Philosophy of Melancholy:

Thine is the mossy convent's crumbling pile,
The weed-choked tomb, the ivy-mantled aisle:
Thine every scene, that tells of splendor past:
Thine every tower, that totters to the blast.

In the prose works consciousness of the picturesque

23 H VIII 166
24 William Gilpin, 99
25 An Essay on the Picturesque, 44-45
26 H VI 195
is most apparent in Melincourt. In The Landscape Knight had depicted a scene which indicates the preferences of both himself and Price:

Bless'd is the man in whose sequester'd glade,
Some ancient abbey's walls diffuse their shade;
With mouldering windows pierced, and turrets crown'd,
And pinnacles with clinging ivy bound.27

In chapter IV of Melincourt Forester's Redrose Abbey is described as 'an ancient abbey which appeared to have been recently converted from a pile of ruins into the habitation of some variety of the human species, with very singular veneration for the relics of antiquity, which, in their exterior aspect, had suffered little from the alteration'.28 The abbey is 'so well planned...that very few vestiges of the modern architect were discernible; and it was obvious that the growth of the ivy, and of numerous trailing and twining plants, would soon over-run all vestiges of the innovation, and blend the whole exterior into one venerable character of antiquity'.29 As Forester declares: 'I do not think...that the most determined zealot of the picturesque would quarrel with me here'.30

27 The Landscape, 2nd edition, Book II, lines 284-287
28 H II 33
29 H II 36-37
30 H II 37
Melincourt Castle might also have been imagined from Knight's description:

Bless'd too is he, who, 'midst his tufted trees,
Some ruin'd castle's lofty towers sees;
Imbosom'd high among the mountains brow,
Or nodding o'er the stream that glides below.\(^3^1\)

Melincourt Castle is a combination of 'picturesque ruin' and 'comfortable modern dwelling',\(^3^2\) with 'ivied battlements and frowning towers'.\(^3^3\)

Although the abbey and castle certainly display 'picturesque' features there is a constant opposition in Melincourt towards picturesque tourists. An attack upon such tourists does not, of course, necessarily constitute opposition to any particular doctrine of the picturesque. Indeed, Peacock\(^1\) frequently implies that his hostility is directed against those people for whom the picturesque is merely a fashionable taste. He would have agreed with Edward in Sense and Sensibility, who, according to Elinor, 'believes that many people pretend to more admiration of the beauties of nature than they really feel'.\(^3^4\)

\(^{3^1}\) The Landscape, 2nd edition, Book II, lines 288-291
\(^{3^2}\) H II 8-9
\(^{3^3}\) H II 14
\(^{3^4}\) Sense and Sensibility, ed. Chapman, 97
describes these tourists as 'heartless fops, who take their fashionable autumnal tour, to gape at rocks and waterfalls, for which they have neither eyes nor ears, and to pervert the feelings and habits of the once simple dwellers of the mountains'. In support of this attack upon the corrupting influence exercised by such tourists Peacock quotes at length from Gilpin in a footnote. Merely fashionable taste is similarly satirised in 'the picturesque tourist' whose sketches transport the 'romantic terrors' of the torrent and woody glen 'from the depths of mountain-solitude to the gay and crowded, though not very wholesome atmosphere of a metropolitan exhibition'. The mere copier, lacking taste and emotional sympathy, like the technically correct but expressionless musical performer, is criticised. Thus the governess, Miss Pliant, is 'a most skilful copier of landscapes, without the least taste for the beauties of nature'.

A more interesting attack is made by Fax upon those 'laborious triflers, profound investigators of nothing, everlasting talkers about taste and beauty, who see in the starving beggar only the picturesqueness of his rags, and in  

35 H II 275-276  
36 H II 276-277n  
37 H II 6  
38 H II 140
the ruined cottage only the harmonizing tints of moss, mildew, and stonecrop.\(^39\) This anticipates Ruskin's criticism in *Modern Painters* of the heartlessness of the surface-picturesque: 'the lover of it seems to go forth into the world in a temper as merciless as its rocks. All other men feel some regret at the sight of disorder and ruin. He alone delights in both; it matters not of what. Fallen cottage - desolate villa - deserted village - blasted heath - mouldering castle - to him, so that they do but show jagged angles of stone and timber, all are sights equally joyful. Poverty, and darkness, and guilt, bring in their several contributions to his treasury of pleasant thoughts.'\(^40\)

J. -J. Mayoux has noted an interesting shift in Peacock's own attitude to nature: 'On pourrait dire que, systèmes et caricatures des systèmes à part, la nature dans *Headlong Hall* est pittoresque, et dans *Melincourt* sublime.'\(^41\) Peacock's contemptuous reference in *Nightmare Abbey* to 'Mr. Burke's graduated scale of the sublime'\(^42\) implies that, like Knight, he thought Burke's theories in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* 'absurd.

\(^{39}\) H II 431-432

\(^{40}\) *Works*, ed. Cook and Wedderburn, IV, 19

\(^{41}\) *Un Épicurien anglais*, 206

\(^{42}\) H III 89
and superficial'. In Peacock's descriptions the sensations of terror and astonishment which for Burke signalised the sublime are not often emphasised. For Peacock the term is usually applied to the magnificence of wild nature. Two examples from his early letters to Hookham from Wales illustrate this. In 1810 he noted 'the sublime magnificence of the waterfalls in the frost'. In 1811 he described the view from the summit of Cadair Idris as 'the very sublimity of Nature's wildest magnificence'. Sublime scenes inspire in Peacock emotions of awe, tranquillity and a sense of dignity and may be combined with an enthusiastic love of liberty.

Throughout his later life Peacock evidently retained a measure of interest in the picturesque. In Crotchet Castle Captain Fitzchrome appears as a 'picturesque gentleman' engaged in sketching the remains of a Roman camp. In Gryll Grange there is a picturesque folly. The Misfortunes of Elphin includes a description of the storm as perceived by

43 Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste, 2nd edition, 196
45 H VIII 179
46 H VIII 190
47 H IV 35
the 'picturesque eye' of the bard.\textsuperscript{48} This description, indeed, like the account of the storm in \textit{Gryll Grange},\textsuperscript{49} presents an interesting example of a scene in which the qualities of the sublime and the picturesque coexist. The sublime characteristics of terror, astonishment and grandeur are here united with the picturesque attributes of roughness, variety and irregularity.\textsuperscript{50} Describing Glastonbury Abbey in \textit{The Misfortunes of Elphin}, Peacock deplores the removal of the ivy from the ruins.\textsuperscript{51} It would seem that in these works the attractions of the picturesque are still real for Peacock. In \textit{Nightmare Abbey}, however, he depicts 'a venerable family mansion, in a highly picturesque state of semi-dilapidation'.\textsuperscript{52} The image of Scythrop taking 'his evening seat, on a fallen fragment of mossy stone, with his back resting against the ruined wall, - a thick canopy of ivy, with an owl in it, over his head, - and the Sorrows of Werter in his hand'\textsuperscript{53} indicates, as A. Nikitas has noted, that the description is primarily intended to satirise the atmosphere of ruin and decay in the Gothic novels. Nikitas cites the similar

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{48} H IV 33-34
\item \textsuperscript{49} H V 81-82
\item \textsuperscript{50} Cf. S.H. Monk, \textit{The Sublime}, 158-159
\item \textsuperscript{51} H IV 116
\item \textsuperscript{52} H III 1
\item \textsuperscript{53} H III 13
\end{itemize}
descriptions of Mandeville House, the castle in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Lindenberg Castle in *The Monk*. It is clear that the satire in *Nightmare Abbey* is directed not primarily against picturesque theory but against the taste for the Gothic novel.

It is notable that, of the theorists, Peacock spoke most highly of Knight, whose *Analytical Inquiry* he described in *An Essay on Fashionable Literature* as 'one of the most admirable pieces of philosophical criticism that has appeared in any language', a judgement which is, in part at least, supported by Sir John Summerson, who asserts that Knight was 'A scholar and aesthetician of great capacity'. Knight, of course, ranged much more widely than the mere discussion of landscape theory, and many of Peacock's own quotations from his writings are not specifically on this issue. There is no real evidence to show whether Peacock supported Knight's arguments that distinctions between the sublime, the beautiful and the picturesque indicated a subjective reaction rather than qualities inherent in scenes and objects.

In his attitude to the practical results of landscaping, however, there is no doubt that, of the two scenes illustrated

54 Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey*, 2-3
55 H VIII 271
56 *Architecture in Britain, 1539-1830*, 276-277
by the engravings in *The Landscape*, Peacock would have had no hesitation in preferring the house and grounds as favoured by Knight, rather than the shaven and defaced alternative. The description of Newark Abbey in the fragment of *A Story of a Mansion among the Chiltern Hills* emphasised precisely those qualities which Knight would have admired: 'This ruin stands on ground above the highest range of the winter floods, and surrounded on all sides by the waters of the Wey. In quiet lowland scenery there is no more beautiful combination of near and distant hills, woods, dotted trees, and water partly glittering in sunshine, partly rolling under thick foliage, than is presented by the site of this old Abbey'.\(^57\) With this may be cited 'the large ancient mansion' standing in a 'woodland tract' in *Cotswold Chase*.\(^58\)

In *Melincourt*, more forcibly than elsewhere in his works, Peacock describes nature as a moral teacher. The discussion between Pax and Forester in chapter XXXVII concludes with Forester's Rousseauistic assertion that 'those who seek the mountains in a proper frame of feeling, will find in them images of energy and liberty, harmonizing most aptly with the loftiness of an unprejudiced mind, and nerving the arm of resistance to every variety of oppression and

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57 H VIII 392
58 H VIII 405-406
imposture, that winds the chains of power round the free-born spirit of man'. 59

Throughout Melincourt Peacock claims that communion with nature should influence men's actions. This is clearly demonstrated by the behavior of Anthelia, who is able to remain calm in the face of danger because she 'felt that she was always in the order of nature'. 60 The description of Anthelia in the first chapter of the book, indeed, constitutes Peacock's most romantic statement of the influence of nature on the human mind:

the majestic forms and wild energies of Nature that surrounded her from her infancy, impressed their character on her mind, communicating to it all their own wildness, and more than their own beauty... A fearless wanderer among these romantic solitudes, the spirit of mountain liberty diffused itself through the whole tenour of her feelings, modelled the symmetry of her form, and illumined the expressive but feminine brilliancy of her features. 61

It is rare, however, for Peacock to express such an uncompromisingly romantic doctrine. In Crotchet Castle Susannah Touchandgo is consoled and educated by the sublimity of nature. Unlike Anthelia, however, Susannah is influenced by the sublime character of the mountain scenery, not instinctively, but as a direct result of an extensive reading

59 H II 388
60 H II 105
61 H II 9-10
of the works of Rousseau:

she carried with her into retirement all the works of Rousseau. In the midst of that startling light which the conduct of old friends on a sudden reverse of fortune throws on a young and inexperienced mind, the doctrines of the philosopher of Geneva struck with double force upon her sympathies...The society of children, the beauties of nature, the solitude of the mountains, became her consolation, and, by degrees, her delight. 62

The description of Susannah's education provides a mid-point between the concept of wild nature as the complete teacher of the young Anthelia and Peacock's more customary assertion that nature can help in the process of education - and especially literary education - by providing a congenial and imaginatively inspiring background for the student. This idea is clearly expressed in the Prospectus: Classical Education in which he contrasts the process of education in large cities and amid majestic scenery to the detriment of the former:

he who under kind and skilful superintendence, amidst the wild beauties of nature, associates the ideas of the great poets with the living landscapes around him, derives from the pleasure thus experienced an ardent love of letters, which accomplishes one [of] the great objects of education, and of which the salutary effects will be felt to the latest period of life. 63

It is, of course, evident that for Anthelia the impressions received from nature in childhood are later

62 H IV 154-155
63 H VIII 430
reinforced by her reading when 'the muses of Italy became
the chosen companions of her wanderings'. In *Gryll Grange*,
by contrast, nature exercises little more than the influence
of a charming background to Falconer's reading. The
description of his favourite forest dell breathes an atmos-
phere which is idyllic rather than imaginatively stimulating,
an aid to fancy rather than a moral influence: 'There he sat
for hours at a time, reading his favourite poets. There was
no great poet with some of whose scenes this scenery did not
harmonise'.

The idyllic character of the New Forest in
*Gryll Grange* at times recalls what David Garnett describes
as the 'pervading sylvan feeling' of *Maid Marian*.

J.I.M. Stewart argues that Peacock shares the attitudes
towards nature of both Jane Austen and Wordsworth. It is
significant that his most extensive assertion of the romantic
influence of nature is found in *Melincourt* which was written
at the period of his closest friendship with Shelley.

E.M.W. Tillyard, indeed, has pointed out the similarity
between the description of Anthelia caught by the torrent
and the descriptions in Shelley's *Alastor*, the title of which

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64 H II 10

65 H V 98

66 *Novels of Peacock*, 442

67 Introduction to J.B. Priestley, *Peacock*, xx
was suggested by Peacock himself. 68 If his conception of the moral influence of nature did not amount to permanent conviction, however, there can be no doubt that Peacock placed a high value on the constant observation of nature's moods. He appreciated certain qualities which, following Gilpin and Price, he often termed picturesque, and he certainly felt the magnificence of the mountain scenery of Wales and the Lake District. A continuous hostility towards enclosures which limited free access to nature pervades his later works. As he grew older he tended to emphasise the idyllic rather than the sublime quality of landscape, though even Gryll Grange includes a storm as an illustration of the 'awful grandeur' of nature's effects. 69

68 Essays Literary and Educational, 121; H VIII 100
69 H V 82
CHAPTER 14

CONCLUSION

The present study has aimed to correct the frequently expressed judgement of Peacock as a writer whose work, although always entertaining, is deficient in serious purpose. Critics have variously depicted Peacock as a merely destructive satirist, a prejudiced and reactionary opponent of change, and a detached observer of contemporary debates who lacks positive convictions of his own and whose insights are often superficial and partial. A survey of critical assessments of Peacock reveals considerable confusion about the nature of his own attitudes to the issues discussed in his novels. Critics have notably failed to reach agreement about the extent to which his satire was motivated by any positive ideals. Although he has been widely praised for his witty exploitation of the comic aspects of contemporary theoretical debates he has generally not been credited with more than the destructive role of a universal sceptic.
The wide differences of opinion about the nature of Peacock's intellectual involvement with the subject matter of his novels have been illustrated in the first chapter of this study. In the face of so much critical confusion it has seemed valuable to analyse his attitudes to a number of significant philosophical, political, social and aesthetic issues and to examine how far he displays positive aims and ideals. Such an analysis has been seen as a contribution to the understanding of Peacock's mental development and an indication of the purposes which motivated his art as a novelist. It is clear that, in his opinions and ideas, as in the artistic form which he devised for his major works, Peacock was frequently unconventional. He did not fit easily into established categories and did not subscribe to the doctrines of any recognised party. The reader of his novels often feels that Peacock was writing much more for his own private satisfaction than for the pleasure of the general reading public.

Although no attempt has been made to prove that Peacock possessed a notably powerful or original mind it has been suggested throughout this study that on many important topics he adopted attitudes which were based upon an intelligent assessment of the situation and which display serious thought. On none of the issues discussed did he write as a professional commentator. Even in his music criticism, written when he
was employed as a regular reviewer of the London opera season, his comments were those of an informed amateur rather than a trained student of the subject. To this, as to all his criticism, Peacock brought qualities of honesty and general intelligence rather than professional knowledge and special expertise.

Much of the interest of Peacock's thought derives from his position as an intelligent layman. Except for purposes of ridicule he avoided the jargon of the specialist. At best his attitudes were based on extensive reading and the application of intelligence and common sense. If he was sometimes guilty of advancing opinions based only upon prejudice he was more frequently successful in offering arguments founded upon reason and sound judgement. The attempt to estimate the significance of his thought within the context of nineteenth-century situations has revealed the contemporary relevance of several of his attitudes which were formerly dismissed by critics as the crotchets of an eccentric and prejudiced mind. The most outstanding example is certainly his persistent opposition to paper money and the growth of country banks. In a period which witnessed the first suspension in England of coin repayment of promissory notes Peacock's financial opinions were clearly based upon a serious evaluation of the effects of an inconvertible currency and uncontrolled speculation. On this issue, as
on several others, the course of events has obscured the contemporary relevance of his arguments. The evidence of his opinions, as expressed in the novels themselves and also in his letters, diary, poems and minor writings, serves to emphasise the fact that he was advocating a positive and logically defensible policy to counteract the evils which he satirised so effectively. Although he was in no sense a trained economist there is certainly no justification for dismissing his ideas as the prejudiced utterances of an uninformed reactionary.

Certain serious limitations in Peacock's outlook are apparent. He advanced a consistent social theory based upon a strong sense of the value of a rural hierarchy. Nevertheless, his attitude to popular education, although logically defensible within the terms of his theory of social relationships, seems disturbingly narrow and unenlightened when compared with his own considerable culture. If he was not duped by the utopian visions of the perfectibilian theorists, his own vision of a benevolent squirearchy ruling a grateful and disciplined tenantry became an increasingly irrelevant ideal in the growing industrialism of nineteenth-century England. Although Peacock's clearly enunciated canons of literary criticism proved adequate for the dismissal of the florid and inaccurate prose style of a writer such as Thomas Moore, they were at times not sufficiently perceptive to
enable him to make any satisfactory assessment of the value of more significant contemporary writers. Despite his early interest in the debate about landscape gardening and his lifelong appreciation of natural scenery, he was surprisingly deficient in concern for the visual arts and one searches his works in vain for evidence of any real appreciation of painting and architecture.

There was a marked diminution in Peacock's interest in contemporary political, social and aesthetic thought after the mid-1830s. This is most apparent in *Gryll Grange* where it is clear that his ideas on literature, music, society and politics have undergone scarcely any change from those advanced thirty years previously. As Peacock was fifty years old in 1835 this is partly explicable as the natural reaction of a man advancing into old age. Nevertheless, the full reason for his dissociation from serious concern with contemporary developments during the last thirty years of his life remains a matter for speculation.

Peacock's novels display a bewildering variety of levels of seriousness. The consistent earnestness of *Melincourt* is unique among his works. The artistic failure of that novel indicates one marked difference between Peacock and Shelley. Peacock was at his most successful when he was sporting with ideas, destroying false arguments
by exposing their inherent absurdities and attacking the mental facades which men erect to protect their own weaknesses and inadequacies. He frequently employed the device of contrasting contemporary life and thought with that of some golden age, most often that of an idealised classical world, the vision of which was based on literature and imagination rather than on historical fact. Several critics have emphasised the unreality of Peacock's depiction of Greek life and culture, arguing that such a presentation indicates a strongly prejudiced mind which refused to become seriously involved with contemporary issues. Such an argument rests upon a misconception about Peacock's positive involvement with significant controversies of the nineteenth century. There is certainly considerable evidence to indicate that he held a romantic and idealised view of classical life. Nevertheless, his purpose in introducing such contrasts in the novels was primarily to expose the defects of the present.

Even in Gryll Grange, where Peacock's interest in many aspects of contemporary life and thought had declined, he introduced a considerable amount of satire upon specific follies and abuses. Furthermore, the dream-like world of the novel supports a serious discussion of ethical attitudes and a sincere and positive statement of the individual's need for a satisfying philosophy of life based upon the cultivation of personal tranquillity and domestic harmony.
If Peacock's final novel does not point towards active involvement in political struggles or the work of social amelioration it does present an honest depiction of a way of life which was relevant to a society which was losing its firm belief in the traditional precepts of Christianity. If the limitations of the self-regarding virtue advocated in the novel are apparent to the modern reader, there is no justification for dismissing the book as the expression of an unsympathetic reactionary who had lost contact with the world around him.

Inevitably, the present study has drawn heavily upon evidence from Peacock's writings other than his seven novels. However interesting these may be his reputation is based firmly upon the novels and the justification for such a study lies finally in its success in increasing the reader's appreciation of these works. Peacock's stature as a purely comic writer needs little advocacy. Critical comment has consistently been concerned with his achievement as a satirist. This study has attempted to emphasise the positive and constructive purpose of his satire by demonstrating his fundamentally serious and thoughtful response to contemporary ideas. It has aimed to show that Peacock was not an uncommitted observer of the life and thought of his age but was constantly concerned with the expression of certain basic ideas through discussion. The value of
ridicule as a weapon lay in its ability to test the truth of opinions. Peacock's novels are 'witty' in a serious sense, for, behind their boisterous farce, their effervescent comic dialogue and their curious learning, they reveal a mind intelligently committed to sane examination and rational analysis.
This chronology provides a concise analysis of information so far discovered about the dating of Peacock's more important writings which are discussed in the present study. The date of publication is listed first, followed by the approximate date of composition in parentheses. Volume and page references in the *Halliford Edition* are included in parentheses after the title.

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1813-14 (1813-14) **Ahrimanès** (VII 263-286)

1814 (1814) **Sir Proteus** (VI 277-313)

- (1814) **Prospectus: Classical Education** (VIII 427-431)

1815 (1815) **Headlong Hall** (I 1-154)

- (1815-16) **Satyrane** (VIII 295-299)

- (1816) **Calidore** (VIII 301-341)

1817 (1816-17) **Melincourt** (II 1-455)

1818 (1817) **Rhododaphne** (VII 1-94)

1818 (1818) **Nightmare Abbey** (III 1-149)

- (1818) **Diary** (VIII 433-444)

- (1818) **An Essay on Fashionable Literature** (VIII 261-291)

1820 (1820) **The Four Ages of Poetry in Ollier's Literary Miscellany** (VIII 1-25)

1822 (1818-22) **Maid Marian** (III 1-180)

1827 (1827) **Review of Moore's The Epicurean in Westminster Review** (IX 1-67)

1829 (1826-29) **The Misfortunes of Elphin** (IV 1-155)

1830 (1830) **Music reviews in the Globe** (not reprinted in Halliford Edition)

1830 (1830) **Review of Moore's Letters and Journals of Lord Byron in Westminster Review** (IX 69-139)

1830 (1830) London Bridge in Westminster Review (IX 189-219)

1831 (1828-31) Crotchet Castle (IV 1-215)

1831-34 (1831-34) Music and dramatic reviews in the Examiner (not reprinted in Halliford Edition)

1835 (1835) Review of Lord Mount Edgcumbe's Musical Reminiscences in London Review (IX 221-252)

1835 (1835) French Comic Romances in London Review (IX 253-287)

1836 (1835-36) The Epicier in London Review (IX 289-311)

1836 (1835-36) Bellini in London Review (IX 313-338)

1837 (1825-26) Paper Money Lyrics (VII 95-146)

1837 (1836-37) Recollections of Childhood: The Abbey House in Bentley's Miscellany (VIII 27-36)

1851 (1851) Gastronomy and Civilization in Fraser's Magazine. Written with Mary Meredith (IX 339-401)

1852-57 (1852-57) Horae Dramaticae in Fraser's Magazine (X 1-87)

1858 (1858) Chapelle and Bachaumont in Fraser's Magazine (X 89-118)
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APPENDIX B

ANALYSIS OF PEACOCK'S REVIEWS OF MUSIC AND DRAMA

This appendix provides a short analysis of the reviews of performances of music and drama which are identified as Peacock's by the editors of the Halliford Edition. Most of these reviews have never been reprinted since their first appearance in the Globe and the Examiner. Unless otherwise noted titles are of operas and personal names are of singers. The dates are those on which the reviews appeared.

A) Reviews Contributed to the 'Globe', 1830

1. June 18. King's Theatre
   Cimarosa: Gli Orasj ed i Curiasj

   Cimarosa: Gli Orasj ed i Curiasj
   Rossini: Il Turco in Italia
3. July 5. King's Theatre
   Mozart: Don Giovanni

4. August 2. King's Theatre
   Malibran

5. August 9. King's Theatre
   Review of 1830 season

B) Reviews Contributed to the 'Examiner', 1831-34

1831

1. February 20. King's Theatre
   Rossini: Ricciardo e Zoriade
   David

2. February 27. King's Theatre
   Rossini: Ricciardo e Zoriade
   Rossini: Il Barbiere di Siviglia

3. March 6. King's Theatre
   Cimarosa: Il Matrimonio Segreto
   Des Hayes (Choreographer) and Costa (Composer):
   Le Château de Kenilworth (Ballet)

   Mrs. Mary Ann Wood
   Rossini: La Cenerentola
5. March 20. King's Theatre
   Pacini: *L'Ultimo Giorno di Pompeii*

6. April 17. King's Theatre
   Mme. Lalande
   Rossini: *Semiramide*
   Rossini: *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*
   Taglioni (Dancer)

7. May 8. Covent Garden
   *The Exquisites* (Play)

8. May 15. King's Theatre
   Mayr: *Medea*
   Pasta
   Mnsr. Taglioni (Choreographer) and Nadaud (Composer): *La Nayade* (Ballet)

9. May 22. King's Theatre
   Attack on heat of theatre and behavior of audience

10. May 29. King's Theatre
    Rossini: *Tancredi*

11. June 5. King's Theatre
    Attack on benefit performances for the estate of Messrs. Chambers & Son
    Inaccuracies in newspaper reports of operas
   Paganini (Violinist)

   Signor and Signora Rubini
   Pasta
   Mozart: Don Giovanni

   Gnecco: La Prova d'un Opera Seria

   Gnecco: La Prova d'un Opera Seria

   Rossini: Otello
   Donizetti: Anna Bolena

17. July 17. King's Theatre
   Donizetti: Anna Bolena

18. July 31. King's Theatre
   Bellini: La Sonnambula

19. August 7. King's Theatre
   Bellini: La Sonnambula
   Taglioni (Dancer)

   Pasta
21. August 21. English Opera (The style of this review is not distinctive and there is serious doubt of Peacock's authorship)
   Peake: The Evil Eye (Play)

22. October 9. Covent Garden
   Young (Actor)

23. October 30. Covent Garden
   Shakespeare: Henry the Eighth
   Miss Poole (Actress)

24. November 27
   a) Drury Lane
      The Adopted Child (Play)
   b) Adelphi
      The Wept of the Wish Ton Wish (Play)
   c) Olympic
      Liston (Actor)

25. December 18. Drury Lane
   Rossini: Il Barbiere di Siviglia
   Jerrold: The Bride of Lüggate (Play)

26. December 25. Drury Lane
   Lords and Commons (Play)
1832

27. January 22
   a) Covent Garden
      Gower: Catherine of Cleves (Play)
   b) 'Italian Opera' (King's Theatre)
      Monck Mason's plans for opera at the King's Theatre

28. February 5. King's Theatre
   Alterations to the King's Theatre

29. February 12. King's Theatre
   Donizetti: L'Esule di Roma

30. February 26. King's Theatre
   Rossini: Otello

31. March 4. King's Theatre
   Rossini: Il Barbiere di Siviglia
   Mercadante: Elisa e Claudio

32. March 18. King's Theatre
   Rossini: Pietro l'Ermita

33. April 1. King's Theatre
   Spontini: Vestale

34. April 8. King's Theatre
   Donizetti: Olivo e Pasquale
35. April 29. King's Theatre
   Rossini: *Elisabetta*
   Tosi
   Mlle. Heberlé (Dancer)
36. May 6. King's Theatre
   Lablache
   Cinti
   Arrigotti
37. May 13. King's Theatre
   Attack on bad management of King's Theatre
38. May 20. King's Theatre
   Pacini: *Gli Arabi nelle Gallie*
   Weber: *Der Freyschutz*
   The German Opera
39. May 27. King's Theatre
   Beethoven: *Fidelio*
   Mme. Schroeder Devrient
   Attack on hotch-potch produced as Italian Opera
40. June 3. King's Theatre
   Rossini: *La Cenerentola*
41. June 17. King's Theatre
   Meyerbeer: *Robert le Diable*
42. July 1. King's Theatre
   Bellini: La Straniera

43. July 8. King's Theatre
   Chelard: Macbeth

44. July 15. King's Theatre
   Mozart: Don Giovanni
   Taglioni (Dancer)
   Mlle. Mars (Actress)

45. July 22. Covent Garden
   Mlle. Mars (Actress)
   La Fille d'Honneur (Play)
   La Jeune Fille Colère (Play)

46. July 29. King's Theatre
   Weigl: Die Schweitzer Familie

47. August 5. King's Theatre
   Paer: Agnese

1833

48. February 10. Drury Lane
   Mozart: Don Giovanni
49. February 24.
   a) King's Theatre
      Rossini: Le Cenerentola
      Des Hayes (Choreographer): Faust (Ballet)
   b) Olympic Theatre
      Promotion (Play)

50. March 3. King's Theatre
    Rossini: La Donna del Lago
    Schiasetti

51. March 10. King's Theatre
    Rossini: Matilde di Shabran

52. March 24. King's Theatre
    Weber: Der Freyschutz
    The Elsler sisters (Dancers)

53. March 31
   a) King's Theatre
      Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro
   b) Covent Garden
      Lacy: The Coiners, or the Soldier's Oath (adapted from Auber's Le Serment)
      A Nabob for an Hour (Play)
54. April 14. King's Theatre
   Beethoven: Fidelio
   The Elsler sisters (Dancers)

55. April 21. King's Theatre
   Attack on mixing of plots of different operas in
   a single performance

56. April 28. King's Theatre
   Herold: Zampa
   Rossini: La Gazza Ladra

57. May 5. King's Theatre
   Pasta
   Cinti
   Taglioni (Dancer)
   Donizetti: Anna Bolena

58. May 12
   a) King's Theatre
      Mayr: Medea
      Monsr. Taglioni (Choreographer): Nathalie (Ballet)
   b) Drury Lane
      Bellini: La Sonnambula
   c) Covent Garden
      The Italian Opera
   d) Adelphi
      The Soldier's Wife (Play)
59. May 19. Haymarket Theatre
   *Rip Van Winkle* (Play)

60. June 2
   a) King's Theatre
      Donizetti: *Anna Bolena*
      Rossini: *Tancredi*
      Bellini: *Il Pirata*
   b) Drury Lane
      Bellini: *La Sonnambula*
   c) 'The German Opera' (Covent Garden)
      Mozart: *Die Zauberflote*

61. June 9
   a) King's Theatre
      *Inez de Castro* (Ballet)
   b) Drury Lane
      *The Students of Jena* (Operetta)
   c) 'English Opera' (Adelphi)
      *The Mummy*

62. June 23. King's Theatre
   Rossini: *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*
   Mozart: *Don Giovanni*
   Bellini: *Norma*
63. July 7. King's Theatre

La Bayadère (Ballet)
Malibran
Attack on The Times

64. July 14. King's Theatre

The Elsler sisters (Choreographers): La Fée et le Chevalier (Ballet)

65. July 28

a) King's Theatre

Bellini: I Capelletti e i Montecchi
Rossini: Semiramide
Rossini: La Cenerentola

b) Haymarket Theatre

Dudley: The Flitch of Bacon (Play)
My Wife's Mother (Play)

66. August 18. King's Theatre

Review of the past season at this theatre

1834


Dancing for Life (Play)
68. February 16. Drury Lane
   Scribe: The Minister and the Mercer (English transl. of Bertrand et Raton)

69. March 9. King's Theatre
   Rossini: La Gazza Ladra

70. March 16. King's Theatre
   Rossini: Semiramide

71. March 30. King's Theatre
   Carradori
   Monsieur Taglioni (Choreographer): Sire Huon (Ballet)

72. April 13. King's Theatre
   Grisi
   Rossini: La Gazza Ladra

73. April 20. King's Theatre
   Donizetti: Anna Bolena
   Grisi

74. May 11. King's Theatre
   Attack on practice of charging higher prices for better attended performances

75. May 18. King's Theatre
   Armide (Ballet)
   Grisi
76. May 25. King's Theatre
   Weber: Der Freischutz

77. June 1. King's Theatre
   Rossini: La Donna del Lago
   Winter: Das unterbrochene Opferfest

78. June 15. King's Theatre
   Rossini: L'Assedio di Corinto

79. June 29. King's Theatre
   Rossini: L'Assedio di Corinto
   Rossini: Il Barbiere di Siviglia

80. July 20. King's Theatre
   The Elsler sisters
   Rossini: Semiramide
   Donizetti: Anna Bolena

81. July 27. King's Theatre
   Bellini: La Sonnambula

82. August 17. King's Theatre
   Attack on management of this theatre

83. December 28
   Christmas notice
APPENDIX C

PEACOCK'S LIBRARY

In the British Museum are two copies of a 44-page Catalogue of the Library of the Late Thos. Love Peacock, Esq...which will be Sold by Auction, by Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge...on Monday, the 11th of June, 1866, and the following day... One of these copies (shelf-mark S.C.S. 567(3)) includes manuscript notes of the price and purchaser of each lot. 764 lots were auctioned during the two days of the sale and they realised a total of £503. 7s. 6d.

There is no proof that the sale catalogue lists the total contents of Peacock's library at the time of his death. It is, indeed, quite probable that some volumes were not offered for sale by his family and friends. Nevertheless, the catalogue certainly reflects the range of Peacock's reading as this is indicated in the quotations and allusions which are scattered throughout his writings. It is improbable that any significant part of his collection was ever dispersed before his death. Throughout his life reading clearly constituted one of his chief pleasures. This is evident in his works and in his own statement in 1862 to
Thomas L'Estrange: 'I passed many of my best years with my mother, taking more pleasure in reading than in society'.

His granddaughter, Edith Nicolls, records that when fire broke out at his home in the last year of his life he retired to his library and refused to leave his books.

From the sale catalogue one can construct a useful and interesting outline picture of the probable size and scope of Peacock's library. The majority of items listed are printed books but the catalogue also includes seventeen manuscript letters from Shelley to Peacock, several maps and charts, papers relating to East India affairs and a small collection of printed music. There are also a few miscellaneous items, including 'a capital brass-mounted achromatic telescope, of great power'.

Peacock's professional interest in Indian affairs is clearly indicated by a large number of the works listed. The catalogue also includes a wide selection of books on travel and on natural history, some of which were singled out for special notice by the auctioneers on the title-page.

The collection of philosophical works includes William Drummond's *Academical Questions* and *Origines*, Lord Monboddo's

1 H VIII 259
Ancient Metaphysics and Sir G.C. Haughton's Inquiry into the First Principles of Reasoning (1839). There is a copy of Locke's Life and Correspondence by Lord King but no copy of An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, which Peacock had certainly read. There is no copy of Kant, even in translation. Bentham's works appear only in a French translation. Hobbes is not represented at all and Peacock refers to him only once in his writings. There are several books by and about classical philosophers, including a set of Plato, but it is astonishing to find no copy of Diogenes Laertius, whom Peacock must surely have read for his account of the life and teachings of Epicurus.

The library includes several biographical dictionaries of musicians and books about music. There are a number of collections, such as Beauties of the Opera and Ballet (no date) and A. Burgh's Anecdotes of Music (1814). The small collection of printed music includes a few arrangements of operas for domestic performance by voice, flute, violin and pianoforte.

As would be expected from the study of Peacock's own writings, the library indicates a wide interest in a variety

3  H IX 293
of subjects. Nevertheless, the major portion of the catalogue is devoted to literary works and it is here that his tastes are most apparent. Predictably, there is a marked bias towards the Greek and Latin classics. Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes are all represented in scholarly editions, notably by Brunck, Hermann and Heyne. Peacock's unusual and lasting predilection for Nonnus is substantiated by his possession of three editions of the Dionysiaca, one published in Paris as late as 1856. Surprisingly, in view of his possible influence on Peacock, there is no copy of Lucian. Among Latin authors, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Livy, Cicero, Tacitus, Petronius and Juvenal all appear in several editions. Peacock's interest in Epicureanism is evident in his possession of two editions of Lucretius.

Italian epic poems are well represented. The catalogue lists Italian editions of Ariosto, Boiardo, Pulci and Tasso. Rather unexpectedly, there are three Italian editions of Dante. Rabelais, Molière, Rééif de la Bretonne, Voltaire and Paul de Kock indicate Peacock's tastes in French and Cervantes in Spanish literature. German literature is represented only slightly and in translation.

In English literature the library is fairly strong on
the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists. In his writings Peacock quotes from Shakespeare, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger and Middleton and these writers are well represented. Favourite poets, such as Milton, Samuel Butler and Gray appear in several editions. There are copies of Dryden, Gray and Burns but not of Pope, Thomson and Cowper. It is, however, difficult to assess what extracts from their works may have been in Peacock's library, for the list includes several collections and anthologies of poetry and plays. It is interesting to note that although Peacock possessed sets of the novels of Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, he had no copy of Richardson. Predictably, he possessed editions of Gibbon and Boswell's Life of Johnson.

Among his contemporaries, Wordsworth, Southey, Byron, and Shelley are all represented. There are no copies of Moore, Campbell, Keats or Coleridge. Peacock's frequent references to and quotations from Coleridge make this omission strange, unless it is assumed that he read much of Coleridge's work in periodicals. There is a good set of Cobbett's Political Register and copies of several of his other works. There is also a number of sets of other contemporary periodicals, including Ainsworth's Magazine.
(1842-45), Bentley's Miscellany (1837-46), and the Westminster Review (1824-61). A parcel of the Edinburgh Quarterly Review, New Quarterly Review and Fraser's Magazine is also included as a single lot.

Few of the contemporaries of Peacock's later life are represented. Although he apparently read Dickens and Tennyson and met Disraeli and Thackeray, none of these is included in the catalogue. It is possible, however, that these would be the volumes most likely to be chosen by his family and friends for their own possession.

The sale catalogue certainly does not offer conclusive evidence of the scope and size of Peacock's library, though it is at least arguable that it provides a useful general guide to the books he chose to possess. Any conclusions about the range and variety of his reading must be supported by the considerable evidence which may be derived from the quotations and allusions in his own writings. The evidence of the sale catalogue and of his writings indicate a mind which was considerably dependent upon the printed word for its impressions not only of foreign territories but also of the wide areas of human emotion and passion which lay outside his own experience.

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Unless otherwise stated the place of publication of books is London.

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