

PEACOCK AND THE IDEA OF PROGRESS

The greater heart in thy appeal to heads,  
They see, thou Captain of our civil Fort!  
By more elusive savages assailed  
On each ascending stage; untired  
Both inner foe and outer to cut short,  
And blow to chaff pretenders void of grist.

Meredith, "Ode to the Comic Spirit"

PEACOCK AND THE IDEA OF PROGRESS:  
A BACKGROUND TO THE NOVELS OF TALK

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the idea of progress in Peacock's "novels of talk," primarily against the intellectual background of the early nineteenth century. Although much of it is concerned with elucidating specific sources and probable general influences, my aim throughout has been to show how these sources and influences operate in the novels. As Peacock is a highly eclectic writer, critics have found it difficult to disentangle his own views from the many others put forward in his fiction. By examining Peacock's treatment of what was perhaps the most widely diffused and variously applied idea of his century, I attempt to find grounds for reconciliation of the many seemingly opposed views on this idea presented in the five novels of talk.

Using Peacock's "Four Ages of Poetry" as a starting-point, I suggest in my introduction that Peacock's early transition from poetry to satire had an historical premise, rooted as it was in an eighteenth-century intellectual tradition which viewed man's progress from a savage to a civilized state as an advance from "rude" passion to urbane reason. Hence comedy and satire became for Peacock the only feasible literary forms in a "polished" age.

Turning to Peacock's fiction, I devote a chapter to

each of the five novels of talk, in which I examine Peacock's treatment of such concepts as perfectibility, reform, primitivism, political economy, millenarianism and so on, all concerns of Peacock's age, and all in some way bearing on the notion of progress. Against this broad background I analyse the narrative level of the fiction and attempt to show how it illustrates practically the ideas set forth on the level of discourse. My conclusion, essentially, is that Peacock professes an optimism tempered by informed scepticism. Peacock is convinced, to quote from Headlong Hall, that "an amelioration in the state of the sensitive man" is eminently possible. While he is less optimistic about society at large, some few rays of hope are evident in the tentative syntheses of opinion and theory which he effects on the level of discourse in the novels.

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INTRODUCTION: "THE FOUR AGES OF POETRY"

It is the different Periods, naturally succeeding in the Progression of Manners, that can only account for the Succession of Wit and Literature.

Thomas Blackwell, An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer (1735)

Peacock deplored what he wryly termed "The March of Mind," but his nostalgia for an irrecoverable golden age seems to have existed side by side with a genuine belief in progress. If he ridiculed the Godwinian enthusiasms of Shelley's Bracknell circle, he nevertheless sympathized with many of his young friend's views on reform. If he was an outspoken, and often intolerant, champion of the Ancients, he was also closely affiliated with the philosophic radicals at the India House (where he was himself instrumental in urging the company's adoption of steam-navigation), and during one period was Jeremy Bentham's regular dinner guest.<sup>1</sup> His fiction reveals a similar dichotomy. Headlong Hall (1815), his first novel, presents a seemingly inconclusive debate between a "deteriorationalist," a "perfectibilitarian" and a "statu-quo-ite." Such an opposition also occurs in Melincourt (1817) between a Shelleyan idealist and a Malthusian, and is further complicated by the presence of the Natural Man in the form of a domesticated orang-outang. This fundamental debate, with some interesting modifications, can be traced in every one of Peacock's novels, right up to the

last in 1861.

Commentators have usually assigned Peacock a playful detachment in such instances, and have been reluctant to credit him with any genuine convictions either way. Said James Spedding as early as 1839 in the Edinburgh Review:

He stands, among the disputing opinions of the time, a disengaged and disinterested looker-on; among them, but not of them; showing neither malice nor favour, but a certain sympathy, companionable rather than brotherly, with all; with natural glee cheering on the combatants to their discomfiture, and as each rides his hobby boldly to the destruction prepared for him, regarding them all alike with the same smile of half-compassionate amusement.<sup>2</sup>

This is the representative view, and Peacock himself seemed to confirm it when in 1861, with all of his novels now behind him, he told a friend that "in the questions which have come within my scope, I have endeavoured to be impartial, and to say what could be said on both sides" ("Letters," viii, 253). While such impartiality can be seen as a strength--since Spedding, Peacock has been the "court jester" of the Romantics for his admirers<sup>3</sup>--it can also leave one with the frustrating sense that it is hard to say just where Peacock stands on any issue raised in his novels. Even Spedding felt that "he dwells more habitually among doubts and negations than we believe to be good for any man."<sup>4</sup>

Spedding's cautiously expressed reservations have been frequently repeated, and in much harsher terms. Mario Praz has characterized Peacock's detachment as a typical bourgeois escape from genuine engagement, while critics like A. E.

Dyson and Howard Mills have found Peacock's stance somehow specious, a facile scepticism masking a not very penetrating intelligence.<sup>5</sup> The ideas which Peacock presents, according to Dyson for example, are merely part of the pageant:

They need, for Peacock's purpose, to be both simplified and arrested: simplified so that original notions sound wildly eccentric; and arrested so that one simplified idea can clash with its opposite to the greatest effect. The result falls short, one need scarcely add, of synthesis; and still farther short of the point where any meaningful action might occur.<sup>6</sup>

In a similar connection, Humphry House feels that Peacock "never dealt with the deeper and more exacting struggles of thought but only with thought as it emerged into opinion or emotional attitude."<sup>7</sup> Most recently, "the exaggerated claims made for Peacock's intellectual stature" have been rather ungratefully exploded by C. S. Ferns in a study of Peacock's most famous literary descendant, Aldous Huxley. "A satiric treatment of the philosophy of the Romantics," Ferns says, "would surely involve some kind of exposure of falsities and contradictions inherent in it, and this Peacock does not provide."<sup>8</sup>

As most of the above criticisms carry some authority, they must necessarily be answered in any study of Peacock. There are a number of possible approaches. One of these is largely to avoid the issue of Peacock's thought and to study his technique. In this way the opinions and ideas uttered in the novels can be seen as merely components of Peacock's satiric form--a form classed variously as the novel of ideas,

satiric romance, and, to use Frye's influential term, Menippean satire.<sup>9</sup> Thus such portmanteau concepts as "aesthetic ambivalence," "the concord of discord" and "the fortunate foible" have been offered as formal keys to Peacock's clash of ideas.<sup>10</sup> Another way is to approach the ideas directly, as Jean-Jacques Mayoux did exhaustively in his still valuable 1933 study of Peacock, Un Epicurien anglais,<sup>11</sup> and as Marilyn Butler has done more recently in Peacock Displayed: A Satirist in his Context (1979). As the title of her study suggests, Butler is concerned with Peacock as a man and writer of his age, for "opinion as a contemporary phenomenon," she says, "is Peacock's subject."<sup>12</sup> Thus the key is to be found both in the stuff of contemporary reality which informs Peacock's satire and in Peacock's response to that reality--a response which Butler and Mayoux have convincingly shown to be an informed and intelligent one. To quote from Butler's still more recent Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries:

Authors are not the solitaries of the Romantic myth, but citizens. Within any community tastes, opinions, values, the shaping stuff of art, are socially generated. Though writers are gifted with tongues to articulate the Spirit of the Age, they are also moulded by the age. Culture is a social phenomenon, and its larger manifestations are not therefore to be understood without recourse to the disciplines of those who study society, whether anthropologists or sociologists or historians.<sup>13</sup>

The present study is much more limited than those of Butler and Mayoux in that it is concerned with Peacock's treatment of what is, in effect, a single idea--the idea of progress.



However, it is essentially upon the premise stated above by Butler that my investigation is based, and although I am not as exclusively concerned with Peacock's role in the intellectual politics of his age as Butler and Mayoux are in their studies, this particular area is relevant to my thesis, but only as one of many such relevant areas. The idea of progress, and the doctrine opposed to it known as primitivism, are central to Peacock's satire, whether in the fields of politics, economics, speculative mythology, education, religion or literature.<sup>14</sup> A. O. Lovejoy has shown that the doctrines of progress and primitivism have often been concurrent in the history of ideas.<sup>15</sup> I believe that such a concurrence can be demonstrated in Peacock. By examining the bewilderingly diverse programs of human perfectibility presented in Peacock's novels--ranging from primitivistic notions of human goodness to utilitarian schemes for rational advancement--I hope to shed some light on what has hitherto appeared to be a radical inconsistency in the thought of this writer and of his century.

## II

Although progress can mean different things to different people it can be summed up as the idea, to cite J. B. Bury's famous definition, "that civilization has moved, is moving, and will move in a desirable direction."<sup>16</sup> What has been written on the idea of progress would probably occupy a small library, and the subject itself spans many fields,

for during the past two hundred years or so everything from political and economic theory to metaphysics and ontology has been saturated in the temper of progressivism.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, formulated into a law by thinkers like Turgot, Adam Smith and Condorcet in the eighteenth century, and in the nineteenth century by Comte, Marx, Spencer and many others, progress has, until this century perhaps, been the rock of modern man's faith in man. The origins of the idea have been exhaustively examined and debated, but whether they can be traced only so far as the seventeenth century or right back to classical antiquity, certain eighteenth century developments which gave impetus to both the doctrines of progress and primitivism are clearly relevant to Peacock.

"The elements of progress and decline" Ruskin found to be "strangely mingled in the modern mind."<sup>18</sup> The particular duality noted by Ruskin here was to a great extent the product of economic developments in the preceding century.<sup>19</sup> To give a brief account, England's prosperity grew enormously in the eighteenth century because of rapid expansion in the areas of commerce and manufacturing. Where the classical economic attitude was elaborated in the seventeenth century by study of primitive civilizations such as those of Rome and Sparta, which stressed simplicity and frugality, eighteenth-century England's new prosperity necessarily resulted in an increased consumption of luxuries and with this came the need to justify such consumption. Mandeville's famous defence

of luxury in his Fable of the Bees (1714) sparked a controversy which is still far from settled and which raged on during the eighteenth century in periodical literature, in moral philosophy, even in fiction. Against the new doctrine of the wealth of nations were opposed classical ethics, Christian theology, the testimony of travellers among primitive tribes, and perhaps most crucially the rationalism of the early eighteenth century which prescribed "nature" as moral norm.<sup>20</sup> Thus if apologists for capitalism like Mandeville and Adam Smith lauded the new prosperity, a conservative and mainly popular faction opposed it and denounced it as evil and corruptive. In his History of Civil Society (1767), Adam Ferguson perfectly sums up this clash of attitudes:

We are far from being agreed on the application of the term luxury, or on that degree of its meaning which is consistent with national prosperity, or with the moral rectitude of our nature. It is sometimes employed to signify a manner of life which we think necessary to civilization, and even to happiness. It is, in our panegyric of polished ages, the parent of arts, the support of commerce, and the minister of national greatness, and of opulence. It is, in our censure of degenerate manners, the source of corruption, and the presage of national declension and ruin. It is admired, and it is blamed; it is treated as ornamental and useful; and it is proscribed as vice.<sup>21</sup>

Two such antithetical views co-exist in Peacock's works, and indeed Peacock wrote during a period which had just witnessed a great outpouring of literature in which progressivism and primitivism were equally at grips.<sup>22</sup> In its most naive form Peacock's primitivism is amply evident throughout

much of the early poetry--the odes and the topographical poems, which look back for their models to the eighteenth century. In his first long poem for example, an ode entitled Palmyra (1805), Peacock invokes the ghost of Ossian when he asks,

Where is the bard, in these degen'rate days,  
To whom the muse the blissful meed awards,  
Again the dithyrambic song to raise,  
And strike the golden harp's responsive chords?<sup>23</sup>

Such passages are common in the verse of the decade or so during which Peacock seriously attempted a poetic career. Some of his shorter poems have titles like "Clonar and Tlamin," which is imitated from MacPherson's Notes on Ossian, and "Foldath in the Cavern of Moma From the Same Foldath, Addressing the Spirits of his Fathers"--all very typically romantic attempts at primitive heroic poetry.

The Genius of the Thames (1810) indicates a much more ambivalent attitude. Its patently "progressive" aspects incurred the disapproval of Shelley (who had not yet met Peacock),<sup>24</sup> and indeed much of the poem reads like a versified

Wealth of Nations;

Throned in Augusta's ample port  
Imperial commerce holds her court,  
And Britain's power sublime:  
To her the breath of every breeze  
Conveys the wealth of subject seas,  
And tributary climes (vi, 118).

Nevertheless, the poem also recalls the spirit of "eldest time" (vi, 120), travelling back through history into Britain's primitive past where Peacock depicts a very curious chance meet-

ing between a young Roman legionnaire and an ancient British Druid. Here, quite clearly, "polished" civilized man confronts rude, primitive man. Through the eyes of the bewildered Roman youth the modern reader is meant to marvel at the spectacle of untamed primitive passion embodied in the old Druid, and Peacock's point is surely that with the advance of civilization we have gained something and lost something. In his notes to the poem, Peacock anticipates the thesis of his famous essay "The Four Ages of Poetry" (1820), when he regretfully observes that "the tutelary spirits, that formerly animated the scenes of nature, still continue to adorn the visions of poetry: though they are now felt only as the creatures of imagination, and no longer possess that influence of real existence, which must have imparted many enviable sensations to the mind of the ancient polytheist" (vi, 157).

Peacock's dislike of certain aspects of modern civilization takes a more direct form in a series of letters addressed to Edward Hookham, the publisher and bookseller, written during the composition of Genius, in which Peacock inveighs against commercialism and calls England "the modern Carthage" (viii, 162). More characteristic, is an often cited passage from one of these letters in which Peacock frankly admits his ambivalence in terms remarkably similar to those used by Ferguson above:

The Thames is almost as good a subject for a satire as a panegyric.-- A satirist might exclaim: The rapacity of Commerce, not content with the immense advantages derived from this river in a course of nearly 300 miles, erects a ponderous engine over the very place of its nativity, to suck up its unborn waters from the bosom of the earth and pump them into a navigable canal! It were to be wished, after all, that the crime of water-sucking were the worst that could be laid to the charge of commercial navigation: but we only have to advert to the conduct of the Spanish Christians in South America, of the English Christians in the East Indies, and of Christians of all nations on the coast of Africa, to discover the deeper dyes of its blood-sucking atrocities.--

A panegyrist, on the contrary, after expatiating on the benefits of commercial navigation, and of that great effort of human ingenuity, the Thames and Severn Canal, which ascends the hills, sinks into the valleys, and penetrates the bosom of the earth, to unite the two noblest rivers of this most wealthy, prosperous, happy, generous, loyal, patriotic, &c, &c, &c, kingdom of England, might say: "And yet this splendid undertaking would be incomplete, through the failure of water in the summer months, did not this noble river, this beautiful emblem, and powerful instrument of the commercial greatness of Britain, contribute to that greatness even at the instant of its birth, by supplying this magnificent chain of connection with the means of perpetual utility (viii, 172-3).

Presented with the choices of censure and panegyric, then, Peacock appears to have had some partial foresense of his later abnegation of poetry in favour of satiric fiction. Moreover, he shows himself to be aware of certain difficult philosophical questions here as well, and indeed they are questions which present themselves in many forms to the characters in his novels: is the movement of the present age for the better or for the worse? should one look to the present or to the past for one's good? Both dilemmas --the literary and the philosophical--are closely connected, as, we will see, the later "Four Ages of Poetry" amply

demonstrates. And the choice is not so clear-cut as the above passage might suggest either, for the youthful writer of the Ossianic imitations is as much a primitivist as the hypothetical satirist envisioned in the letter to Hookham. Conversely, if he has been called a primitivist, the author of the eminently satiric "Four Ages" has also been called a utilitarian.<sup>25</sup> This dilemma, as Peacock perceived it during the composition of The Genius of the Thames, would not in fact be satisfactorily resolved in that poem. "The problem," as Marilyn Butler acutely observes, "was to find a form capable of expressing what were really more equivocal attitudes."<sup>26</sup>

### III

"The Four Ages of Poetry" (1820) seems as equivocal as anything Peacock ever wrote. Shelley called it a "hobby of a paradox,"<sup>27</sup> and Peacock criticism has never really improved on that. Yet this essay, with its broadly historical perspective and its incongruously ironic manner, can shed some light on Peacock's satire. Its thesis, in brief, is that as society advances and increasingly pursues more rational, scientific kinds of knowledge, poetry, which once played an indispensable role in forming man's intellect, loses its influence and becomes a mere distraction. The progress of poetry, then, is inversely related to the progress of civil society, for its maturity coincides with

the infancy of the other arts and sciences. As it becomes exhausted, "new rivals arise around it in new fields of literature, which gradually acquire more influence as, with the progress of reason and civilization, facts become more interesting than fiction" (viii, 9). Hence, for example, the gradual separation from poetry of history, which can be traced from Homer through Herodotus to Thucydides. Where the history of Herodotus "was written while the whole field of literature yet belonged to the Muses" (viii, 9), by Thucydides' time history is a separate discipline. It is a process very like the division of labour,<sup>28</sup> and operating throughout is a kind of historical necessity similar to the "invisible hand", which, according to Adam Smith, makes such a process inevitable.

In itself the essay's thesis points to a utilitarian bias, but the fact that Peacock bases his argument on a Hesiodic scheme of ages in which the age of greatest poetic achievement is specifically termed an age of gold, could indicate equally a primitivistic bias. Thus confronted with what would seem to be two distinct and irreconcilable attitudes in the essay, critics have identified Peacock as either a utilitarian or a primitivist, or else have refrained from committing him at all.<sup>29</sup> Such readings of the essay have long been based, in my view, on one central fallacy. This is that what, at any rate, passes for utilitarianism in "The Four Ages" is necessarily opposed to the other possi-



ble tendency--apparently a primitivistic one. What has not yet been suggested is that perhaps no real opposition exists in the essay, that the utilitarian and primitivistic strains do not constitute distinct positions as such, but are rather two sides of the same coin. To find an authority for this view it is not necessary to look further than the great historical inquiries of the eighteenth century in which man is dispassionately and broadly surveyed in his progress from a "rude" to a "polished" state. The authors of these inquiries--Adam Smith and the Wartons among them--seem a diverse group, yet they can be said to form a school, for whether they wrote on economics or literature they employed the "historical method." <sup>30</sup>

The historical method as applied to literature involves the premise that a society's poetry reflects the manners and institutions of that society at any given stage of civilization. In general, the consensus was that poetry is best in its early stages (although, as I will show, this was not at all an expression of "primitivist" convictions in the sense of being anti-progress). In his Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope (1782), which Peacock appears to have known,<sup>31</sup> Joseph Warton remarks:

Few disquisitions are more amusing, or perhaps more instructive, than those which relate to the rise and gradual increase of literature in any kingdom: And among the various species of literature, the origins and progress of poetry, however shallow reasoners may despise it, is a subject of no small utility. For the manners and customs, the different ways of thinking and of living,

the favourite passions, pursuits, and pleasures of men appear in no writings so strongly marked, as in the poets in their respective ages; so that in these compositions, the historian, the moralist, the politician, and the philosopher, may, each of them, meet with abundant matter for reflection and observation.<sup>32</sup>

Such a view is amply evident in Peacock's own literary criticism. The unfinished "Essay on Fashionable Literature" (1818) states as its premise that "every age has its own character, manners, and amusements, which are influenced even in their lightest forms by the fundamental features of the time" (viii, 265). In "French Comic Romances" (1835), Peacock suggests that it might be useful, although out of his present scope, to conduct what he calls a "progressive inquiry" into the historical development of comic fiction (ix, 259-62), and indeed in this essay and a later one, "The Epicier" (1836), his perspective is unmistakably an historical one. Even a collaborative article which Peacock and his daughter published in Fraser's Magazine, "Gastronomy and Civilization" (1851), is based on the premise that the progress of cookery is directly connected to the changing manners and morals of a society. However, while these instances justify studying "The Four Ages" generally in connection with the eighteenth-century historians, what is needed is a specific link between this school and the views found in Peacock's essay. The link, Richard Payne Knight, is curiously enough a figure of Peacock's own century.

Knight's name usually comes up in discussions of the landscape controversy satirized in Headlong Hall (1815). But besides his writings on aesthetics and taste, Knight wrote The Progress of Civil Society (1796), a didactic poem in six books modelled on the type of eighteenth-century historical inquiry I have discussed above. Indeed, the poem's first four books--I "Of Hunting," II "Of Pasturage," III "Of Agriculture," IV "Of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce"--are clearly presented on the four stage scheme often followed by the eighteenth-century historians,<sup>33</sup> among whom Knight cites Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, and William Robertson in his notes. Like these authors, he is concerned throughout his survey with the development of "the wandering brute into social man," and the phenomenon of gradually expanding and compounding social bonds which, "with concentrated interest," builds the state.<sup>34</sup> He describes the progress and eventual separation of the arts and sciences, and the advent of a money economy which "to arts and commerce gave a wider range,/And loosed to all the freedom of exchange."<sup>35</sup> Knight is not any more the prophet of unqualified progress, however, than the eighteenth-century historians were. Indeed, he has been called a primitivist, as have certain members of the eighteenth-century school.<sup>36</sup> But this is to consider only one part of what is a much more comprehensive historical view. True, Knight laments the circumstances which have in some ways "made the social man worse than the

savage man."<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, with the progress of civil society have come philosophy, science and more enlightened social institutions, lacking which the savage "no social joy or dawn of comfort feels."<sup>38</sup> A poet himself, Knight recognizes particularly the loss, through this civilizing process, of man's imaginative power, but he appreciates too the inevitable progress of intellect which has led to a more rational, scientific habit of mind and its concomitant benefits.

Peacock ordered a copy of Knight's poem in 1809 in a letter to Edward Hookham (viii, 176), and it is probable that this work had some influence on Peacock's notions about poetry and progress. In the "Prooemium" to The Genius of the Thames, Peacock questioned whether in a polished age the poet "still feels a sacred influence nigh" (vi, 102) and found in the affirmative. However, when nine years later he wrote his last long poem, Rhododaphne (1818), he was not so sanguine. Rhododaphne is set in ancient Greece, but around its perimeters lurk Peacock's serious doubts about poetry in the present age: "In ocean's caves no Nereid dwells:/ No Oread walks the mountain-dells" (vii, 29). These same fears were to be repeated, with an ironic edge, two years later in "The Four Ages of Poetry" in a phrase almost identical--"there are no Dryads in Hyde-park nor Naiads in the Regent's-canal" (viii, 19)--and the source for both phrases is Knight's observation in his poem

that "no playful Dryads cheer the lonely woods:/ Or Sportif Naiads float in crystal floods."<sup>39</sup> This echo, along with other internal evidence,<sup>40</sup> suggests that while slightly more than a decade separates "The Four Ages" and Peacock's only reference to The Progress of Civil Society, Peacock may well have been reading the latter work two or three years before he wrote his essay.

Although there is nothing in Peacock's essay of the four stage scheme Knight has borrowed from the eighteenth-century historians, there is much, nevertheless, in its conception and details which can be specifically attributed to the eighteenth-century school, both through Knight and undoubtedly through Peacock's direct reading of Smith, Ferguson, Robertson and others.<sup>41</sup> Knight's poem must have been useful in showing how the "method" of these latter authors could be used in the sort of cultural-historical critique at which both Peacock and Knight excelled. For Peacock, as for Knight, the arts, and in particular poetry, are inseparable from the social and economic context of an age. To be useful, critical opinion must be historically conditioned. If Peacock finds these to be "unpoetical times" (viii, 22), this is not to assert, as Shelley claimed his friend in fact had, "that Poetry is a bad thing,"<sup>42</sup> any more than it is to support by implication the utilitarian or, alternately, the primitivistic view. In the broad eighteenth-century perspective of Peacock's essay,

the rude and the polished states are both necessary steps in the progress of human intellect. The continually diminishing audience for poetry which Peacock predicted to Shelley ("Letters," viii, 220) is an inevitable consequence of man's gradual advance from his infant to his mature state--from the birth of intellectual inquiry in the "crude congeries" of primitive poets (viii, 6) to its expansion and subsequent separation into the present arts and sciences. "The Four Ages," in fact, was neither more nor less severe on either poetry or polished society than any of its eighteenth-century models had been.

#### IV

"The Four Ages" is a useful guide to Peacock's fiction. As with the latter, indeed, a frequent judgment of this essay is that nowhere in it does Peacock offer a serious, consistent point of view--"it is idle," says M. H. Abrams, "to inquire about the exact boundaries between the serious and the playful in this witty essay."<sup>43</sup> I suggest that Peacock means what he says in "The Four Ages," and that his witty satiric manner in fact confirms the essay's historical thesis.

Where in Peacock's four age scheme, the ages of iron and gold see poetry at its height, the following age of silver sees it beginning its decline: "The poet of the age of iron celebrates the achievements of his contemporaries: the poet of the age of gold celebrates the heroes of the

age of iron; the poet of the age of silver re-casts the poems of the age of gold" (viii, 11). After the over-refined and derivative silver age comes Peacock's own age, which is an age of brass. It is at this point in the essay that poetry really appears to get short shrift. Peacock's indictment of his contemporaries' poetry as a "modern-antique compound of frippery and barbarism" (viii, 20) amounts almost to invective:

While the historian and the philosopher are advancing in, and accelerating, the progress of knowledge, the poet is wallowing in the rubbish of departed ignorance, and raking up the ashes of dead savages to find gewgaws and rattles for the grown babies of the age. Mr. Scott digs up the poachers and cattle-stealers of the ancient border. Lord Byron cruizes for thieves and pirates on the shores of the Morea and among the Greek islands. Mr. Southey wades through ponderous volumes of travels and old chronicles, from which he carefully selects all that is false, useless, and absurd, as being essentially poetical; and when he has a commonplace book full of monstrosities, strings them into an epic (viii, 19).

Looking closer, however, it becomes evident that neither here nor elsewhere in the essay is Peacock attacking poetry per se, but rather a specific and very limited conception of poetry. Attempting to revive a manner of poetry which has necessarily disappeared with the civil institutions which fostered it, the modern brass age poet "is a semibarbarian in a civilized community" (viii, 20). His poetry comprises "barbarous manners, obsolete customs, and exploded superstitions" (viii, 20). It is such "artificial reconstructions" (viii, 22) which are unnatural, not modern society, nor indeed poetry itself.

Paradoxically, the sole literary form genuinely "natural" to a polished age is comedy, which Peacock describes elsewhere as a product of "artificial combinations" ("Letters," viii, 438). Significantly, the "poetry of civilized life," which distinguishes the silver age in Peacock's essay, is of two kinds: the "imitative," which merely recasts and polishes the tragic and heroic forms of the preceding golden age, and the "original," which "is chiefly comic, didactic, or satiric" (viii, 10). Once again Peacock's general debt is to the eighteenth century. In the final pages of his History of English Poetry (1774-1781), Thomas Warton states that Elizabeth's age, "commonly called the golden age of English poetry," produced little satire--for "satire is the poetry of a nation highly polished."<sup>44</sup> Similarly, in his previously mentioned essay on Pope, Joseph Warton decides that "if the Moderns have excelled the Ancients in any species of writing, it seems to be in satire."<sup>45</sup> Indeed, Warton's account of Pope's career has a particular application to Peacock's own, as Peacock himself might well have noted, for like him, Pope "early left the more poetical provinces of his art to become a moral, didactic, and satiric poet."<sup>46</sup> And the rationale for this transition--as I am also going to suggest of Peacock's case--is very much an historically and culturally conditioned one: "He [Pope] stuck to describing modern manners, but those manners, because they are familiar,



uniform, artificial, and polished, are, in their very nature, unfit for any lofty effort of the Muse."<sup>47</sup>

In Peacock's scheme, of course, the urbane silver age which witnesses the rise of the comic-satiric modes is succeeded by the brass which takes a retrograde stride back into spurious barbarity. It should be noted, however, that while Peacock observes in his essay that of the silver age's "original" poetry the "ethical" and "didactic" forms have become exhausted, he is suggestively silent regarding comedy and satire. Significantly, the motto of his second novel, Melincourt, is "vocem comoedia tollit," "Comedy raises its voice," and is taken from Horace whom Peacock praises in "Gastronomy and Civilization" for his "extensive sympathies" (ix, 353). Just as the Homeric Muse in its time, according to "The Four Ages", gave "the grand outline of things" (viii, 13), so must modern poetry, if it is to count for anything, keep apace with the "comprehensive views and enlarged combinations" (viii, 11) of its sister arts and sciences. And this, in Peacock's opinion, is where his contemporaries have failed. Retreating back into the ostensibly more "natural scenes" of the past, they have mistaken "the prominent novelty for the all-important totality" (viii, 17)--and so must Peacock have also felt about his own youthful Ossianic imitations and even the more ambitious poetry such as The Genius of the Thames, which is clearly of the obsolete

"didactic" and "ethical" bent mentioned above.

This thesis will deal with Peacock's five "novels of talk"--Headlong Hall (1815), Melincourt (1817), Nightmare Abbey (1818), Crotchet Castle (1831) and Gryll Grange (1861)--for in both form and scope they best exemplify the historical thesis outlined above. Like Warton's Pope, Peacock turned his hand to satire because it suited not only his particular temper but that of his age. Warton states:

If it be a true observation, that for a poet to write happily and well, he must have seen and felt what he describes, and must draw from living models alone; and if modern times, from their luxury and refinement, afford not manners that will bear to be described; it will then follow, that those species of poetry bid fairest to succeed at present, which treat of things, not men; which deliver doctrines, not display events.<sup>48</sup>

In "elegant and polite philosophical comedy,"<sup>49</sup> Peacock found the mode which he believed was able to meet the complex demands made upon literature by the age. Indeed, prior to "The Four Ages," he had already, in Headlong Hall, with its far-ranging debates on progress, followed by Melincourt and Nightmare Abbey, made extensive comic-satiric incursions into the fields of "history, society and human nature" recommended by "The Four Ages" (viii, 18)--and in the great histories of civil society on which it is modelled--as the province of modern intellectual inquiry. Written in 1820, after the fact, so to speak, "The Four Ages" is less a program than an historical justification. If at this essay's conclusion, mathematicians, metaphysicians, political

economists and so on gaze down at the modern Parnassus below them, "knowing how small a place it occupies in the comprehensiveness of their prospect" (viii, 25), we should remember that it is Peacock, here no less than in the novels, whose comic-satiric vision takes them all, philosophers and poets alike, into its ken.

## CHAPTER ONE: HEADLONG HALL

No active comprehensive mind can forbear some attention to the reliques of antiquity. It is prompted by natural curiosity to survey the progress of life and manners, and to inquire by what gradations barbarity was civilized, grossness refined, and ignorance instructed. But this curiosity, Madam, must be stronger in those who, like your Ladyship, can remark in every period the influence of some great Progenitor, and who can still feel in their effects the trans-actions and events of distant centuries.

Thomas Percy, Relics, dedication to Elizabeth, Countess of Northumberland (1765)

Probably by the fall of 1815 Peacock had abandoned work on a long mythological poem entitled "Ahrimanes," and, likely, was already putting the final touches on his first novel, Headlong Hall. What we have of "Ahrimanes" is a canto and a half, as well as an additional fragment and two prose outlines, but the completed poem was to have illustrated, in twelve cantos, nothing less than the historical struggle of the forces of good with the forces of evil. To summarize, it depicts the conflict between two deities, Oromazes, "lord of peace and day" (vii, 272), and Ahrimanes, who leads the dark powers. Both deities have divided and equal dominion in the world; sometimes one of the two has a temporary supremacy. At the point at which the poem opens, Ahrimanes is pre-eminent, and, as far as the fragment goes, shows little immediate sign of losing that position to his rival. His is a reign of des-

truction and ruin, and he is associated with storms and earthquakes. Oromazes, by contrast, appears to be a kind of Saturn figure whose reign, long ago in the world's infancy, represents a time when men lived in primal simplicity, and disease and war were unknown. There are indications in the poem that he may some day be reinstated, but this possibility remains only a hope. Against this background Peacock was to have depicted the adventures of a pair of lovers named Darassah and Kelasris.

"Ahrimanes" is mainly a redaction of the Persian mythology, usually attributed to Zoroaster, concerning the division of the world into the principles of good and evil, represented by Oromazes and Ahrimanes respectively. As Carlos Baker points out,<sup>1</sup> Peacock's is only one of a number of such treatments of the Zoroastrian scheme by the Romantic writers. Southey, Scott, Byron and Shelley all made some use of it. My concern in this chapter is not specifically with Peacock's Zoroastrian poem, much less with those of his fellow Romantics, but with its intellectual background--a background which is complex and far-ranging, and which bears more than a little on the novel Peacock wrote during this period--Headlong Hall.

Peacock had known Shelley since 1812, and through Shelley at Bracknell, in 1813, the year "Ahrimanes" was probably begun,<sup>2</sup> met J. F. Newton. Newton appears at least twice in Peacock's fiction, in the persons of Mr.

Toobad the Manichaeian Millenarian in Nightmare Abbey (1818) and Mr. Ramsbottom the Zodiacal Mythologist in Crotchet Castle (1831). There may be something of him in Mr. Escot of Headlong Hall as well. Newton is best known perhaps for persuading Shelley to vegetarianism and for his pamphlet, The Return to Nature, or, a Defence of the Vegetarian Regimen (1811). Peacock includes a description of him in the Memoirs of Shelley (1860), where he mentions his interest in Zoroastrianism. In fact, it is on the basis of the reference in the Memoirs that Peacock is usually assumed to have gotten from Newton his interest in this subject, for in neither The Return to Nature nor a series of letters Newton contributed to the Monthly Magazine in 1812 is Zoroastrianism directly mentioned. It seems likely, then, that the theories dramatized by Peacock in "Ahrimanes," and later by Shelley in Laon and Cythna, were discussed among the three acquaintances at Bracknell. In 1816, writing from Switzerland, whose mountains and glaciers put him in mind of Ahrimanes's "terrible magnificence," Shelley surely recalled these talks, as well as the unfinished poem, when he half-jokingly included Peacock among those "who assert the supremacy of Ahriman."<sup>3</sup> Certainly the usual account given of Peacock's and Shelley's intellectual relations, those especially which see in them a model for the debates between Messrs. Escot and Foster in Headlong Hall, would confirm Shelley's observation

here. Whether we identify the deteriorationalist Escot with Peacock or with Newton, as commentators have variously done, the reference to the Bracknell talks is unmistakable.

Peacock had many other sources for "Ahrimanes" besides Newton, as his notations to the shorter version of the poem indicate.<sup>4</sup> One of these, Jacob Bryant's Ancient Mythology (1776), he was already reading in the fall of 1809,<sup>5</sup> well before he met Newton (although The Return to Nature, significantly, refers to "Mr. Bryant's attempts to commix the Pagan fables with the Jewish history"<sup>6</sup>). In the second volume of this work, Bryant discusses the Zoroastrian doctrine "concerning the two prevailing principles, the one good, and the other evil: the former of these was named Oromazes, the latter Areimanius."<sup>7</sup> Peacock also used Volney's Ruins (1791), Charles Dupuis's Origine de tous les cultes (1795), the astronomical mythologists, Thomas Hyde's essay on Manicheism in Historia Religionis Veterum Persarum (1700), as well as several classical authors.

"Ahrimanes"'s sources and their relevance to Headlong Hall will be discussed presently; however, it is in the broad scheme initiated in this unfinished poem that Peacock likely found his starting point for Headlong Hall. Indeed, a portion of the novel can be found on one of the blank pages of the "Ahrimanes" MS. It would seem strange,

therefore, if Headlong Hall showed no traces of influence from a work just abandoned at the novel's completion. In fact, Headlong Hall raises and in many ways extends the questions which prompted "Ahrimanes."

Neither of the two Zoroastrian deities on whom Peacock based his poem is ever mentioned in the novel. As it has often been pointed out, Peacock was probably making a very conscious break with poetry at around the time he wrote Headlong Hall (although one further major poem, Rhododaphne, would follow in 1818), and he undoubtedly eschewed any direct reference in his first novel to the poem which had defeated him. Moreover, the novel's emphasis necessarily differs from that of the poem. Instead of the sweeping scene of eternity depicted in "Ahrimanes," we have in Headlong Hall a nineteenth-century country-house. The cosmic struggle of the powers of darkness and light has been replaced by a group of dilettanti, who, as befits an enlightened age, argue the pros and cons of progress on a civilized philosophical plane. Still, the question posed in the novel is the same one posed by the poem: is the present progress of man and of the world for the best?

Headlong Hall's spokesman for the pessimistic side, the deteriorationalist Escot, is clearly among that number who, according to Shelley, "assert the supremacy of Ahriman." He is convinced that man has been declining steadily, both morally and physically, since civilization



began, and this condition he extends even to the natural world, as evidenced by the ruinous, irregular state of the Welsh mountain country where the novel is set. The etymological derivation of his name, set out early in a note to Chapter I, establishes his role in the novel: "One who is always looking into the dark side of the question" (i, 8n.). Ahrimanes, we recall, leads the powers of darkness. In the poem's cyclical scheme of alternating periods of prosperity and ruin, he represents the principle of universal deterioration. In addition, he represents the inventive faculty. It is Ahrimanes, significantly, who taught men to "force from the veins of flint the seeds of fire" (vii, 274), and who consequently can be identified as a type of the Promethean figure attacked by Mr. Escot in Chapter II, as well as by numerous other primitivists in a tradition reaching back to antiquity.<sup>8</sup> He is the dark side of progress perceived by Mr. Escot.

On the optimistic side is Mr. Foster--according to Peacock's note, "one who watches over and guards the light" (i, 8n.). He quite evidently does not recognize the supremacy of Ahrimanes, and in effect sees the light side of the question just as Escot sees the dark. In contrast to the latter's anti-Promethean bias, he sees in man's progress nothing but good. Where Escot detects unmistakable signs of universal deterioration everywhere, Foster, "in the face of evidence so luminous" (i, 11), finds ex-

actly otherwise. Situated precisely in mid-centre of the controversy and representing a sort of Panglossian eighteenth century optimism is the "statu-quo-ite" Mr. Jenkison ("one who from equal measures divides and distributes all things," i, 8n.).

Thus in Headlong Hall the "light" and "dark" sides of the question are balanced against each other--not actively, of course, as they are in "Ahrimanes," but rather in the form of conflicting philosophical positions. Often the scales seem over-balanced in favour of one or the other side; however, at the novel's end, Jenkison can still conclude that "the scales of my philosophical balance remain equally equiponderant" (i, 154). Such, in different terms, is the situation in "Ahrimanes." There, under the sway of Necessity, the question seems to pend eternally in the poem's historical scheme of recurring cycles. Putting the question at once more topically and concretely than "Ahrimanes," however, Headlong Hall manages at the same time to retain the poem's historical and mythological background.

## II

The two deities of Peacock's poem, Oromazes and Ahrimanes, are known as the "Preserver" and the "Destroyer" respectively, and during their alternate reigns hold dominion over both "nature and mankind" (vii, 272). Under Oro-

mazes man was innocent and "virgin nature smiled" (vii, 272). When Ahrimanes assumed his sway, however, "he brought with him into the world every species of moral and physical evil" (vii, 428). To his evil yoke he subordinated not only human nature, but terrestrial nature as well, "and signalized his dominion by storms and earthquakes and volcanoes" (vii, 429). Indeed, under the Destroyer, "this mundane ball", as it is called (vii, 277), has been reduced from Edenic felicity to a calamity-ridden wreck of its former self. Peacock could have found his idea for this anywhere--he uses a pertinent quotation from Lucretius as the epigraph to Canto II--but it happens he probably had here a fairly specific source.

In the absence of any direct reference to Thomas Burnet's Sacred Theory of the Earth in Peacock's writings, it is difficult to prove that Peacock knew this work firsthand. If he did not, then he surely knew of it. The Sacred Theory had a pervasive influence throughout the eighteenth century. For Burnet's controversial theory of mountain-formation alone, the work is frequently cited in that century's copious topographical literature.<sup>9</sup> It is possible that Peacock could have come across any number of references to Burnet in the course of his ordinary reading.<sup>10</sup> In any case, he must surely have heard Burnet's theories spoken of by his Bracknell acquaintance, J. F. Newton. In The Return to Nature, Newton quotes a passage taken from

"the ingenious author of the 'Theory of the Earth'" in which Burnet points out the physical inferiority of modern man as compared to the antediluvians.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, this inferiority both Burnet and Newton ascribe to the consumption of animal food. Burnet's antediluvians, significantly, "did not feed upon animal flesh, but only upon fruit and herbs,"<sup>12</sup> and of course Newton's pamphlet is a defence of the vegetable regimen. Newton's emphasis differs from Burnet's in that he is almost exclusively interested in moral and physical deterioration in the human sphere, whereas the most remarkable aspects of the Sacred Theory concern the geological state of the earth. Even so, Burnet's influence is unmistakable in a passage like the following from Newton's pamphlet: "We can scarcely look around us without being struck by the proofs of violence and convulsion which prevailed throughout this our ruined planet at the great catastrophe of which the fable of Phaeton was intended to perpetuate the memory."<sup>13</sup> In even Newton's strictures on the degenerate physical state of modern man, there is some trace of Burnet's ruined post-diluvian world--"It is not man we have before us, but the wreck of man."<sup>14</sup>

The "mundane ball" over which Ahrimanes holds sway in Peacock's poem, then, may be constructed partially from the materials of Burnet's apocalyptic cosmography, if only at second-hand through Newton. That perhaps the influence

was a direct one could be argued on the grounds that what Peacock undoubtedly heard of Burnet's ideas from Newton might well have prompted him to read the Sacred Theory for himself, if he had not, that is, already. Burnet in fact gives an account of the Zoroastrian mythology in this work, and, anticipating the syncretic methods of the aforementioned Bryant and the speculative mythologists of the eighteenth century, relates it to other religious systems. His treatment of the Deluge probably influenced the mythologists as well. Thus the Sacred Theory was very much relevant to the subject matter of "Ahrimanes." There is, in any case, ample evidence of the Burnet-Newton influence in Headlong Hall.<sup>15</sup>

Newton's imprint on Headlong Hall has been remarked often and is most strongly impressed on the character of Mr. Escot who, at least in theory, advocates the vegetable regimen. Some trace of the Reverend Burnet and his herbivorous antediluvians is perhaps faintly discernible in a fellow Anglican churchman, Dr. Gaster, who observes in Chapter V that "milk and honey was the pure food of the antediluvian patriarchs" (i, 34). Significantly, the free-thinking Mr. Escot agrees with Gaster on this point. However, where Gaster argues on the authority of Moses, Escot, while not dissenting with "that most enlightened astronomer and profound cosmogonist" (i, 40) inclines to a more rationalistic view of the Genesis account. Like

Burnet, in fact, whose career in the church was damaged by his theories, he is "too often apt to lose sight of the doctrines of that great fountain of theological and geological philosophy" (i, 40). The unlikely union of theology and geology itself suggests Burnet's "Christian geology,"<sup>16</sup> and introduces an important aspect of the landscape controversy in Headlong Hall.

Mr. Escot would certainly have seen in the "avalanches, torrents, rocks, & thunders," Shelley described in his letter from Switzerland, "the proofs and symbols of his [Ahrimanes's] reign."<sup>17</sup> He would also have seen "a world lying in its rubbish,"<sup>18</sup> as Burnet did nearly one hundred and fifty years earlier on first viewing the Alps. In Chapter VII, during a walk through the mountainous Vale of Llanberris, Escot theorizes about a "tremendous convulsion" in the past which destroyed "the perpendicularity of the poles" (i, 72). The result of this universal cataclysm is amply evident to his "philosophical eye" in the scene before him, with its "vast fragments of stone" and "perpendicular rocks, broken into the wildest forms of fantastic magnificence" (i, 72). The optimist Foster argues against Escot's gloomy belief that this fallen condition is permanent and predicts a future "precession of the equinoxes" which will bring about a vast amelioration of the earth's physical state and coincide with an equal improvement in human nature (i, 72-73). Foster appears to echo almost

verbatim here a passage from the notes to Queen Mab,<sup>19</sup> but in fact both Peacock and Shelley are indebted to a passage in The Return to Nature.<sup>20</sup> As well, the "tremendous convulsion" predicated by Escot recalls "the proofs of violence and convulsion" which Newton similarly speaks of in his pamphlet. Newton in turn, however, looks back to Burnet, as does, there is reason to believe, Peacock also.

As a result of what he saw during his tour of the Alps, Burnet, like Escot, postulated "some universal concussion or dislocation, in the nature of a general ruin," which shattered the once perfectly smooth and geometrically regular sphere of the original Paradise.<sup>21</sup> This terrestrial havoc he attributed to the great Deluge which, in addition to destroying the perpendicularity of the earth's axis,<sup>22</sup> forced upwards the subterranean waters, thus shattering the earth's crust and causing what we call mountains but which are really "the highest tops of the fragments of the ruined earth."<sup>23</sup> Escot's echo of this latter phrase of Burnet's, in fact, "confracti mundi rudera" ("Fragments of a demolished world," i, 72), suggests that Peacock might have known the original Latin version of the Sacred Theory.<sup>24</sup> In any case, there are several other instances of Burnet's possible influence in Headlong Hall. Escot contemplates "this terrestrial theatre of universal deterioration" (i, 26), evoking the metaphor frequently used by Burnet of the world

as an "apocalyptic theatre."<sup>25</sup> Jenkison makes a brief reference to a terrestrial "calamity" at the end of Chapter VII (i, 82). The "impetuous cataract" described pouring from the points of the embankment at Tremedoc (Chapter VII) may recall Burnet's analogy of bursting "floodgates" for the "violent and impetuous" inundation wrought by the Deluge.<sup>26</sup> One intriguing little motif which runs right through the novel is that of the mundane egg. Burnet uses this ancient metaphor in the Sacred Theory when he compares the cracking of the earth's vault by the Deluge to the cracking of the mundane egg.<sup>27</sup> It is tempting to see evidence of Burnet's ruined world in "the supernal fragments of an egg" (i, 17) which Dr. Gaster cracks amidst a heated breakfast debate in Chapter III concerning the progress of mankind.

Both Newton and Escot would undoubtedly have found Burnet's reverence for the "primitive integrity and soundness"<sup>28</sup> of the original Paradise and its inhabitants congenial to their own views. It should also be noted, however, that more than merely a monument to paradise lost, the Sacred Theory is also a "prognostication of things to come."<sup>29</sup> The optimist Foster represents as much the other side of the coin, as Burnet presents it in his work, as he represents the utopian schemes of Godwin and Condorcet. For, in its latter half, the Sacred Theory heralds the coming millennium when the earth "will become such an earth and of such a



form, as the first paradisaical earth was."<sup>30</sup> The picture drawn by Foster in Chapter VII of man's future perfection is clearly indebted to Burnet's antediluvian paradise with its "perpetual equinox" and its instauration at the millennium. Moreover, there are still vestiges of the former ideal age in the "antediluvian family of Headlong Ap-Rhaiader" (i, 119) who, according to the genealogy in Chapter I, were preserved from the Deluge on the summit of Mount Snowdon (i, 6). They, like the vast Cambrian landscape of their ancient seat, are the vestiges of this wreck of Eden.

### III

Also lurking in Headlong Hall's dim prehistory are the speculative mythologists of the eighteenth century, notably Jacob Bryant whose Ancient Mythology Peacock frequently cites in his notes to "Ahrimanes," along with several other authors mentioned above such as Hyde and Dupuis. What these sources have in common is a euhemeristic or rationalistic approach to mythology, by which particular myths are resolved into some general historical or natural fact.<sup>31</sup> "Ahrimanes" itself represents a sort of inversion of the euhemeristic method, for in it Peacock is attempting to present certain pressing concerns of his age under the cover of mythology. He presents the Zoroastrian scheme in his poem, not as a mere allegory, but in a

light in which his various euhemerist sources would undoubtedly have seen it--as a myth of progress. Since the great histories of civil society written in eighteenth-century Scotland, and the related works of such figures as Turgot and Rousseau, the notion of man's perfectibility, and its corollary, the idea of progress, had been a subject of vigorous debate, in the pages of Condorcet, Godwin, Malthus and many others. Even the speculative mythologies of Bryant, Hyde, Dupuis and others were not immune to the influence of these ideas. Indeed, the tracing of the various myths of progress and their meanings by these three writers inspired Peacock's own treatment of the subject in "Ahrimanes," and, further, can be found behind even the unexpected comic turn this subject takes in Headlong Hall.

In "Ahrimanes," Zoroaster's opposing powers of good and evil, light and darkness, become much more complex personifications of progress and declension, primal simplicity and modern corruption. Oromazes is associated with at once a lost golden age and the promise of one to come, and thus has both primitivistic and progressivist connotations. Similarly, Ahrimanes, the Destroyer, leads the powers of darkness, yet he is also a bringer of fire, a dark Prometheus to Oromazes's light one. The poem, then, is clearly more than the relatively straightforward adaptation of Zoroastrian mythology which it has been taken to be,<sup>32</sup>

for like Shelley's Laon and Cythna, it is meant to comprehend some of the contradictions and ambiguities inherent in the progressivist temper of the age, although not in quite so explicitly political terms as Shelley's poem.

We have seen already how Peacock adapted "Ahrimanes"'s broad mythical scheme to the general dialectical pattern of Headlong Hall in which progress opposes primitivism, optimism opposes pessimism and so on. The euhemerist influence in Headlong Hall is present in another, more specific, and as far as I know, hitherto unnoticed connection as well. The family of Ap-Headlong, we learn in Chapter I, has a long and venerable lineage, at least as long as any other of the "multi-ramified" Cambrian families of Wales:

They claim, indeed, by one account, superior antiquity to all of them, and even to Cadwallader himself; a tradition having been handed down in Headlong Hall for some few thousand years, that the founder of the family was preserved in the deluge on the summit of Snowdon, and took the name of Rhaiader, which signifies a waterfall, in consequence of his having accompanied the water in its descent or diminution, till he found himself comfortably seated on the rocks of Llanberris (i, 6).

The obvious proto-type for the Headlongs' ancestor is mentioned later in the novel in Chapter VI, and is, of course, Noah, "who moored his ark on the summit of Ararat" (i, 33).

Noah and a host of other mythical figures, including Prometheus and Deucalion, were syncretically resolved by Bryant and others of the speculative mythologists into a

single historical figure called simply the Patriarch. This personage was the chief survivor of the great Deluge, through whom the earth was repopulated. Thus he "is... looked upon as the first born of mankind: and both his antediluvian and postdiluvian states are commemorated."<sup>33</sup> Significantly, the "antediluvian family of Headlong Ap-Rhaiader" can trace its lineage to such a figure, and annually celebrates its antiquity at a grand fête (Chapters XI-XIII). It is probable that Peacock had an intermediate source for this particular account, although he undoubtedly knew Bryant's treatment of the myth. Indeed, in The Mythology and Rites of the British Druids (1809), cited by Peacock in the notes to his Genius of the Thames, Edward Davies states his debt to Bryant's "master-key to the mythologies of the ancient world"<sup>34</sup>-- namely, Bryant's notion of a universal flood which destroyed an obscure antediluvian civilization whose memory has been preserved among the world's different mythologies. Davies's contribution to Diluvian scholarship lay in his application of Bryant's syncretic method to Celtic mythology. Thus such legends as the inundation of Gwaelod (which Peacock would later adapt in his Misfortunes of Elphin, 1829) are interpreted by Davies as local Welsh variants of a universal flood myth. Like Bryant, he traces postdiluvian man to a single "magnanimous and amiable patriarch," who along with a small band of survivors seems to have escaped the

flood waters atop the summit of Mount Snowdon. The parallel with Squire Headlong's great progenitor is obvious, and just as the name of Headlong is derived from Rhaiader's "descent" with the flood waters down the side of Snowdon, so the place where Davies's Welsh Patriarch weathered the Deluge "was distinguished by a name, which implied a descent, or going forth:"<sup>35</sup>

The landing of those who escaped from this drowned country, upon the mountain of Snowdon, is like the landing of Deucalion upon Mount Parnassus. It is not history, but mythology. The district of Snowdon, from the remotest period of British mythology, was famous for its Arkite memorials. Here was the city of Emrys, or the ambrosial city--this was also called the city of Pharaon, or, the higher powers; that is, the Baalim, or Arkite patriarchs. (36)

Just as the Headlong family annually honours its worthy progenitor, so the Druids, according to Davies, regularly commemorated the Deluge and the preservation of mankind.

To the progressively-minded eighteenth-century Euhemerists mythical heroes such as Noah and Prometheus reflected the ideal types of the age, introducing the useful arts to mankind, distributing justice and formulating laws<sup>37</sup>--in short, personifying progress. Bryant's Patriarch, for example, "first collected men together, and formed them into petty communities."<sup>38</sup> Davies, as much as Bryant and others of the Euhemerists, is interested in drawing from his material a myth of progress, and so his version of the Patriarch is traditionally regarded by the Welsh "as the great founder of their sacred and civil institutions."<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, an unmistakably progressivist temper is discernible generally among the Welsh antiquarians, who include, besides Davies, Edward Williams and William Owen Pughe-- both of whom Peacock probably consulted for The Misfortunes of Elphin. Indeed, an earlier work of Davies, Celtic Researches (1804), is virtually an antiquarian survey of the progress of Celtic civil society, and it is interesting to speculate whether a discussion of "the progress of naval architecture," carried on by Mr. Escot and Mr. Foster at one point in Headlong Hall (i, 33), is indebted to one such discussion in Celtic Researches.<sup>40</sup> In any case, Welsh antiquarianism and euhemerist mythology provide the immediate background to Headlong Hall's discussion of progress. They in fact contribute to a setting which, as I will show, is more intimately associated with the subject matter of that novel than has perhaps been allowed by critics.<sup>41</sup>

#### IV

Though ameliorist and deteriorationalist respectively, Foster and Escot argue from an identical premise. If Foster posits a progressive and infinite improvement in man and the natural world, Escot posits an equally progressive and infinite deterioration in these spheres. For Foster things "may, and therefore will, be changed for the better," where for Escot "every change is for the worst" (i, 103), but

it is significant that neither of them doubts the inevitability of some kind of change. Indeed, even the optimistic Foster can go so far as to say that things "will necessarily become retrograde in ceasing to be progressive" (i, 103). In this common premise, Foster and Escot have their roots in the previous century. The static conception of the universe which had begun to break down by the end of the seventeenth century was laid to rest finally by the scientific and philosophical inquiry carried out in the eighteenth century. Thus even in the views of two late eighteenth-century thinkers as disparate, indeed as unalterably opposed, as William Godwin and Thomas Malthus, the conviction of a uniform progress in the universe was inescapable. The only questions concerned the nature of this progress and whether it was for better or for worse. This, in a variety of ways, is the form the question takes in Headlong Hall.

We have seen how in "Ahrimanes" this question is presented on an abstract, mythical plane, and how it is translated into immediate fictional terms in Headlong Hall, while still having reference to this broad, rather eccentric historical-mythic context. In order to better understand the direction taken by Headlong Hall, however, it will be necessary to examine closely some of the more main-stream currents of opinion surrounding the idea of progress in Peacock's age. Marilyn Butler has identified Foster's and

Escot's debate with the public debate carried out in the 1790's between Godwin and Malthus.<sup>42</sup> In Political Justice (1793) and The Enquirer (1797), Godwin had advanced views favouring the possibility of future human perfection, and Malthus refuted Godwin's arguments in his Essay on the Principle of Population (1798). I have nothing here to add to Butler's consideration of the matter, except to reemphasize that what Godwin and Malthus were arguing was not whether progress was possible or not, but whether it was for better or worse. This, in any case, is how the question presents itself in another debate which was carried on through several issues of the Edinburgh Magazine in 1801-02. Coming right on the heels of Godwin versus Malthus, this debate takes many of its features from the more famous one. However, it simplifies and often distorts the positions of Godwin and Malthus, and marks that point where seriously held opinion is easily translated into terms of comedy.

The debate was initiated in the April issue of 1801 in a feature entitled "Candle-Light Sketches." An anonymous correspondent, A. M., contributed a letter in which he argued the inevitability of eventual human perfection. Though he insists here that his opinion is not "enthusiastic rapture" but "a rational conjecture, sanctioned by probability," he speaks in the same rosy millennial terms as Foster: "Ignorance will be banished from the earth--



reason will universally prevail, and every man will be a philosopher."<sup>43</sup> A reply to this letter by one Scoto-Britannus attacks two main premises set out by A. M.--"the infinite perfectibility of the human mind," and its apparent corollary, that philosophy and science, "like a falling stone, will advance with an accelerated velocity."<sup>44</sup> Scoto-Britannus, significantly, does not deny man's progressive tendencies--"which," he says, "no man in his senses can possibly deny"--although he questions whether progress can be "infinite."<sup>45</sup> Nor, unlike Escot, does he believe "that society has a necessary, retrograde, tendency towards vice and decay."<sup>46</sup> However, he doubts the logic behind any assertion of a uniform and ever accelerating advance forward by man, and ends up, finally, adumbrating a cyclical view of history with "alternate seasons of ignorance and illumination"<sup>47</sup> (similar perhaps to the Zoroastrian scheme). In his several articles of reply, A. M., now calling himself Urbanus, professes himself chilled by "the genius of destruction" present in the views of Scoto-Britannus,<sup>48</sup> and reaffirms his own sanguine opinion of man's "infinite perfectibility." As the controversy progresses, several new voices enter the foray, R., D. and J. E., all generally taking one or the other side, but further complicating the matter by raising new issues. It is significant that the debate ended, in August of 1802, in much the same condition of stasis as Headlong Hall

appears to, with the correspondent J. E. proposing, like Mr. Jenkison the statu-quo-ite, that mankind remain "for ever stationary."<sup>49</sup>

Appearing in an established periodical, this debate may quite possibly have been known by Peacock, who was an indefatigable reader of periodical literature, despite his avowed contempt for it. Indeed, the controversy depicted in Headlong Hall coincides with the Edinburgh Magazine forum on a number of points,<sup>50</sup> the most significant of which is the view that man's faculty of improvement is his main distinguishing feature. In the opening paragraph of his first article, J. E. states: "Man is chiefly distinguished from the other animals by the extent and versatility of his genius. No limits can be set to his improvements, and his exertions are indefinitely varied; whilst the inferior animals, with undeviating certainty, in a short time reach the highest perfection of their nature."<sup>51</sup> A preoccupation with finding man's classification in the animal kingdom runs through Headlong Hall. In Chapter II, it is attempted on the basis of man's eating habits: whether he can be classified as a frugivorous, carnivorous or omnivorous animal (i, 19-20). Plato's ironic definition of man as a "featherless biped" constitutes almost a motif in the novel. The matter receives its fullest treatment, however, in a lecture delivered by the phrenologist Mr. Cranium in Chapter XII.

Cranium begins his dissertation by pointing out the obstacle in classifying man: "Physiologists have been much puzzled to account for the varieties of moral character in man, as well as for the remarkable similarity of habit and disposition in all the individual animals of every other respective species" (i, 111). Where each of the other species has some chief distinguishing faculty, man has "few distinct and characteristic marks which hold true of all his species" (i, 111). All that can be safely predicated of him is that he is "a bundle or compound of faculties of other animals" (i, 112). These remarks serve, finally, as a preamble to a discourse on the hobby horse which chiefly distinguishes Cranium from the other eccentric creatures of Peacock's fiction, namely, phrenology. But it also recalls the general tenor of inquiries into man's progressive nature.

The bewildering "compound of faculties" which, according to Cranium, has hindered man's classification, is what J. E., we recall, identifies in man as "the versatility of his genius." Lord Monboddo, that crotchety eighteenth-century evolutionist and favourite author of Peacock's, similarly finds that "man is an animal as various in his composition, as in his progress from his natural state to civility."<sup>52</sup> Due to this innate versatility man's nature is "susceptible of greater change than the nature of any other animal known."<sup>53</sup> What Monboddo

refers to here, to use his own century's term for it, is "perfectibility." Although probably coined by Turgot, the term "perfectibility" was given currency by Rousseau, and from thence went on to become the catchword of such apostles of progress as Condorcet and Godwin.<sup>54</sup> Not surprisingly, then, the concept had widely diverging implications depending on who used it. For Godwin "intellect has a perpetual tendency to proceed," and this is for the best.<sup>55</sup> Rousseau, although he distinguishes man from the brute by "the faculty of self-improvement," believes that it is man's perfectibility which will finally cause man to lose all he has gained by it and fall lower than a brute.<sup>56</sup>

A similar ambivalence about man's innately progressive nature informs Headlong Hall. The widely ranging accomplishments of what Monboddo praised as "this most varied animal Man"<sup>57</sup> are signs to Foster of "the perfectibility of the species" (i, 16). While Escot seems at times to deny altogether the notion of perfectibility, he does so probably by erroneously taking it to mean absolute perfection rather than, as both Rousseau and Godwin define it, simply the tendency to change perpetually, whether for better or worse. In any case, what Escot actually denies is not the fact of certain advances but that they are necessarily for the best. Much preferable for him is the wild man, who "is happy in one spot, and there he remains"

(i, 20-21). Unfortunately, the innate perfectibility of man in even his brute state cannot be denied as even Rousseau would admit. It is ironic that as he inveighs against progress and praises the "natural state" in Headlong Hall's opening chapters, Escot should be advancing forward, with "much facility," in a modern coach (i, 20).

V

In one of his letters to the Edinburgh Magazine, Urbanus describes human perfectibility in terms both sanguine and foreboding: "No human force can refrain its energies. No barrier can stop its exertions--No limits can be set to its acquisitions."<sup>58</sup> The character in Headlong Hall who comes closest to exemplifying these qualities is, unlike Foster and Escot, not a philosopher or a moralist. He has none of the eccentric views which distinguish the novel's other characters, is, indeed, in no way remarkable, save in his seeming inability to stay still for even a moment:

In all the thoughts, words, and actions of Squire Headlong, there was a remarkable alacrity of progression, which almost annihilated the interval between conception and execution. He was utterly regardless of obstacles, and seemed to have expunged their very name from his vocabulary. His designs were never nipped in their infancy by the contemplation of those trivial difficulties which often turn away the current of enterprise; and, though the rapidity of his movements was sometimes arrested by a more formidable barrier, either naturally existing in the pursuit he had undertaken or created by his own impetuosity he seldom failed to succeed either in knocking it down or cutting his way through it (i, 83).

Squire Headlong, significantly, is at once the descendant of an ancient and venerable family, and a creditable specimen of man in his polished state. Thus if he can trace his lineage back to Bryant's Patriarch, he can also say with all the complacency of the civilized man, "I happen to be more enlightened than any of my ancestors were" (i, 139). But in fact he comes by his advanced notions honestly, for, as their genealogy indicates, the Headlongs seem traditionally to have been a progressive group. Even their name, the epithet of torrent or waterfall (i, 7), suggests an innately progressive, indeed precipitate, nature, as does a list (itself rather like a torrent) given in Chapter XI of some of them--Headlong Ap-Headlong Ap-Breakneck Ap Headlong Ap Cataract Ap-Pistylle Ap-Rhaiader Ap-Headlong, Headlong Ap-Torrent and Headlong Ap-Hurricane (i, 106-06). The present squire is no exception. His very nature seems informed with the "headlong zeal" against which the non-revolutionary Godwin warned in Political Justice.<sup>59</sup> A deep drinker and a hearty eater of meat, he is also a tireless and, we will see, often ill-advised, innovator, who confirms preeminently The Return to Nature's primitivistic thesis--that "many a headlong passion has been excited by the food and drink which have stimulated the brain through the stomach."<sup>60</sup>

The Squire and his venerable lineage form the background of historical necessity against which Headlong Hall's

action takes place. Virtually personifying, like Bryant's patriarch, the idea of progress, the Headlongs are also, by long and ancient association, closely identified with the vast Cambrian setting of the novel. (Indeed, the present squire, we are told, always "pounced upon his object with the impetus of a mountain cataract," i, 83-4.) Their history, encompassing both the ante- and postdiluvian ages of the world, parallels the tumultuous natural history of their ancient seat. Those same mighty energies with the potential of moving the cataclysmic events envisaged by Escot (and Burnet), and capable, according to Foster (and Burnet again), of some day reinstating the earth's primitive perfection, we will see, similarly move the innately progressive Headlongs and their various schemes.

After Peacock's account in Chapter I of the Headlongs' curious family history, follows, in the next chapter, a description of the hurried preparations being made for the arrival of a select party of guests. The scene serves to set the precipitate, slapstick tenor of the novel:

The rage and impetuosity of the Squire continued fermenting to the highest degree of exasperation, which he signified, from time to time, by converting some newly unpacked article, such as a book, a bottle, a ham, or a fiddle, into a missile against the head of some unfortunate servant who did not seem to move in a ratio of velocity corresponding to the intensity of his master's desires (i, 15).

As the three philosophers, Foster, Escot and Jenkison, at this moment speeding towards Headlong Hall in their coach,

argue about the respective virtues and evils of commercial society, a virtual torrent of packages is pouring into Headlong Hall from all parts of the country in preparation for the festivities--"books, wine, cheese, globes, mathematical instruments, turkeys, telescopes" among them, and all arriving "with infinite rapidity, and in inexhaustible succession" (i, 14). Interestingly, later in the novel, Foster and Escot will discuss the consequences of such a profusion of luxuries in modern society as they view a newly established manufacturing community at Tremadoc. Where for Foster the scene demonstrates the positive gains made through the manufacturing system (in much the same way the Thames had for Peacock in The Genius of the Thames)--"employment and existence thus given to innumerable families, and the multiplied comforts and conveniences of life diffused over the whole community" (i, 77)--for Escot it represents only the increase of "unnatural wants" and leads only to "selfish and ruinous profusion" (i, 77). Elsewhere in the novel, luxury manifests itself, for better or worse, in a number of forms. Indeed, the squire's guests--novelists, phrenologists, metaphysicians, "scientific" musicians, landscapers, all frequently shown pursuing the numerous distractions provided at Headlong Hall--are both the purveyors and consumers of luxury in this society.

More broadly, the profusion of things exhaustively catalogued during this scene of confused preparation at



Headlong Hall, and the "infinite rapidity" of their arrival, parallel the picture of accelerating and compounding progress (or regress, depending on the point of view) which forms the general background of the novel. Certainly Escot would perceive in this social context (as he does in similar scenes) the same inexorable torrent of moral and physical evil he finds evidence of in the natural world--in the cataracts and mountains seen on the way to Tremedoc, for example (i, 72). Such parallels demonstrate the balance effected in the novel between, on the one hand, the inquiry into progress conducted in the eminently social country-house setting of Peacock's comedy, and, on the other, the same question posed amidst the vast elemental expanses of Wales, suggested, I think, by "Ahrimanes"'s similar treatment of the subject. The link between both these levels in Headlong Hall is landscape gardening, for "progress" and landscape are very closely related in this novel, whether in the form of Burnet's ruined fragmented world or the tamer variety found in the red-books of Humphrey Repton. Indeed, a farcical history of civil society, outlined by one Marmaduke Milestone in Chapter IV, clearly indicates the particular form which Headlong Hall's satire of human perfectibility will take:

One age, sir, has brought to light the treasures of ancient learning; a second has penetrated into the depths of metaphysics; a third has brought to perfection the science of astronomy; but it was reserved for the exclusive genius of the present times to invent the noble

art of picturesque gardening, which has given, as it were, a new tint to the complexion of nature, and a new outline to the physiognomy of the universe (i, 30).

It is well-known that Marmaduke Milestone is a caricature of Repton, or rather, of certain of Repton's theories on landscape design. During the 1790's, Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price had published a number of works in which they attacked the very formalistic eighteenth-century aesthetic of the late "Capability" Brown, of whose school of landscaping Repton was now the foremost practitioner. In his didactic poem The Landscape (1794), Knight, who preferred a more natural approach to landscape, satirized the regular, polished aspect of the typical Repton prospect, "one dull vapid smooth and tranquil scene."<sup>61</sup> According to Price, excessive deformity, as in even a quarry or a gravel pit, was full of picturesque possibilities, and preferable to the clipped and shaved results of Repton's "improvements."<sup>62</sup> Butler sees in the landscape controversy a predominantly political significance. Price, she suggests, is a Tory of Burke's type, defending the existing order against rationalizing modern innovators like Repton, while Knight is more a primitivistic radical (of Cobbett's type?) closer to Peacock's own sympathies.<sup>63</sup> My view is that the novel's treatment of the controversy has a wider significance, encompassing the historical and philosophical questions about man's perfectibility and the idea of progress earlier initiated in the fragmentary "Ahrimanes."

In a short farce entitled "The Three Doctors," written around 1810, Peacock presented a number of ideas and characters which he would later develop in Headlong Hall. Among them is Marmaduke Milestone, who has the following to say about one of the retainers of a certain Squire Hippy and the estate to which he is attached: "That fellow's an uncivilized goat--a mountain-savage--a wild man of the woods. Wants shaving and polishing. As much in need of improvement as the place he inhabits. Great capabilities here" (vii, 404). It is not clear whether Milestone perceives these "great capabilities" in the man or the grounds. It could easily be in both, for in an eighteenth-or early nineteenth-century context, "capabilities" is a very pregnant term. If Repton, or his famous mentor, "Capability" Brown, could see infinite "capabilities" in a rude unpolished setting, so also Lord Monboddo could be confident of similar "capabilities" in man in even his brute or infant state--capabilities, "as it were, folded up, till time and opportunity display them, and bring them into exertion."<sup>64</sup> The term, then, connotes a potential for progress, an innate faculty evident, according to Mr. Cranium, in even the bumps and protuberances of a man's skull--in a word, perfectibility. Upon his arrival at Headlong Hall, Marmaduke Milestone also sees "great capabilities in the scenery," but, as is the case with both the grounds and servants of Squire Hippy, it all wants "polish-

ing" (i, 25).

Milestone's "improvements" will be carried out with the aim of "polishing and trimming the rocks of Llanberris" (i, 23). Indeed, the rocks will be blown up, the trees be cut down, the entire wilderness vanish like mist, and a great smooth and regular "bowling green" rise upon its ruins (i, 30). If Milestone's rhetoric occasionally suggests Genesis, it is in keeping with certain philosophical premises of his art. Christopher Hussey has pointed out that behind eighteenth-century landscaping lay the theoretical ideal of nature as "first created," and that it was the business of the artist to approximate this pristine state as nearly as possible. Hussey adds that "some theorists believed that the world had been created quite as geometrically regular as the gardens of Holland and Versailles."<sup>65</sup> Foremost among these theorists, as Hussey indicates in a note, was Thomas Burnet, whose Sacred Theory posits a perfectly smooth and regular globe prior to the Deluge and to follow the great conflagration which will usher in the millennium. When John Jackson, Pepys's nephew, wrote to his uncle of Lombardy, he said that it was "as even as a bowling-green from one end to t'other; with roads like avenues sett with trees and strait as an arrow for miles together...in a word, with such a concurrence of all that's beautiful and useful in Nature that I could not but fancy it an undisturbed re-

minder of Dr. Burnet's primitive earth."<sup>66</sup> It is the ruin of this paradise which Escot perceives in the "vast fragments of stone" in the Vale of Llanberris and which he parallels with the "ruinous profusion" of modern commercial society. Burnet himself, however, warns that "we are not to be discouraged because we see things at present wrapped up in a confused mass; for, according to the methods of nature and Providence, in that dark womb usually are the seeds and rudiments of an embryo-world."<sup>67</sup> What Burnet is speaking of here is, in more eighteenth-century terminology, "capabilities," for it is due to these "seeds" or "rudiments" in man and the world that the coming millennium shall witness "the rebuilding of the ruins of our nature," and see the original paradise restored.<sup>68</sup>

Confronted with Milestone's system of extensive "clumping and levelling," it is likely that Burnet would have concurred with Mr. Foster (i, 25) in doubting the usefulness of such "improvements." Still, the renovations attempted in Chapter VIII ("The Tower") are aimed at realizing "capabilities," if only in the unlikely form of an eighteenth-century landscaper's concept of perfection. Earlier, in Chapter IV ("The Grounds"), while Milestone has surveyed Squire Headlong's estate to ascertain its "capabilities," Escot, Foster and Jenkison have been engaged in an essentially similar study as they view a lone boatman from the excellent (from a picturesque

point of view) prospect of "a projecting point of rock"-- here, however, the "capabilities" are those of man as evinced by "the progress of naval architecture." In a later chapter preceding "The Tower," Chapter VII, the same three philosophers view first the shattered magnificence of the Vale of Llanberris and then the man-made embankment at Tremedoc and the small manufacturing community of that name nearby. In each case, we recall, Escot sees unmistakeable signs of progress for the worst, and Foster, needless to say, for the best. Their debate, however, is interrupted by a "tremendous explosion" (i, 82), for while they have been arguing the pros and cons of progress, Marmaduke Milestone, at Squire Headlong's characteristically urgent request, has, with the aid of the squire, several of the squire's retainers and a quantity of gunpowder, set about "improving" Headlong Hall's grounds.

What happens in "The Tower" is as much due to the operations of Necessity as that greater terrestrial calamity earlier posited by Escot. In his notes to Queen Mab, Shelley defines Necessity thus:

He who asserts the doctrine of Necessity means that, contemplating the events which compose the moral and material universe, he beholds only an immense and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects, no one of which could occupy any other place than it does occupy, or act in any other way than it does act. The idea of necessity is obtained by our experience of the connection between objects and the uniformity of the operations of nature, the constant conjunction of similar events, and the subsequent influence of one from the other.<sup>69</sup>

If "Ahrimanes" was strongly influenced by this aspect of Shelley's poem,<sup>70</sup> so, I think, was Headlong Hall in its different way. The optimistic colouring which Foster puts on Burnet's notion of "the precession of the equinoxes," for example, has as its basis, to quote Shelley, "a perfect identity between the moral and physical improvement of the human species."<sup>71</sup> Even Escot, in presenting the exactly opposite interpretation of this phenomenon, which, he says, "inundated this globe with that torrent of physical evil, from which the greater torrent of moral evil has issued" (i, 72), is as convinced as Foster of the influence of Necessity (Burnet calls it Providence) in all spheres of action, moral and material. But it is in "The Tower," immediately following this, that the concomitant theories of Necessity and the perfectibility of man receive their dubious illustration.

Directly following Escot's and Foster's speculations on the natural history of the earth, the sequence of events which constitutes this episode is dictated by essentially the same Necessity posited above. The scene's action centers around the excavation of an outcropping of rock on Headlong Hall's grounds with explosives. The project ends in near disaster with Mr. Cranium appearing unexpectedly at a crucial moment and being hurled precipitately into a lake by the force of the blast. A passage describing Squire Headlong's mental processes at the very moment of

the ignition of the train illustrates at once that character's innately precipitate nature (the above cited description of which, significantly, prefaces the episode as a whole, i, 83) and its immediate reference to what happens in the material sphere:

At this critical moment, Mr. Cranium and Mr. Panscope appeared at the top of the tower, which unseeing and unseen, they had ascended on the opposite side to that where the Squire and Mr. Milestone were conducting their operations. Their sudden appearance a little dismayed the Squire, who, however, comforted himself with the reflection, that the tower was perfectly safe, or at least was intended to be so, and that his friends were in no probable danger but of a knock on the head from a flying fragment of stone.

The succession of these thoughts in the mind of the Squire was commensurate in rapidity to the progress of the ignition, which having reached its extremity, the explosion took place, and the shattered rock was hurled into the air in the midst of fire and smoke (i, 87-8).

What the squire has omitted from his considerations, however, but what nevertheless is as innate in the course of things as the explosion which follows the ignition, is the "elastic influence" of fear which sends Mr. Cranium bounding down a slope into a lake where he nearly drowns.

Butler has called "The Tower" a "central symbolic scene" in Headlong Hall, standing as "an emblem of advanced society in all its silliness."<sup>72</sup> Central the scene certainly is, for it is the practical exposition of much that has been discussed in theory only throughout the rest of the novel; and, characterized by Peacock's usual accompaniment of farce and slapstick, it is certainly "silly" in



many respects. Yet, in the cultural-historical context outlined above, the incident surely reflects more than the silly excesses of faddish modern society. In its satiric and farcical way, indeed, the squire's attempted "improvement" to his grounds--the transformation of a "rugged and broken hillside" into a smooth, regular slope covered with "an elegant stratum of turf" (i, 86)--is directed towards restoring something of the pristine state which must have prevailed before the great cataclysm which wrecked the antediluvian paradise and left a world "lying in its rubbish." More important, it is as inevitable as that earlier catastrophe and the Headlongs' precipitate descent from their illustrious Progenitor, as inevitable as progress.

## VI

To Escot's "philosophical eye" the Tower fiasco is no doubt yet another proof of the fatal Promethean impulse in man. Nevertheless, the novel goes inexorably on to a comic resolution. Butler feels that after Chapter VII, the plot-line of which "The Tower" is part seems to drop out of account entirely, and has nothing to do with what follows in the novel's second half.<sup>73</sup> On the contrary, this scene serves to bring together several hitherto distinct strands necessary to the novel's resolution. Just as the catastrophe which overtakes the squire's "improvements" is clearly

meant as a practical exposition of Escot's and Foster's theoretical ruminations earlier, so it also serves to forward a rather neglected (by critics) subplot of the novel--and in a manner entirely relevant, and essential, to Peacock's theme of progress.

Headlong Hall's romantic interest seems at first glance a rather cursory affair. It is easily regarded, along with other such sub-plots in Peacock's novels, as something arbitrarily inserted into the story to ensure a conventional comic resolution. It is certainly conventional enough in form. Mr. Escot, who had formerly been the received lover of the beautiful Cephalis Cranium but was imprudent enough to laugh at a profound phrenological dissertation delivered by her father, is now out of favour with that old gentleman (i, 26). Cranium, consequently, is bent on marrying off his daughter to someone else. Indeed, just before the near fatal explosion at the tower, Cranium and the Coleridgean Mr. Panscope have determined--in the same manner, significantly, of "the heroic age, in which it was deemed superfluous to consult the opinions and the feelings of the lady"--that Miss Cranium should be Panscope's bride (i, 71). None of this, however, is fated to take place. Cranium's machinations are as much subject to Necessity as Squire Headlong's projects are. The sequence of events in "The Tower", which has the effect of thwarting the squire's "improvements" and of nearly killing

Mr. Cranium, also has the effect of eventually foiling the latter's plans for his daughter, by putting him in Escot's debt for his life--for it is Escot who rescues him from drowning.

Escot's heroic action is at least as instrumental in redeeming polished society as "The Tower" fiasco itself is in discrediting it. It is significant that much earlier, during one of his diatribes against civilized man, the "sophisticated, cold-blooded, mechanical, calculating slave of Mammon," Escot illustrates his argument by imagining himself in the place of a drowning man. The unsophisticated man, he claims, would rescue him, whereas the modern philosopher, with his wholly rational view of the incident, would not (i, 30). Like Rousseau, who declares in his Discourse on the Origin of Inequality "that a state of reflection is a state contrary to nature,"<sup>74</sup> Escot praises "the original, unthinking, unscientific, unlogical savage" (i, 36). And yet Escot himself is pre-eminently a creature of reflection. His primitivist views are no less the product of his thinking nature than is the criminal inaction of the modern rationalist of his hypothetical example. Indeed, he has it pointed out to him by Jenkison, in Chapter XIII, that savage man, in order to comprehend and appreciate his state of felicity and his consequently superior moral nature, would have to be transferred "from his wild and original state to a very advanced stage

of intellectual progression" (i, 122). The fallacy to which Escot has fallen prey is not a new one. The ancient Stoics overcame it by recognizing, according to A. O. Lovejoy, that "primitive men are, so to say, Stoics sans le savoir; but the savoir is essential."<sup>75</sup> Lord Monboddo, himself a disciple of Rousseau and at least a nominal primitivist, comes to a similar conclusion:

There cannot be virtue, properly so called, until man is become a rational and political animal; then he shows true courage, very different from the ferocity of the brute or savage, generosity, magnanimous contempt of danger and death; friendship and love of country, with all the other virtues which so much exalt human nature, but which we can as little expect to find in the mere savage as in the brute, or infant of the species.<sup>76</sup>

And it is Escot, the sophisticated and rational creature, who, despite his earlier conjectures to the contrary, performs the eminently benevolent, and necessarily social, act of rescuing the drowning man.

Moreover, he marries that man's daughter. Escot's marriage to Cephalis, and the three other marriages which conclude the novel, have an importance beyond conventional romantic interest. Prior to the multiple marriage ceremony in Chapter XV, Squire Headlong infers from Escot's happiness at the prospect of married life, "that there is an amelioration in the state of the sensitive man" (i, 147). Escot is reluctant to disavow his deteriorationalist bias --although symbolically he appears to have done so by giving up the skull of Cadwallader (to him a reproach to

modern man's puniness) to Cranium for his daughter's hand (i, 147)--but his position has nevertheless been considerably modified, if not weakened, by this point. For the scientific and commercial society which he has censured throughout the novel is also very much a polished civil society. Alongside the abuses for which progress is responsible are distinct social benefits. For example, Headlong Hall's anarchic state of preparation in Chapter II is mitigated by the presence of Caprioletta Headlong, the squire's sister, "beaming like light on Chaos, to arrange disorder and harmonize discord" (i, 22). The analogy of primordial chaos and the ordering power of Eros is apt, for Headlong Hall's society depends very much for its harmony on the feminine influence. Indeed, in Rhododaphne (1818), Peacock credits it with initiating the very earliest forms of civil society:

Love first in social bonds combined  
The scattered tribes of humankind,  
And bade the wild race cease to roam,  
And learn the endearing name of home.  
From Love the sister arts began,  
That charm, adorn, and soften man (i, 77).

Payne Knight, probably the source behind this passage,<sup>77</sup> similarly attributes the social compact to this process:

Fraternal with parental ties connects,  
And, the still growing numbers, still collects;  
Farther and farther spreads its wide embrace,  
In bonds connubial, to each neighbouring race,  
Controls fall discord in its germs innate;  
And, with concentrated interest, builds the state.<sup>78</sup>

In Headlong Hall, following a tempestuous dinner-

debate in Chapter V on the idea of progress, conducted in exclusively male company amidst copious drinking and numerous allusions, through quotation, to the barbarous society of Homeric Greece, an adjournment is urged by Escot and seconded by Foster, "declaring the transition from the bottle to female society to be an indisputable amelioration of the state of the sensitive man" (i, 58). Thus throughout Headlong Hall the ideal of civilization is closely associated with enlightened "female society," which is, moreover, indispensable to the thoroughly civilized spirit of comedy. Thomas Warton, who, we recall, saw comedy and satire as exclusively the products of polished society, attributes "the comic air" in no small part to "female society" which exerts its influence by "giving elegance and variety to life, by enlarging the sphere of conversation, and by multiplying the topics and enriching the stores of wit and humour."<sup>79</sup> The foiling of Mr. Cranium's barbaric marriage plans for his daughter represents a clear victory for the civilized comic spirit, as do, even more conclusively, the multiple marriages which eventually follow in the novel. Besides Escot's love-match with Cephalis, the painter Patrick O'Prism marries a Miss Grazioza Chromatic; Foster, who probably could not give an account of his great-grandfather, marries Miss Caprioletta with her long and venerable lineage; and Squire Headlong himself, to the horror of his maiden aunt,

marries a Saxon, Tenorina Chromatic, to complete a "harmonious octave," which quite clearly goes against the grain of feudal tradition in the ancient house of Ap-Headlong (i, 142). It is all very much a resounding vindication of "civil" society.

What, then, is the novel's final position on the idea of progress? The answer which comes out during Escot's and Jenkison's discussion of modern manners in "The Ball" (Chapter XIII) is that just as indolence is natural to the savage man, and the midnight war-dance of the North-American Indian is justified "on the iron plea of Necessity" for the marshalling of courage and energy (i, 123), so, as a valuable basis for social relations, is ball-room dancing in a polished age (i, 125). Earlier, in Chapter II, Foster cites the example of the "philosophical auricula," which, working itself up into an abomination of the "unnatural ingredients of that rich composition of soil which had brought it to its perfection" would have all the advantages of "natural theory" on its side in its insistence on common earth. However, it would soon discover the practical error of its "retrograde experiment" by its subsequent decline in strength and beauty (i, 19). It would be interesting to know if Foster is echoing here Edward Davies who cannot

grant the assumption, that savage life, is a natural state, or, that extreme depravity, and the ultimate perfection of the human creature, can be one and the same

thing. A natural state is that which affords the best and fairest opportunity, for a display of the discriminative character, of this or that species: and the characteristic of man, is reason, or common sense. The condition, which affords the best and fairest opportunity for the exercise of this endowment, is the natural and perfect state of man. Examine the plant!--it grows in its proper soil, and congenial aspect. There it will be found in its natural state. From that state, it may be equally removed, if pampered in a hotbed, or starved in a cold steril earth. So man departs as widely from his nature, by the path of rudeness and brutality, as by that of luxury and refinement.<sup>80</sup>

But if a return to the savage state, as Escot advocates, is not the answer, there is really not much to support Foster's Godwinian optimism either. The fact is, Peacock's characters have little choice in the matter. Necessity, which has turned awry the attempted "improvements" on the squire's grounds in "The Tower," and is likewise behind the scene of industry and commerce at Tremedoc, alternately censured and praised by Escot and Foster in the chapter preceding, has also brought about the symbolic affirmation of civil society in the novel's quadrupal marriage ceremony. If Mr. Cranium initially refuses to approve his daughter's marriage to Escot on the grounds of a moral obligation to the latter for his rescue--he uses the purely rationalistic argument that we are all "creatures of necessity" and hence no moral significance can be attributed to our actions (i, 144)--Squire Headlong manages to secure Cephalis's hand for Mr. Escot by countering that both "are necessitated to love one another" and



that their marriage, with or without Cranium's assent, is "inherent in the eternal fitness of things" (i, 144-45). Ultimately, if we are to define what is "natural" to man, we must take into account his innately "various" nature, in a word, his perfectibility. For better or worse, wherever this faculty leads is inherent in the fitness of things. "While this active being is in the train of employing his talents, and of operating on the subjects around him," says Adam Ferguson, "all situations are equally natural."<sup>81</sup>

In Adam Smith's four stage scheme of social development--hunting, pasturage, agriculture, and commerce --Headlong Hall falls easily into the last category. It is, we learn in the first chapter, set "in later days, when commercial bagsmen began to scour the country" (i, 6), and thus much of the novel is concerned with evaluating modern commercial society. Not surprisingly, when set against the long perspective of the past--and I think Peacock uses the past in exactly that way in Headlong Hall, as a "perspective" in the manner of landscape design--the modern age does not come off very well. Yet this first novel of Peacock's is hardly a wholesale denunciation of progress, although it is anything but progressivist, in the narrow sense at any rate. There is no doubt that Escot's Natural Man is superior in many respects to modern man, and that if the earth ever returns to its former pristine

antediluvian regularity, it will likely not be through the modern art of picturesque gardening. Nevertheless, there are signs of amelioration in Headlong Hall--in the multiple marriages which close the novel, indeed in the unmistakable aura of civilization which even in the most hectic of situations is never entirely absent. Despite Escot's stubborn persistence in his deteriorationalist views to the very end, there is a strong sense in the novel's concluding pages of the inevitability of such instances of progress for the better. A passage from Volney's Ruins, a work cited in the notes to "Ahrimanes", expresses perfectly the optimism, tempered by experience, which informs Headlong Hall:

By the law of sensibility, man as invincibly tends to render himself happy as the flame to mount, the stone to descend, or the water to find its level. His obstacle is his ignorance, which misleads him in the means, and deceives him in causes and effects. He will enlighten himself by experience, go right by dint of errors, grow wise and good because it is in his interest to be so.<sup>82</sup>

## CHAPTER TWO: MELINCOURT

The question now afloat in the world respecting THINGS AS THEY ARE, is the most interesting that can be presented to the human mind. While one party pleads for reformation and change, the other extols in the warmest terms the existing constitution of society.

William Godwin, Preface to Caleb Williams (1794)

Comparing Melincourt (1817) to the novels which preceded and followed it--Headlong Hall and Nightmare Abbey--Shelley felt that Peacock's second novel had "more of the true spirit, and an object less indefinite."<sup>1</sup> It has generally been assumed that Shelley's partiality to Melincourt was more a result of his approving the novel's political commitment, an element much more in evidence there than in any of Peacock's other novels, than of aesthetic acumen. Further, it is to the influence of Shelley himself that critics have attributed this spirit of engagement. The consensus is largely that Melincourt falls short as a novel in proportion as it fails to render the Shelleyan strain in convincing imaginative terms. In the words of Howard Mills, admittedly one of Peacock's less sympathetic critics, "there is something false and forced about Peacock's attempt at close intellectual sympathy with Shelley the 'enemy to every shape of tyranny and superstitious imposture.'"<sup>2</sup>

By "an object less indefinite" Shelley could have

meant Melincourt's very prominent political satire, and, no less, the equal prominence of Peacock's own views in the novel. His remark that Melincourt had "more of the true spirit" is vaguer. Perhaps it again simply referred to Peacock's having evidently taken up the cause. Another possibility, however, is that by "true spirit" Shelley meant some more quintessential element in Melincourt. The novel involves, after all, a quest, not dissimilar to the one depicted in Alastor (1816). Just as in that latter work Shelley's young poet experiences a vision of ideal beauty which he thereafter attempts to realize, so the two protagonists of Melincourt, Sylvan Forester and Anthelia Melincourt, seek "a visionary model of excellence" (ii, 12). Because this quest is of a highly idealistic nature, a dominant theme in both works is the difficulty, indeed the impossibility in Alastor, of reconciling ideal with real, of realizing visionary excellence in a tangible form. The seeming insubstantiality of the quest's goal in each case is counter-pointed by the "reality" with which the questors must contend, for both quests are necessarily conducted in the world of men, and to be successful must realize the ideal in earthly terms. Less fantastic in its setting and action than Alastor, Melincourt tends often to see this goal in more utilitarian terms of reconciling theory and practice, because, no doubt, of its more direct examination of political and social issues. The two works

differ on one other count. Although in Forester's own estimate "the calculations of probability make the search little more than desperate" (ii, 116), unlike the doomed poet in Alastor, the hero and heroine of Melincourt realize their ideals, in each other. Shelley would not have disapproved, however. The besetting sin of Alastor's protagonist is solipsism; Melincourt, often to its commentators' dismay, urges emphatically the importance of engagement.

## II

Before dealing with Melincourt it will be helpful first to consider a novel which Peacock began and left unfinished around the time of Melincourt's composition in 1816.<sup>3</sup> As Carl Dawson points out, "Calidore" is a satire written in the tradition of Voltaire's L'Ingenu and Goldsmith's Citizen of the World.<sup>4</sup> It concerns a hero named Calidore who hails from a distant country whence, an innocent and an outsider, he has come to comment on the manners and morals of nineteenth-century English society. Among his potential targets are the Church of England, Malthusianism, paper currency, marriage, periodical criticism, the idea of legitimacy and its conservative premise: all concerns of Melincourt as well.

The opening chapters of the fragment are set mainly in "the rapidly improving age" of nineteenth-century

Britain (viii, 303), but in Chapter III we are given some details of Calidore's background. His homeland is "a solitary island, in a sea hitherto unexplored" (viii, 322), where, it seems, Arthur and his knights fled by ship after their fatal battle against Modred. This island, significantly, is inhabited also by the deities of classical mythology, a "treaty of holy alliance" having been worked out between both "the powers of Olympus and those of Fairyland" (viii, 326). The "syncretic," as Carl Dawson terms it,<sup>5</sup> nature of this arrangement is aptly symbolized by the treaty's ratification, which involves the touching of Merlin's wand to the thyrsus of Mercury, and a subsequent feast shared in by "Gods, Nymphs, Genii, Fairies, Knights, and Ladies" (viii, 327). The peculiarly eclectic character of the island has been further compounded by evident intermarriage among its varied inhabitants. (Population is kept in check, interestingly, by allotting only three children to a marriage, an arrangement much favoured by Merlin, who happens to be a Malthusian of strong convictions, viii, 327-28.) Perhaps the most syncretic product of this improbably syncretic society is Calidore himself, for he is the offspring of a woodland nymph and a nineteenth-century English clergyman shipwrecked on the island (who, incidently, has shed his puritanism along with his suit of black for the dress of a Bacchanal, viii, 333). The odd male child on the island

at his coming of age, it falls to Calidore to go abroad and seek a wife, as well, in this case, as a philosopher, at Merlin's insistence, in nineteenth-century Britain. There he meets a free-thinking young lady named Ellen Ap-Nann who is possibly the prototype for the equally heterodox Anthelia Melincourt. It is tempting to speculate whether in the completed novel Calidore would have found both a wife and a philosopher in Ellen, as Mr. Forester most certainly does in Anthelia. Unfortunately, the fragment abruptly ends at the very inception of Calidore's quest.

If an incipient romantic interest between an emancipated young lady of the nineteenth century and a character apparently lifted from The Faerie Queene seems incongruous, it in fact indicates the premise on which "Calidore" was undoubtedly conceived by Peacock. What becomes apparent just as the novel is suspended is the evolution of an intriguing scheme. More than being merely a satiric tale concerning an innocent abroad, "Calidore" seems, as far as it goes, to move towards achieving a sort of mythical and historical synthesis, in which the modern age is not merely set against an ideal past (or pasts) but actually merged with it at points. There is nevertheless a very strong sense here of an ideal past and a degenerate present. The denizens of classical mythology, whom Arthur and his entourage meet upon first landing on the island, fled from intercourse with mortals because

mankind had become depraved. Similar circumstances probably surround Arthur's flight. Merlin's odd bits of intelligence from the outside world, concerning King John's reign, the Puritan revolution, William of Orange's installation and so on (viii, 327-28), certainly seem to convince Arthur of mankind's sorry state. However, in itself the island's eclectic society represents a happy amalgam of the best that has been thought and said in the golden ages of Classical and European civilization. And, although far removed from the world of men, there is every indication that the ideals embodied in this cultural utopia are not forever lost. Indeed, they seem to retain a permanence which transcends the constant flux of history in the outside world. The island and its inhabitants occupy much the same place perhaps as Plato's heaven of ideal forms, far above the mutable aspect of the mortal world, yet existing as the prototype for all that is lasting and valuable there.

Calidore may represent a link between the two levels on which the fragment operates--this synthesis of ideal pasts and a corrupt, but by no means yet irredeemable, present. His probable future wife, Ellen Ap-Nanny, with her liberal opinions (attested to by her reading of Forsyth<sup>6</sup>) and an emancipated manner, which rubs against the stolid conservatism of her clergyman father, clearly represents the possibility of progressive reform in the world



of the present--progressive reform, paradoxically, which looks back to the past for its inspiration. Calidore's proffering of his knightly devotion to Ellen, early in Chapter I, is of course deliberately archaic, and, besides serving as a satiric counter-point to the calculating practices of modern love and marriage, represents both a form and an ideal, not only still possible in the world but perhaps imminent. For Arthur, according to a messianic-sounding pronouncement of Merlin's, must stay on his island refuge only until a "fated hour" when he will return to Britain "and reign glorious and victorious" (viii, 322).

Thus some very interesting thematic and plot possibilities remained suspended when Peacock abandoned work on "Calidore." Some of these possibilities, in altered form, were to be picked up again in Melincourt. It is likely, in fact, that after he had reached a certain point in "Calidore," it occurred to Peacock that the scheme outlined above might be developed along lines at once more satirically pertinent and more genuinely fictional. Melincourt indeed has all the potential satiric targets of "Calidore" and a few more besides. As well, it manages to draw these social and political concerns into its central story interest, an interest which it shares with the earlier fragment-- a singular and highly idealistic romance between its hero and heroine.

## III

It has been frequently said that Calidore's role as the innocent abroad is assumed in Melincourt by the mute Baron Oran Hauton, Mr. Forester's simian ward.<sup>7</sup> But Forester plays this role himself to an extent, as does, on occasion, Anthelia Melincourt. Perhaps Anthelia might be more accurately called a damsel in distress, for the novel's opening chapters find her besieged in her castle by an onslaught of opportunist suitors. Indeed, the arrival, in Chapter II, of one Mrs. Pinmoney and her daughter Miss Danaretta Contantina (Italian for "ready money") seems to signal a fatal intrusion of the modern age into Anthelia's former romantic seclusion. Throughout the rest of the novel, Anthelia will be prey constantly to "interest" and "calculation"--aspects of the modern age with which she is wholly unfamiliar. A stranger to the world of fashion, Anthelia has formed a knowledge of such things as love which is "altogether theoretical" (II, 12), based as it is on her study of chivalric romance. The ideals which she has fostered seem unlikely to be realized in the nineteenth century. Mrs. Pinmoney dismisses them as mere "chivalric whimsies" (i, 24).

Mrs. Pinmoney's not very noble mission in visiting Melincourt Castle is to arrange a "suitable" (to her way of thinking a synonym for "profitable") match for Anthelia. However, she will find that Anthelia's "chivalric whimsies"

are more than proof against her worldly designs. To a gathering of suitors, in a chapter entitled "The Spirit of Chivalry," Anthelia outlines her ideas about love and marriage, stating emphatically that "the spirit of the age of chivalry, manifested in the forms of modern life, would constitute the only character on which she could fix her affections" (ii, 85). The key here is that the chivalric spirit be displayed in the "forms of modern life."

Significantly, none of the suitors present seem to be aware of this, with the possible exception of the poet Feathernest, a caricature of Southey. He explains to Lord Anophel Achthar, a young aristocrat whom he is tutoring, that the spirit of chivalry involves notions of Truth and Liberty, disinterested benevolence, and the subversion of tyranny. Haunted by his political apostasy, however, he delivers his definition in a half-intelligible mutter. Moreover, in the account he gives, his aristocratic charge immediately recognizes "all the ingredients of a rank Jacobin" (ii, 85). Appropriately, there is a suitor based on Sir Walter Scott to vie for Anthelia's hand, Mr. Derrydown, whose notions of chivalry, as might be expected, are replete with archaic usages and folk legends gleaned from antiquarian researches. One other suitor, a Sir Telegraph Paxarett, seems genuinely puzzled as to how to resolve the tilts and tournaments of the middle-ages into the forms of modern life. He settles on

a "four-in-hand-race" as an apt substitute (ii, 87).

If nothing else, the above debate clearly shows us what the "Spirit of Chivalry" is not. Further, it sets out the aim of the suitors' quest: somehow to reconcile this spirit with the forms of modern life. The quest motif in Melincourt has been discussed in detail by Butler, who explains the novel's plot and structure in terms of its "allegorical-romance" form,<sup>8</sup> pointing out that Melincourt has "the same kind of logic as a book of The Faerie Queene."<sup>9</sup> What I am going to suggest is that Peacock derives more than plot conventions from Spenser's poem, that the very satiric premise of Melincourt derives in some part from Spenser.

The germ of Melincourt's quest is undoubtedly in "Calidore." The difference is that, rather than locating the sought-after ideal in an actual geographical location, as he does in the earlier fragment, Peacock relegates it in Melincourt to the less tangible field of imagination and intellect. It is possible, however, that Peacock may have been influenced in both "Calidore" and Melincourt by a passage in The Friend (1809-10). Here Wordsworth describes a youth entering the world and uses the analogy of a fledgling knight at a tourney:

I will compare him...to a newly-invested Knight appearing with his blank unsignalized Shield, upon some day of solemn tournament, at the Court of the Fairie-Queen, as that Sovereignty was conceived to exist by the moral and imaginative genius of our divine Spenser. He does

not himself immediately enter the lists as a combatant, but he looks round him with a beating heart; dazzled by the gorgeous pageantry, the banners, the impresses, the Ladies of overcoming beauty, the Persons of the Knights--now first seen by him, the fame of whose actions is carried by the Traveller, like Merchandize, through the world; and resounded upon the harp of the Minstrel.--But I am not at liberty to make this comparison. If a Youth were to begin his career in such an Assemblage, with such examples to guide and animate, it will be pleaded, there would be no cause for apprehension: he could not falter, he could not be misled. But ours is, notwithstanding its manifold excellences, a degenerate Age: and recreant Knights are among us, far outnumbering the true. A false Gloriana in these days imposes worthless services, which they who perform them, in their blindness, know not to be such; and which are recompensed by rewards as worthless--yet eagerly grasped at, as if they were the immortal guerdon of virtue.<sup>10</sup>

That Peacock knew The Friend is testified by a citation to it in Melincourt (ii, 45). It is known, moreover, that Shelley's circle generally was familiar with this publication.<sup>11</sup> Thus Peacock very probably ran across the above passage; with the sentiments expressed in it he would undoubtedly have sympathized. The single quotation from The Friend cited in Melincourt runs in a similar strain about this "degenerate Age": "We are bad ourselves, because we despair of the goodness of others." More broadly, the situation of the innocent young knight entering the lists of a perilously corrupt world is strikingly similar to Calidore's situation in Peacock's unfinished novel, and occurs in a subtly modified form in Melincourt. In any case, both of these works set out to expose the same falsehood and dangerous moral relativity encountered by

the young knight of Wordsworth's example.

Wordsworth's reference to Spenser in the above passage is fairly general, and there seems little to suggest that Wordsworth has any particular episode from The Faerie Queene in mind. He may simply be contrasting conditions in the England of his day with those in the more ideal court of Faerie. If so, his view of Spenser's poem as a pleasantly archaic piece of medieval escapism is, for the most part, a standard one for the Romantics. The general tone of the passage, however, suggests otherwise. Wordsworth's preoccupation here is with the corruption of the present--this "degenerate Age," of which he draws a rather ominous picture. A "false Gloriana" these days imposes "worthless services" which are performed by men who in their blindness are not even aware of their futility, which suggests an age approaching moral anarchy. It is possible that Wordsworth is echoing here the similarly disturbing tones of disillusionment and cynicism which permeate the final books of Spenser's poem. The "solemn tournament" might then allude to that famous one described in Book V. iii. where the "spousals" of Florimell are celebrated. Throughout this latter part of The Faerie Queene, Spenser is attacking the corruption and speciousness of his own age:

Let none then blame me, if in discipline  
 Of virtue and of ciuill vses lore,  
 I doe not forme them to the common line  
 Of present dayes, which are corrupted sore,  
 But to the antique vse, which was of yore,  
 When good was onley for itselſe deſyred,  
 And all men ſought their owne, and none no more;  
 When Iuſtice was not for moſt meed outhyred,  
 But ſimple Truth did rayne, and was of all admyred.<sup>12</sup>

Spenser's influence is unmistakable in Melincourt, if only because of Peacock's frequent allusions to The Faerie Queene, nearly all of which are from Book V,<sup>13</sup> the most satiric of the poem's books, significantly, and the book most concerned with specific social and political issues. (Indeed, many of Shelley's allusions to The Faerie Queene are from this book, one of them occurring in a letter to Peacock in which Shelley, showing his characteristic sympathy with radical causes, takes the side of Spenser's egalitarian giant as against Artegall's rather Burkean regard for aristocratic privilege and legitimacy.<sup>14</sup>) Although certainly very different as a work from The Faerie Queene, Melincourt, like that poem, is very much concerned with the role of the past in the present. In the case of Spenser's poem, past and present are often confusingly merged. In the latter two books especially, the age of Raleigh and Elizabeth begins to be more and more prominent in the poem, until the mythical age of Faerie gets pushed aside almost entirely and is relegated to the role of a longed-for ideal past, while heroes like Artegall and Calidore must deal with a fallen

and increasingly degenerate present. Consequently, Spenser speaks with almost Juvenalian rancour in the proems of Books V and VI as he inveighs against his and the reader's corrupt age. On the positive side, the ideal age of Faerie still exists, if only in tenuous form now, as it has since Book I, side by side and continually merging with and diverging from the Elizabethan age. Unfortunately, Spenser's poem is unfinished, and, like "Calidore," remains virtually suspended in the fallen present.

Melincourt is set entirely in the present age of nineteenth-century England, although it is nevertheless strongly tintured, perhaps at times even merged, with both past and future. As Spenser does in the proems of Books V and VI, Peacock effects a direct and pointed connection between the reader's fallen present and that of his novel's fictional world. In an aside in Chapter I, he sarcastically admits to the sceptical reader that the idea of "disinterested passion" is perhaps a "supposition too violent for the probabilities of daily experience in this calculating age" (ii, 6). In the same breath, however, that he appears to make this concession to modern scepticism--a scepticism given eloquent form by the likes of Mrs. Pinmoney--Peacock claims his story's right to "that degree of poetical license which is invariably accorded to a tale founded on facts" (ii, 6). What he does, then,



is to request the suspension of disbelief essential to a work of imagination, while at the same time he in effect questions whether such a frame of mind is possible anymore in a calculating, sceptical age. According to Mr. Forester's Malthusian friend, Mr. Fax, and numerous eighteenth-century commentators, the imaginative faculty is potent in early rather than in late stages of society, when there is "a rooted principle of reason and knowledge" (ii, 356), a conviction shared by Peacock, as we have seen, in "The Four Ages of Poetry" and Rhododaphne. The latter work, which laments the passing from the world of magic and poetry, was written around the same time as Melincourt.

But in chiding his readers' incredulity, Peacock is doing more than reflecting on the state of poetry in a rational, scientific age. He is clearly making a moral observation as well, for he questions even the possibility of portraying "disinterested passion" in fiction. Along with poetry and magic has also fled the fragile spirit of idealism. Spenser begins Book V of his poem with an account of Artegall's upbringing and education by Astraea, the goddess of Justice, and the subsequent passing from an increasingly corrupt world of that deity. In Chapter XXV of Melincourt, Mr. Forester similarly alludes to this mythical departure of "primaeval Justice," during, significantly, one of his frequent tirades on the present age's "progressive degeneracy" (ii, 283). If Mrs. Pinmoney

feels that Anthelia Melincourt's admittedly theoretical ideals are "chivalrous whimsies," so, Peacock has intimated, does the modern reader in "this calculating age."

#### IV

The age of the present as it is depicted in Melincourt is a curious amalgam. It has been constructed out of hints from Cobbett, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Burke, Monboddo, Horne Tooke, Malthus, Shelley, Condorcet, and the Edinburgh Review, to name some of Peacock's major sources. In itself this list suggests a variety of positions--from reactionary to radical. Some of the names, like Cobbett's, imply both. Two names such as Coleridge and Malthus seem entirely opposed, judging by what Coleridge has to say about political economists, and about Malthus in particular, in the Lay Sermons. On the other hand, both men expressed views useful to the established powers of England, and each in his different way represented the same interests. Shelley and Coleridge, though they might agree in their dislike of the calculating spirit of the age, would most certainly have differed on whom they held accountable and on what should be done. In the characters of Mr. Forester (based in part on Shelley) and Mr. Moley Mystic (the Coleridge of the Statesman's Manual), Peacock provides the materials for such a confrontation. Surprisingly, the

results are not always as polarized as might be expected. Mr. Fax, the Malthusian, and Forester (who also has more than a little of Lord Monboddo's cranky primitivism in his constitution<sup>15</sup>) co-exist on remarkably harmonious terms. The fact is, that Peacock's object, in all his novels of talk, is not only to oppose apparently conflicting views, as some critics would have it he does exclusively,<sup>16</sup> but often to find the grounds of their reconciliation. Such alliances can be very shaky. Sometimes they are entirely specious. In all of them, however, the aim is to discern what is substantial and what is not, what is valuable and useful, and what, to use a favourite term of Peacock's, is cant.

Perhaps the major attempt at such a synthesis in Melincourt involves the novel's seeming opposition of modern rationalism and chivalric idealism. While Burke and the Tories come to mind immediately as chief spokesmen for the latter position, the lines are not so clearly drawn. Although in Melincourt, Peacock, like Burke, looks back to the middle ages for his ideal, Burke himself is damned, in this novel and elsewhere, as a "pensioned apostate" (ii, 401), and along with his disciples, the Lake poets, relegated to the forces of blind reaction. Interestingly, William Godwin, than whom probably there could be none more opposed in his political convictions to Edmund Burke, observes in his historical novel St. Leon that "the

defeat of Pavia may, perhaps, be considered as having given a deadly wound to the reign of chivalry, and a secure foundation to that of graft, dissimulation, corruption, and commerce."<sup>17</sup> Godwin, along with other radical thinkers of his time, would most certainly have been included by Burke among those "sophisters, economists and calculators" portrayed in the Reflections as signalling the death of chivalry and ushering in a sinister new spirit of the age.<sup>18</sup> But the fact remains that Godwin, utilitarian and reformer that he was, could advocate (on paper at least) dismantling the entire edifice of custom and prejudice held so dear by Burke, and yet encourage the cultivation of, at any rate, certain of the ideals and virtues of a feudal past. In 1812, Shelley, an ardent admirer of Political Justice (1793), wrote to Godwin and confessed:

I yet know little of the chivalric age, the ancient romances in which are depicted the manners of those times never fell my way. I have read Southey's Amadis of Gaul and Palmerin of England but at a time when I was little disposed to philosophize on the manners they describe.--I have also read his Chronical of the Cid. It is written in a simple and impressive style, & surprised me by the extent of accurate reading evidenced by the references. But I read hastily & it did not please me so much as it will on a reperusal seasoned by your authority & opinion.<sup>19</sup>

It is well known that Shelley reluctantly took up the study of history at Godwin's insistence. The reading mentioned above was evidently a part of this program. The results appear to have been mixed. In a letter written the following year to Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Shelley chided

Hogg for a certain "species of pride," saying, "This chivalric pride altho of excellent use in an age of vandalism & brutality is unworthy of the nineteenth century. A more elevated spirit has begun to diffuse itself which without deducting from the warmth of love or the constancy of friendship reconciles all private feelings to public utility, & scarce suffers true Passion & true Reason to continue at war."<sup>20</sup> Although Shelley may appear to reject outright the idea of chivalry here, he in fact rejects only the particular form of chivalry suited to the civil conditions of the middle ages. What he presents as an alternative to Hogg's archaic "chivalric pride" is actually a modern equivalent of chivalry, the form of it most suited to the nineteenth century. Reason perhaps plays a greater role in this modern chivalry, and to the "warmth of love" and "constancy of friendship," which are the basis of chivalry, is added a further obligation to "public utility." But it really amounts to the same thing. What Shelley urges is disinterested devotion, now on a public as well as a personal plane, an "elevated spirit" not so far, after all, from the high idealism which informs the spirit of chivalry. It is possible to conclude that Shelley's reperusal of the "ancient romances" at Godwin's suggestion was, if only in an indirect way, fruitful.

The character in Melincourt who seems to have benefited most by pursuing such a course is Anthelia. Like Falkland

in Caleb Williams, Anthelia is a devotee of the heroic poets of Italy--Tasso and Ariosto.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the library at Melincourt Castle seems to embody the very "genius" of these writers, for it "combines the magnificent simplicity of ancient Greece with the mysterious grandeur of the feudal ages" (ii, 164). At the point at which the novel opens, Anthelia's chief intercourse with the world, apart from some few seasons spent in London, has been carried out through the medium of romance.

Anthelia's chivalric enthusiasms have a curious background, however. Contrary to what might be expected, Anthelia is not a traditionalist in any conventional sense. She is far from sharing the Tory sentiments about birth and privilege which, likewise nurtured by chivalric romance, have made a Burkean Frankenstein of Godwin's Falkland. Apart from their chivalric colouring, her political sentiments are closely in line with those of the early nineteenth-century radicals, who in turn looked back to the eighteenth century (hence the numerous allusions throughout the novel to Voltaire and Rousseau, and the hostility with which they are regarded by Melincourt's Tory faction). Anthelia, indeed, has been raised by a father with unusually advanced opinions about education in general, which he seems to have taken from Emile, and about the education of women in particular, which are indebted to Mary Wollstonecraft and probably also to Condorcet.

The latter's Esquisse d'un Tableau historique des Progrès de l'Esprit humain (1795), which predicts the eventual equality of the sexes, is found open in Anthelia's library in Chapter XXXIII following her abduction. But perhaps the most decisive factor in this character's education, after the chivalric romances, has been the natural surroundings of her Westmorland home.

In a passage very like something from Tintern Abbey<sup>22</sup> we learn that since Anthelia's childhood, "the majestic forms and wild energies of Nature" have "impressed their character on her mind" (ii, 9). Much useful discussion has been devoted to Melincourt's treatment of the matter of the Lake poets,<sup>23</sup> their early devotion to the causes of Liberty and the Rights of Man, and their subsequent falling away from these ideals, an apostacy in the eyes of the younger Romantics. These ideals have lingered on in Melincourt, having been imbibed since infancy amidst the mountains of Westmorland by Anthelia. Indeed, if as Butler has shown, Sylvan Forester, or at least his name, arose from a phrase in a letter of Shelley's from Switzerland,<sup>24</sup> it is equally likely that Peacock took his inspiration for Anthelia in part from Wordsworth's sonnets on Switzerland.

The sonnets were published by Coleridge in The Friend (December 1809), and it seems probable that Peacock first knew them from this source. We know that the

first of these sonnets, "Thoughts of a Briton on the Subjugation of SWITZERLAND," provided the subject for Messrs. Forester's and Fax's discussion in Chapter XXXVII about the validity of associating Liberty and Truth with mountains.<sup>25</sup> It is in the character and role of Anthelia, however, that the Switzerland sonnets have left their strongest imprint. Coleridge prefaces the above cited sonnet by calling it "the happiest comment on the line of Milton--'The mountain Nymph, sweet Liberty,' which would be no inapt motto for the whole collection."<sup>26</sup>

Accordingly, Wordsworth's "Liberty" is a feminine personification, a "high-soul'd Maid" whose customary dwelling is among mountains and torrents. With Switzerland's subjugation, however, Liberty has fled her mountains: "Thou from thine Alpine Holds at length art driven,/ Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee."<sup>27</sup> The circumstances are remarkably similar in Melincourt. Here too Liberty is represented by a "high-soul'd Maid," for Anthelia, "the mountain-enthusiast" (ii, 16), has since childhood been nurtured on her mountainous surroundings, and "the spirit of mountain liberty diffused itself through the whole tenour of her feelings" (ii, 10). Just as Wordsworth's "high-soul'd Maid" is driven by a "Tyrant" from her mountains, perhaps never to return, so Anthelia, shaken by an unsuccessful kidnapping attempt in Chapter XVIII, resolves to leave her mountain home:



The occurrence of the morning, by taking the feeling of safety from her solitary walks, and unhinging her long associations with the freedom and security of her native mountains, gave her an inclination to depart for a time at least from Melincourt Castle (ii, 205).

Later in captivity, after a subsequent and successful abduction, Anthelia passes her imprisonment composing extemporaneous odes to Liberty, "sole nurse of truth and glory" (ii, 442). Ironically, the very group of poets from whom Peacock took his inspiration for Anthelia are associated with the forces of interest and reaction which have ignominiously routed "the spirit of mountain liberty" by imprisoning this character.

Thus the respective influences of the chivalric poets and the political ideals of the Revolution (embodied by the mountains of Westmorland) seem to have gone hand in hand in the formation of Melincourt's radical heroine. Moreover, Anthelia's requirements for a husband have their origin in this curious mixture of romance and radicalism, for the idealistic spirit of the 1790's is closely associated, perhaps synonymous, with the spirit of chivalry in Melincourt. Peacock's satirical treatment of both reactionaries and lapsed radicals depends on this identification of, if not opposed, at least ordinarily unconnected creeds.

V

Despite his advice that Shelley re-peruse the "ancient

romances," Godwin was of course aware of the abuses potential in an ill-considered adoption of the chivalric morality, such as he associated with Burke, for example. "The feudal spirit," he warns in Political Justice, "still survives that reduced the great mass of mankind to the rank of slaves and cattle for the service of a few."<sup>28</sup>

Caleb Williams illustrates the tyrannical imposition of such an archaic prerogative by the deluded Burkean idealist Falkland. Melincourt presents, besides Anthelia's highly idealistic notions of chivalry, other forms of veneration for a feudal past which are much less idealistic and disinterested in their purposes. Certainly Melincourt Castle is not "the great feudal fortress of society" to which, in the tale of Desmond recounted in Chapters XIII and XIV, the honest man despairs of finding an entry (ii, 150). Indeed, a few pages later Anthelia complains of the feudal prerogatives safeguarded by such a society, in this case using Wollstonecraft's feminist reworking of Paine's position and depicting woman as "an intruder on its prescriptive authority, its legitimate and divine right over the dominion of thought and reason" (ii, 166-67). Here, presented from a very specialized viewpoint, is the crux of the problem which Melincourt examines: how far is a veneration for the past consistent with the idea of reform? When does the respect for antiquity become merely a means by which to justify existing abuses, a tool of the tempori-

zers of "things as they are"? Anthelia, feminist of Wollstonecraft's stamp, believer in the ideals of the French Revolution, is nevertheless the votary of chivalry, a disciple of at least certain aspects of the feudal past, indeed in some sense a conservative. Desmond, in Mr. Fax's account, is branded a Jacobin by the representatives of periodical literature whom he meets in London (as Calidore does, incidentally). Yet he and his wife find a temporary refuge from the venality of the age, along with a former lawyer whose practice has failed due to his Bentham-like ambition to "reconcile philanthropy and law" (ii, 145), in a simple agricultural existence along the lines of the early Roman Republic (ii, 146). Desmond's praise of this rural occupation is voiced also by Mr. Forester who has realized such a community on a larger scale on his estate in Chapters XXV and XXVI. Forester too has radical tendencies and his backward-looking reformism owes something to Rousseau's idealizing of the old patriarchal agrarian communities, to Monboddo's praise of the Roman agriculturalists in Ancient Metaphysics (1779-99)<sup>29</sup> as well as his accounts, in that same work, of his own estate (organized on the same principles as Forester's<sup>30</sup>), and also to Cobbett's very singular brand of radical feudalism.

Cobbett, indeed, is a case in point. Sharing with conservatives of Burke's ilk a veneration for the past and

its institutions, and likewise having a strong aversion to the philosophic-radicals, like Bentham and Godwin with their worship of abstract reason, he nevertheless applied, according to W. Osborne, "what were essentially utilitarian standards and did not accept these institutions for their own sake as Burke did."<sup>31</sup> The conservatism of Burke and his followers consisted, essentially, in accepting the present order as something gradually evolved over the centuries and as such fundamentally good and not to be tampered with, which is the view put forward by the arch-Tory Prince Seithynin in The Misfortunes of Elphin (1829). Cobbett, on the other hand, was not inclined to regard existing abuses and prejudices as sacred by virtue of their being natural historical developments from the past. Backward-looking, even reactionary as he was, Cobbett was convinced of the need for immediate reform. This conviction, and an impatience with all apologists, Tory and Whig alike, for "things as they are" he shared with the philosophic-radicals.

The upholders of "prescriptive authority," of "legitimate and divine right," in Melincourt constitute the forces of blind reaction. They represent an extreme and exploitive application of Burke's Toryism. In their hands, Burke's "sublime mysticism"<sup>32</sup> is put to wholly discreditable use, and his organic conception of society made into a grotesque travesty. The established order

in Melincourt is indeed a living organism, as Burke would have it, but it breeds only corruption. Its roots, in Desmond's account, are "the wide-spreading roots of superstition and political imposture" (ii, 131). The creatures it supports include parasitic aristocrats like Lord Anophel Achthar, whose name, deriving from the Greek, means "a useless cumber of the ground,"<sup>33</sup> and his father the Marquis of Agaric ("AGARICUS, in Botany, a genus of the plants of the class Cryptogamia, comprehending the mushroom, and a copious variety of toadstools," ii, 80n.). Others, of the landed gentry, the commercial middle-class and the clergy, are Mr. Lawrence Litigate of Muckwormsby Manor and Mr. Greenmould, Mr. Dross, the Reverend Grovelgrub. This established order comprehends a foundering and specious monetary system and a corrupt and antiquated political system which countenances rotten boroughs and sinecurism, and "estimates conscience and Stilton cheese by the same criterion"--namely, by their rottenness (ii, 138). Mr Forester applies a fiction to it from Norse mythology (taken from the Edda and Northern Antiquities) which is perhaps a satirical construct of the extravagant mythopoetical analogies employed by Tory Romantics like Coleridge:

The ash of Yggdrasil overshadows the world: Ratatosk, the squirrel, sports in the branches: Nidhogger, the serpent, gnaws at the root. The ash of Yggdrasil is the tree of national prosperity: Ratatosk the squirrel is the careless and unreflecting fundholder: Nidhogger

the serpent is POLITICAL CORRUPTION, which will in time consume the root, and spread the branches on the dust. What will then become of the squirrel? (ii, 434).

As well as travesty-ing Burkean organicism, Peacock nips at the heels of "Old Authority," as an Anglican divine in "Calidore" calls it (viii, 316). His main inspiration here is probably Cobbett in Paper Against Gold (1810), and Horne Tooke, whose Diversions of Purley (1787), as well as being a grammar book, is many other things besides, among them an ingenious attack directed at the very roots of conservative orthodoxy--"roots" in both the etymological and philosophical senses. Tooke's specific influence on Melincourt will be discussed at some length in a later section of this thesis (see Appendix). In general terms, however, the rigor of inquiry which distinguishes the Diversions certainly made its impression on Peacock's dialectic of ideologies in Melincourt. One of the several interlocutors in the Diversions questions the authority by which Tooke attacks the previous authorities on grammar, such as James Harris and Dr. Johnson, and suggests that Tooke is merely indulging his own heterodox views: "Are you not against Authority, because Authority is against you? And does not your spleen to Mr. Harris arise principally from his having taken care to fortify his opinions in a manner in which, from your singularity, you cannot?"<sup>34</sup> Tooke's reply reveals both his method and his justification. Harris and the others, he says, "are

my authorities. Their own doubts, their difficulties, their dissatisfactions, their contradictions, their obscurity on all these points are my authorities against them."<sup>35</sup> Tooke describes perfectly here the satiric method of Melincourt. That novel is a tissue of authorities, many towards whom Peacock is sympathetic, but many too against whom his satire is directed. Phrases from sources as diverse as Coleridge's Lay Sermons and The Friend, the Quarterly and Edinburgh reviews and from British Parliament itself are continually quoted and requoted, sometimes directly, other times slyly modified or applied to wholly unexpected subjects and situations. In this way "Old Authority" is effectively turned on its head.

If Tooke provided Peacock with a satiric technique in Melincourt, Cobbett provided him with much of the material upon which to exercise that technique. In addition, Cobbett was as skilful as Tooke when it came to using an authority to refute itself, and his style of polemic, as much as Tooke's, had a strong influence on Peacock's satire. His Paper Against Gold, which Peacock knew,<sup>36</sup> is an energetic indictment of the newly emerging paper credit system. From this work Peacock got a number of hints for his story--for the episode of "The Paper Mill," for example, in Chapter XXX. A sturdy farmer in this episode who fondly recalls "the good old days o' goulden guineas" (ii, 325), clearly echoes Cobbett's own nostalgia for an

older economic order. Cobbett's most penetrating criticism of the paper credit system, however, lies in his exposure of its justification by the powers that be. Cobbett believes that the English people have been duped into regarding paper-credit as an established institution, something with venerable sanction. On the contrary, Cobbett insists, "there is nothing mystical in the words Funds and Stocks," although their value, he implies, is as substantial perhaps as most supernatural apparitions.<sup>37</sup> In Melincourt, paper credit is called "this chimerical symbol of imaginary riches" (ii, 323). It is in keeping with such supernatural associations that the most vocal defender of this system turns out to be a representative of the Church of England, a portly divine named Reverend Peppertoast in the "Paper Mill" episode. This very orthodox churchman devoutly believes "that the system of paper-money is inseparably interwoven with the present order of things" (ii, 321). In any case, the Reverend, unlike his parishioners, who have lost everything to an unreliable countrybank, has his notes from a more venerable and orthodox institution, Threadneedle Street (ii, 320)--namely, the Bank of England. The hint for this ironic association of religious and economic orthodoxy Peacock probably got from Cobbett's account, in Letter I of Paper Against Gold, of the origin and history of the Bank of England. Cobbett prefaces his account by expressing astonishment at the



eneration with which the English populace regard this institution:

Some people suppose, that paper always made a part of the currency, or common money of England. They seem to regard the Bank of England as being as old as the Church of England, at least, and some of them appear to have full as much veneration for it. The truth is, however, that the Bank of England is a mere human institution, arising out of causes having nothing miraculous, or supernatural about them.<sup>38</sup>

It is little wonder that Cobbett should have regarded as "cant" talk of the "Blessed comforts of religion" in a speech by the Secretary of the Treasury, George Rose.<sup>39</sup>

This particular piece of cant Peacock modifies to "the blessed comforts of paper-money" (ii, 327), one of the ironic phrases with which the episode of "The Paper Mill" concludes.

## VI

In Melincourt, the lines appear to be clearly drawn between the rationalists and the anti-rationalists, represented by radicals and Tories respectively. Anthelia, we have seen, is very much a philosophic-radical in her sympathies, as are Mr. Fax and Mr. Forester. Forester, indeed, is an active exponent of rational reform, to the point even of regulating his "domestic arrangements on philosophical principles" (ii, 42). Fax, of course, is a caricature of Malthus, or rather a satirical construct of Malthusian ideas (the Malthus probably of Cobbett's early admiration and of Godwin's at any rate reluctant acceptance

before the "dismal science" came to be identified exclusively with the vested interests of the state). Fax concerns himself with the problems of "political arithmetic" (ii, 204). The bearer, according to Forester, "of the torch of dispassionate truth, that gives more light than warmth" (ii, 73), he is clearly opposed to the irrationalism of Moley Mystic with his "synthetical torch" of transcendental intuition. Fax's rather chilly reason--light without warmth--is what Mystic's proto-type, Coleridge, rejects in specifically those terms in The Friend: "The light of religion is not that of the moon, light without heat; but neither is its warmth that of the stove, warmth without light."<sup>40</sup> It is interesting to note that when Fax and Forester visit Cimmerian Lodge, to Mystic's dismay they favour the light and warmth of the kitchen over the "darkness visible" of that establishment's other rooms.

Just as the group at Mainchance Villa with their reactionary defence of church and state represent one possible form of Burke's Toryism, so Moley Mystic represents another related form. Mystic, like Coleridge, derives his transcendental ideas from the philosophical speculation which was going on in Germany, and which, as Elie Halévy points out, shocked English utilitarians like Bentham and James Mill with "its mystical definition of reason, and its scorn for the discursive processes of abstract under-

standing."<sup>41</sup> Significantly, Burke, whose irrationalism appealed to this particular temper in German thought, had a school of followers in Germany at around this time. Thus it is appropriate that the figure who comes closest to articulating the philosophical principles of Melincourt's reactionaries should be both a Burkean Tory and a Transcendentalist. Indeed, Mystic's invocation of "the Ghost of Feudal Time" (ii, 331) and the hopes of the Mainchance Villa cabal of bringing back the "glorious ignorance of the feudal ages" (ii, 417) are probably indebted to Burke via contemporary European thought. It was due to the distorted influence of Burke, for example, that the doctrine of legitimacy was formulated by Continental reactionaries.<sup>42</sup> Hence Mr. Anyside Antijack's enthusiastic endorsement of "legitimacy, divine right, the Jesuits, the Pope, the Inquisition, and the Virgin-Mary's petticoat" (ii, 415). It was with an acute understanding of this tendency in conservative thought that Horne Tooke said of Samuel Johnson that "he did not indeed acknowledge any RIGHTS of the people; but he was very clear concerning Ghosts and Witches, all the mysteries of divinity, and the sacred, indefeasible, inherent, hereditary RIGHTS of Monarchy."<sup>43</sup>

Moley Mystic's indictment of Fax and Forester as "empirical psychologists" (ii, 335) is meant to echo Coleridge's similar attacks against what he considered the cold-bloodedly hedonistic doctrines of utilitarianism. In a number of

The Friend, Coleridge speaks contemptuously of "moral arithmetic" and its "ledgers of calculating self-love."<sup>44</sup> In The Statesman's Manual, he rigorously criticizes the "prudential reasonings" of Bishop Paley.<sup>45</sup> Despite, however, their aggressive irrationalism, Melincourt's Tories are still remarkably adept reasoners. Burke's mystical justification of "things as they are" seems fine as far as it goes, but as the Reverend Peppertoast informs Fax and Forester, "the present order of things I have made up my mind to stick by precisely as long as it lasts" (ii, 321). The "prudential" Paley makes an appearance in an anecdote of Fax's concerning "a celebrated divine, who turned his theological morality to very excellent account, and died en bonne odeur" (ii, 149-50). But Paley's famous quip, that he could not afford to keep a conscience (quoted by Fax), puts him in the company of Tory apologists like Feathernest-Southey who has been "given a place in exchange for his conscience" (ii, 81), and, in consequence, is in "good odour at court" (ii, 129).

The Tory appeal to the past, to antiquity and hallowed precedent, then, is a sham, for not far below the surface is the very "sense of expediency," as Coleridge calls it, "the cautious balancing of comparative advantage, the constant wakefulness to the Cui bono"<sup>46</sup> that characterizes the hedonistic ethic. In Chapter IX, "The Philosophy of Ballads," Mr. Derrydown demonstrates "the truth of things"

as it is to be found in an ancient ballad. The result is a cynical discourse on "love and prudence" (ii, 94): a justification of "prudential reasoning" on the authority of primitive poetry. Surprisingly, Derrydown even manages to find an authority for Malthus's population theories in this ancient ballad (ii, 94). It seems, then, that only such "reasonings" as lie behind criticism of existing abuses are to be distrusted. The conspiracy at Mainchance Villa to reinstate feudalism and "rebuild the mystic temples of venerable superstition" (ii, 417) is directed solely at maintaining "things as they are" through a specious and exploitive appeal to "things as they were." What finally emerges here is a background of calculating self-interest, not at all the affective anti-rationalism of Burke's Tory Romantics. Mr. Sarcastic, an adept at manipulating and satirizing the Tory vocabulary (in this case taken from the Quarterly Review and Castlereagh), presents a vision of the "mysterious incorporation" celebrated by Burke,<sup>47</sup> which eventually shades off into the crasser arena of political expediency and graft:

The monied interest...is the great point of connexion and sympathy between us: and no circumstances can throw a wet blanket on the ardour of our reciprocal esteem, while the fundamental feature of our mutual interests presents itself to us in so tangible a shape (ii, 242-43).

In the last chapter of Melincourt, Mr. Forester rescues Anthelia from Alga Castle where she has been held a prisoner by Lord Achthar. In doing so he finds that he has

fulfilled Anthelia's requirements for resolving the spirit of chivalry into the forms of modern life. Indeed, having already shown himself to be the disinterested champion of Truth and Liberty, it only remained for him to "emancipate a captive damsel" (ii, 452). Butler remarks that "Peacock's adoption of chivalry, as the ideal quality required in a man by a radical heroine, is characteristically sly and unexpected."<sup>48</sup> Perhaps, however, this element in Melincourt is not merely a sly twist. We have seen how even the radical Godwin, though quite clear on the dangers of the chivalric morality, could endorse some of its virtues nevertheless. Shelley, in his letter to Hogg, while he rejected its barbaric practices, seems also to have endorsed chivalry, to the extent that he advocated a "more elevated spirit," which having superseded the old-fashioned "chivalric pride," still retains its virtues of devotion and constancy, while displaying a rather more utilitarian concern for "the greatest happiness."

The key here is a discriminating regard for the past and its institutions. Melincourt's Tory reactionaries display no such power of discrimination inasmuch as they merely wish to justify current abuses on the authority of old ones. Their appeal to the past is to its ignorance and superstition--an appeal made in the interests of keeping intact the "great feudal fortress of society" and of resisting the spirit of reform. Throughout the novel, the

consequences of such a program are ominously hinted at. Although the French Revolution is mentioned only once (ii, 119), its ghost hovers uneasily over Melincourt's pages alongside "the Ghost of Feudal Times" evoked by Moley Mystic. If reform should ever come, according to Mr. Sarcastic, it will be hailed as one of the "triumphs of reason," but reason, he adds, will have little to do with it in reality (ii, 235). Its catalyst will be "interest" and its form the "re-action of interest" (ii, 236), a vast turning of the tide against the powers that be. The great rainstorm which overcomes the peaceful mountain-valley through which Anthelia wanders in Chapter X, "The Torrent," is, with its suggestions of Necessity, a portent and a warning. The ugly mood of the mob in "The Paper Mill" recalls Cobbett's accounts of the violence occasioned by the failure of country-banks in Paper Against Gold. Similarly, the riot which levels the "ancient and venerable borough of Onevote" (rebuilt, ironically, a few days afterwards) is a clear illustration of the dangers of "re-action." Indeed the term "re-action" itself Mr. Sarcastic might well have gotten specifically from Coleridge, whose caricature, Moley Mystic, in the Cimmerian Lodge episode, hysterically defends feudalism, legitimacy and divine right, and argues the necessity of keeping the general populace in the thrall of ignorance and superstition--all in phrases taken mainly from The Statesman's Manual.

The episode ends with a violent explosion in Mr. Mystic's bedchamber, found to have been caused by gas "condensed into a mass" and ignited by Mr. Mystic's entrance into the room with a lighted taper. Mr. Forester reads into the incident a "warning to the apostles of superstitious chimera and political fraud:"

In condensing in the human mind the vapours of ignorance and delusion, they are only compressing a body of inflammable gas of which the explosion will be fatal in precise proportion to its density (ii, 342).

Forester is here confirming the very fears of Tories like Coleridge and Southey at this time concerning the possibility of violent revolution in England. What makes the incident doubly ironic is the fact that Peacock most certainly got his idea for it from a passage in The Friend:

This re-action of deceit and superstition, with all the trouble and tumult, I would compare to a fire which bursts forth from some stifled and fermenting mass on the first admission of light and air.<sup>49</sup>

Neither Cobbett nor Tooke could have better turned an authority upon itself.

Melincourt's radicals, by contrast, are much more enlightened but also much more genuinely conservative. They are radical in the true sense of the term in that they concern themselves with the spirit, the essence, of the past rather than with its outmoded forms. Their aim is not to raze entirely society as it exists, any more than it is to blindly clutch on to its every archaic feature out of a misguided (or exploitive) regard for past authority.



Rather they demonstrate reforming aims which are at once innovative and renovative, and are thus perhaps more faithful than are their Tory rivals to Burke's conception of the slow and gradual "renovation and procession" of society.<sup>50</sup> Melincourt Castle illustrates palpably this spirit of renovation in its very structure, for "while one half of the edifice was fast improving into a picturesque ruin, the other was as rapidly degenerating, in its interior at least, into a comfortable modern dwelling" (ii, 8-9). Forester's habitation, Redrose Abbey, seems to have undergone a similar process, and, appropriately, one character who views it remarks "something analogous between the state of this building and what he had heard of Melincourt" (ii, 33). Peacock's description of this "state" is surely meant to convey more than a concession to enthusiasts of the picturesque:

The new dwelling-house was so well planned, and fitted in so well between the ancient walls, that very few vestiges of the modern architect were discernible; and it was obvious that the growth of the ivy, and numerous trailing and twining plants, would soon overrun all vestiges of the innovation, and blend the whole exterior into one venerable character of antiquity (ii, 36-37).

It is the owner of Redrose himself, however, who perhaps most nearly approaches realizing this ideal synthesis of the best of past and present. Sylvan Forester combines the knightly virtues of courage and honour with the enlightened social views of a nineteenth-century reformer.

In rescuing Anthelia from Alga Castle he shows himself in the former capacity, and in seeking reform in such areas as slavery and electoral practices he demonstrates his fealty to the "greatest good." It is Forester who eventually bears out Anthelia's belief that it is possible "to find as true a knight-errant in a brown coat in the nineteenth century, as in a suit of golden armour in the days of Charlemagne" (ii, 24). Past and present, then, are reconciled and the spirits of chivalry and liberalism become one. It was, incidentally, "such a rare combination of an enthusiasm almost chivalrous for the liberty and happiness of mankind, with a calm philosophical judgment," which Peacock would praise in 1830 in the real-life reformer Thomas Jefferson (ii, 185).

## VII

The period of Melincourt's composition saw a vacillation between extremes of gloomy despair and enthusiastic hope concerning the future. The French Revolution still loomed large in men's minds. The hysteria and alarmism which at that time surrounded the possibility of violent revolution in England saturates the Mainchance Villa episode. It was also an age of prophets. The shattering events of the Revolution had sparked a remarkable resurgence of interest in prophecy, and the 1790's and the decades following saw the publication of numerous prophetic writings.

Three years before Melincourt's publication, Joanna Southcott had died at the height of her fame. The influence of Richard Brothers was still felt, and there were hosts of other more minor prophets. Not surprisingly, with the appearance of these self-proclaimed seers came the inevitable charges of fraud and mountebankery, the question (most hotly disputed among the prophets themselves) of who were the true prophets, who the false. A similar spirit, expressed, significantly, in much the same terms, informed the political polemics of the time. Richard Price, claimed Burke, "philippizes, and chants his prophetic song;" he makes "delusive, gipsy predictions" and uses "the confused jargon of Babylonian pulpits."<sup>51</sup> Malthus's Principle of Population, itself a prophecy of the most pessimistic kind, was prompted by the enthusiastic prophetic raptures of Condorcet and Godwin:

Mr. Godwin says, 'Nothing can be more unphilosophical than to conclude that, because a certain species of power is beyond the train of our present observation, that it is beyond the limits of the human mind.' I own my ideas of philosophy are in this respect widely different from Mr. Godwin's. The only distinction that I see, between a philosophical conjecture, and the assertions of the prophet Mr. Brothers, is, that one is founded upon indications arising from the train of our present observations, and the other has no foundation at all.<sup>52</sup>

Ironically, in A Lay Sermon, Coleridge included Malthus among the host of "false prophets"<sup>53</sup> who had invaded politics. With "the assurance of a prophet"<sup>54</sup> himself he outlined the true principles of political theory in the

Statesman's Manual:

Do you excuse it as natural curiosity, that you lend a listening ear to the guesses of state-gazers, to the dark hints and open revilings of our self-inspired state fortune-tellers, 'the wizards, that peep and mutter' and forecast, alarmists by trade, and malcontents for their bread? And should you not feel a deeper interest in predictions which are permanent prophecies, because they are at the same time eternal truths? Predictions which in containing the grounds of fulfillment involve the principles of foresight, and teach the science of the future in its perpetual elements?<sup>55</sup>

Thus it is not surprising that "the voice of prophecy," as Forester calls it(ii, 309), should be heard also in Melincourt. Indeed, voices of prophecy would be more accurate. They include, primarily, the names mentioned above--Condorcet, Malthus, Coleridge--as well, probably, as a host of others in the background, for prognostication, whether in the rapturous visions of Richard Brothers or in Jeremy Bentham's arithmetical projections, were a preoccupation of the age.

In Chapter XXXII, Mr. Fax takes up a book lying open in the library of Melincourt Castle. It is, significantly, Condorcet's Esquisse d'un Tableau historique des Progrès de l'Esprit humain (1795), "in which," according to Fax, "that most amiable and sublime enthusiast, contemplating human nature in the light of his own exalted spirit, had delineated a beautiful vision of the future destinies of mankind" (ii, 353). It is noteworthy that it should be Fax who takes up this work. His model, Thomas Malthus,

wrote The Principle of Population in rebuttal of Condorcet's and Godwin's glowing projections for "the future destinies of mankind." Both authors, said Malthus, had presented only conjectures "unsupported by any philosophical probabilities;" their visions of the future were "like some of the landscapes drawn from fancy and not imagined with truth."<sup>56</sup> Fax speaks often in this strain. His role in the novel is primarily as a counterbalance to Forester's idealistic enthusiasms. Where the latter appeals more to sentiment, to poetry and romance, for his idea of the future, Fax strictly applies "the arithmetic of futurity" (ii, 77). The "colouring of the imagination," which is essential to Forester, is, in Fax's estimate, a "false colouring," and the disillusionment which it engenders is "the consequence of morbid feelings, and exaggerated expectations of society and human nature" (ii, 115). The grounds of reconciliation for these views exist, however, in the currents and cross-currents of contemporary opinion.

The central "principle" of The Principle of Population is a mathematical one, that population increases at a geometrical, and subsistence at only an arithmetic, ratio. Ironically, the inspiration for this "arithmetic of futurity," as Fax calls it, was Condorcet. A mathematician, Condorcet had given a mathematical form to the theory of indefinite progress presented in the Esquisse.<sup>57</sup> It was perfectly reasonable, he said, that by "the calculus of com-

binations and probabilities"<sup>58</sup> man's progress in the future could be estimated on the basis of his past advances:

If man can, with almost complete assurance, predict phenomena when he knows their laws, and if, even when he does not, he can still, with great expectation of success, forecast the future on the basis of his experience of the past, why, then, should it be regarded as a fantastic undertaking to sketch, with some pretence to truth, the future destiny of man on the basis of his history? The sole foundation for belief in the natural sciences is this idea, that the general laws directing the phenomena of the universe, known or unknown, are necessary and constant. Why should this principle be any less true for the development of the intellectual and moral faculties of man than for other operations of nature? Since beliefs founded on past experience of like conditions provide the only rule of conduct for the wisest of men, why should the philosopher be forbidden to base his conjectures on these same foundations, so long as he does not attribute to them a certainty superior to that warranted by the number, the constancy, and the accuracy of his observations?<sup>59</sup>

A further development of this premise, by Malthus, turned Condorcet's idea of progress right around and prognosticated naught but gloom,<sup>60</sup> for the fanciful landscape drawn by Condorcet, determined Malthus, "fails of that interest in the heart which nature and probability can alone give."<sup>61</sup>

Malthus's imprint in Melincourt has often been noted, while that of Condorcet, probably because it is less obvious, has not been remarked. The only direct reference to him is as "that most sublime and amiable enthusiast" in Fax's description in Chapter XXXII. However, the Malthusian connection in Melincourt cannot be fully appreciated unless we take into account its obverse side in Condorcet. It

is significant that Peacock's novel contains two chapters, one near the beginning entitled "The Principle of Population" (Chapter VII), where Fax outlines his Malthusian thesis, and the other, second to the end, "The Hopes of the World" (Chapter XL), which is clearly indebted to Condorcet.

Indeed, the title of this chapter echoes Condorcet's reiterated concern, in his work, with the "hopes" of mankind--"our hopes for the future condition of the human race," "the sweet delights of hope for the future."<sup>62</sup> The phrase occurs throughout Melincourt. Forester speaks in Chapter XVI of "the hopes of mankind" (ii, 180), and the reactionary Moley Mystic presents his own paranoid version of "the hopes of the world" (ii, 338), which, to his horror, involves a coming period of enlightenment. In Chapter XL, however, Peacock, always with as much an eye for the similarities between seemingly conflicting schools of thought as for their differences, puts the phrase into Fax's mouth. Here it is Fax who forms "the best hopes" for mankind (ii, 433). "I rest my hopes," he says, "in the very same basis with Mr. Mystic's fear--the general diffusion of moral and political truth" (ii, 421). In one of the chapter's concluding passages, Fax predicts the abolition of slavery and monkish superstition in the Americas, stating that "the sun of freedom has risen over that great continent, with the certain promise of a glorious day" (ii,

433). Malthus's caricature is undoubtedly paraphrasing here a passage from Condorcet:

The time will therefore come when the sun will shine only on free men who know no other master but their reason; when tyrants and slaves, priests and their stupid or hypocritical instruments will exist only in the works of history and on the stage.<sup>63</sup>

Thus the Condorcet-Malthus debate is turned full circle in Melincourt with Fax transforming the "arithmetic of futurity" back again into an optimistic science, just as his historical prototype had made Condorcet's law of progress into what would become known as the "dismal science." "The manner in which the spirit of system twists everything to its own views," says Forester in another connection, "is truly wonderful" (ii, 67). But in returning Malthus's premise to its original context in Condorcet, Peacock might have felt that he had, if only in fiction, rescued the "arithmetic of futurity" from its often dubious applications by the political-economists.

In his portrait of Sir Walter Scott in The Spirit of the Age, Hazlitt called Scott "a 'prophesier of things past.'" It is hard to imagine a political or philosophical stance more opposed to that of either Malthus or Condorcet than Scott's. Malthus and Condorcet were both radical, innovative thinkers, were both clearly forward-looking, were, in their different ways, both utilitarians (although, in the case of Condorcet there is an unmistakable suggestion of afflatus). Yet they too were prophets of "things



past," if only by virtue of the empirical basis of their predictions. Malthus's gloomy calculations are nothing more, really, than logical projections of the past. In his Esquisse, Condorcet surveys ten stages of human development, only the last of which concerns the future, and even it has been constructed from the materials of the past. The prophetic strain in Melincourt has a similar basis. In Chapter XI, Fax, as Malthus had done with Condorcet, rejects the fanciful "scenes of futurity" drawn by Forester (ii, 115), and Forester's reply is worthy of Condorcet: "I seek no more than I know to have existed," he says, "than, I doubt not, does exist, though in such lamentable rarity, that the calculations of probability make the search little better than desperate" (ii, 116). Indeed, the idea of reform, according to Robert Nisbet, has always carried with it "the message of return, renewal, or recovery."<sup>64</sup> Hence in Melincourt the quasi-feudal community which thrives on Forester's estate is "an image of better times" (ii, 287), but it is a program as well. Like similar ideal communities envisaged by primitivists like Cobbett and Monboddo (not to mention Southey and Coleridge during their pantisocratic period), it is a hopeful portent of future reform. Coleridge defines this reforming temper when in The Friend he speaks of a "class of Reasoners" whom he distinguishes from both "METAPOLITICIANS" (abstract reasoners) and "ANTIQUARIANS:"

This Class, which is rendered illustrious by the names of many intelligent and virtuous Patriots, are Advocates for reform in the literal sense of the word. They wish to bring back the Government of Great Britain to a certain form, which they affirm it to have once possessed: and would melt the bullion anew in order to recast it in the original mould.<sup>65</sup>

In The Prophetic Moment, Angus Fletcher states that the Western tradition of prophecy "balances anticipation of the future with a concern for the past and, even more important, for the present."<sup>66</sup> Fletcher also speaks of a sort of "double perspective on life" which allows the prophet "to hold the eternal and the ephemeral in simultaneous co-presence, balancing stable principle against unstable reality."<sup>67</sup> Melincourt seems to possess this "double perspective." Just as in "Calidore," the degenerate present of nineteenth-century Britain co-exists simultaneously with Arthur's island, which represents both an ideal past, and, according to Merlin's millennial predictions, a possible ideal future, so in Melincourt we have a similar opposition, or perhaps I should say harmony. A synthesis of ideal pasts embodied in a "holy alliance of the powers of Olympus and those of Faery" still retains a tenuous link with the fallen world of the nineteenth century in "Calidore." Similarly, in Melincourt, the past, whether in the merger of heroic and chivalric ideals resulting from the marriage of Forester and Anthelia (devotees of Hellenic and Gothic literature respectively) or in anything else from the miscellany of ideal pasts which Peacock has culled from Cobbett, Mon-

boddo, Spenser, Coleridge, Burke and many others, exists alongside the present. The possibility of a recovery of the values represented by the past, latent but strongly hinted at in the unfinished "Calidore," is imminent in Melincourt. The novel's double concern with past and future is summed up best perhaps in a phrase from The Friend (echoed ironically in the Mainchance Villa cabal's vinous attempt to unlock "the secrets both of memory and anticipation," ii, 399): "Retrospection blends with anticipation, and Hope and Memory (a female Janus) become one Power with a double Aspect."<sup>68</sup>

### CHAPTER THREE: NIGHTMARE ABBEY

The world will not reach its goal so quickly as we think and wish. The retarding demons are always there, intervening and resisting at every point, so that, though there is an advance on the whole, it is very slow. Live longer and you will find that I am right.

Goethe, Conversations with Goethe (1828)

In a series of letters written between May and September of 1818, Peacock informed his friend Shelley--now in Italy--of the current political and literary news, of the English weather (warm and sunny), and, it probably seemed to Shelley, rather perfunctorily of a novel-in-progress, Nightmare Abbey. Indeed, Shelley was evidently not clear on the nature and object of Peacock's newest satire, for, upon hearing that the work in question had been completed, he wrote to congratulate Peacock and fell inadvertently into the zealous strain which characterizes Nightmare Abbey's hero and, as it turned out, Shelley's satiric portrait, Scythrop Glowry. "I hope that you have given the enemy no quarter. Remember it is a sacred war," he admonished Peacock.<sup>1</sup>

In a subsequent letter, Peacock expressed surprise at this misconception, but, in justice to Shelley, all Peacock had said earlier of Nightmare Abbey was that in it he was attempting "to 'make a stand' against the 'encroachments' of black bile"--"The fourth canto of Childe Harold

is really too bad," he had said, "I cannot consent to be auditor tantum of this systematical 'poisoning' of the 'mind' of the 'reading public'" (viii, 193). Now, three and a half months later, Peacock reiterated to his friend 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" (viii, 204). In any case, this "object" was clear enough to Shelley when he read the novel. Although understandably somewhat taken aback by what was so obviously a caricature of his own life and opinions, he accepted it in good humour, and, in Peacock's words, "took to himself the character of Scythrop" (viii, 497). But, if he fully recognized Nightmare Abbey's object, Shelley nevertheless did not entirely accede to the view it implied. He insisted that "looking deeper into it, is not the misdirected enthusiasm of Scythrop what J[esus] C[hrist] calls the salt of the earth?"<sup>2</sup>

Shelley, of course, had a clear bias, which, as far as his critical estimate of Peacock's work goes, was reflected in his partiality to Melincourt, the most obviously political of the novels. There, with the Shelley-like Sylvan Forester as his mouthpiece, Peacock had taken an unequivocal stand against superstition and tyranny, and thus, in Shelley's view, shown "more of the true spirit"<sup>3</sup> than in either Headlong Hall or Nightmare Abbey. But more

of this "spirit," albeit in comically distorted form, exists in the latter novel than perhaps Shelley was able or willing to see. The difference of course is that while Melincourt's Mr. Forester is in no way intended as a satiric butt, Nightmare Abbey's Scythrop is never anything else. Forester's political views, reflecting Shelley's and apparently Peacock's views at the time, are to be taken entirely at face value with little or no allowance for irony, whereas it is impossible to take seriously anything of Scythrop's creed, characterized as it is by excessive zeal and a heavy underscoring of gothic melodrama. In effect, Peacock had, in Nightmare Abbey, turned upon his own earlier work and applied to it the very "scourge of satire" recommended by Mr. Forester for the upholders of tyranny and imposture. Taken off guard by this satirical volte-face, then, Shelley nevertheless tried to find something of redeeming political value in this newest work of Peacock's, if only in a rather oblique way. Even while recognizing his caricature in the absurd Scythrop, he chose to "look deeper into it" and justified Scythrop's intentions if not his excesses. What Shelley seemed to overlook was that these intentions, which he aptly called Scythrop's "misdirected enthusiasm," if not positively evil in themselves--as are, for example, the motives of the Mainchance Villa conspirators in Melincourt--are insidious in their effects, and as much to be included among the ills afflic-

ting society as any of the other abuses enumerated in either Nightmare Abbey or Melincourt.

Commentators usually remark on the obvious change of direction Nightmare Abbey represents. Not "engaged" politically, as Melincourt emphatically is, nor as shrill in its satire, Nightmare Abbey is often seen as either a return to the witty, seemingly uncommitted dialectic of Headlong Hall or an advance towards the polished, epigrammatic comedy of Crotchet Castle. Most important, though, it is not political. It makes, says Carl Dawson, "little mention of politics." Occupied mainly, it seems, with satirizing the current vogue for misanthropic gloom exploited in the novels of William Godwin and the poetry of Byron, it is "a literary rather than a political satire."<sup>4</sup> My view is that, occupied as it is with this characteristic of the age's sensibility in all areas--in politics, manners and religion as well as in literature--Nightmare Abbey is not so far removed from the concerns treated in Melincourt. Although, unlike the latter novel, it does not plunge into the hurly-burly of contemporary politics, it nevertheless analyses the "spirit," or more accurately, as will become evident, the polarities of the "spirit" which informs and moves the politics of the age.

## II

The generation of the younger Romantics inherited

the idealism and political zeal but also the disillusionment and despair which was the double legacy of the French Revolution. It is not an accident that the ancient Zoroastrian mythology should suddenly figure in so much of the poetry of the early nineteenth century. With its eternally opposed principles of good and evil, represented by Oromazes and Ahrimanes respectively, the Zoroastrian scheme was perfectly suited to express the polarities of an age's mood. And it is characteristic of the poetry of this age that the evil principle, Ahrimanes, should usually be depicted as the currently ascendant power. In Manfred (1817), "evil and dread,/ Envelop a nation,"<sup>5</sup> and Byron's hero penetrates to the very source of this affliction, in the hall of Ahrimanes. Manfred's belief, and Byron's too we can be fairly sure, is that "'it is too late.'"<sup>6</sup> Peacock's fragmentary Zoroastrian poem, we have seen, also finds Ahrimanes in the ascendant, although here at least the return of Oromazes is predicted in prophecies. Peacock abandoned Ahrimanes before any such prophecies could be realized, however, and went on to Headlong Hall, in which the tragic historical vision of the earlier poem modulates into a comic treatment of eighteenth-century theories on progress and human perfectibility. But the thread of Peacock's poem was also picked up by Shelley, to whom Peacock gave the salvage rights to his fragment, and the result was The Revolt of Islam, published the same year



as Manfred and one year before Nightmare Abbey.

In a preface, Shelley states that his poem "is an experiment on the temper of the public mind, as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live."<sup>7</sup> He is particularly interested in representing "the rapid and subtle transitions of human passion."<sup>8</sup> This is, in effect, the particular "temper" Shelley has sensed in the "public mind," the fevered vacillation between hope and despair, between amiable idealism and misanthropic gloom. The French Revolution, he says, is the "crisis" which produced this state of mind--first the hopes and sympathies excited by its promises of positive change, and then the "revulsion" engendered by its atrocities:

Thus, many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshippers of the public good have been morally ruined by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored appeared to show as the melancholy desolation of all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds its relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. Metaphysics, and inquiries into moral and political science, have become little else than vain attempts to revive exploded superstitions, or sophisms like those of Mr. Malthus calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph. Our works of fiction and poetry have been overshadowed by the same infectious gloom.<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, Shelley can still detect signs which indicate

that "those who now live have survived an age of despair."<sup>10</sup>

The tenor of the above passage is generally representative of its age. The period spanning the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first two or so decades of the nineteenth century was one of intense millenarian activity.<sup>11</sup> With the shattering events of the French Revolution came a great burst of popular interest in millenarian prophecy. During the 1790's a spate of sermons, pamphlets and books on Daniel and Revelation poured forth, all centering on apocalyptic interpretation of the events in Europe--Prophetic Conjectures on the French Revolution (1793), Antichrist in the French Convention (1795), The World's Doom; or the Cabinet of Fate Unlocked (1795) among many others. Richard Brothers published A Revealed Knowledge of the Prophecies and Times (1795), and Joseph Priestley wrote commentaries on biblical prophecies which he expected to see fulfilled in his lifetime. Mrs. Piozzi's journal Thraliana for the years 1794 and 1795 is filled with "prophetic snippets" which she had read or heard.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, during 1795 the Monthly Review, Gentleman's Magazine and Analytical Review all set aside sections of their magazines for the subject of prophecy.<sup>13</sup> Coleridge's Religious Musings (1796) is notably millenarian sounding in its final pages, although Coleridge and Southey collaborated in 1830 on The Devil's Thoughts, a satire on Richard Brothers. Alongside this contemporary millenarian literature

appeared the older prophecies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, dug up and reprinted for a public eager for prophetic utterances of all kinds.

Millennial thought is an extensive subject, encompassing numerous different periods and cultures, but scholars in the field generally agree that ages characterized by disillusionment and loss of purpose are ripe for millenarian revival, usually precipitated by some sort of disaster or crisis.<sup>14</sup> The two or three decades following the French Revolution constituted such an age. It displayed the "mixture of anxiety and hope" which, according to Clarke Garrett, seems to characterize the millenarian temper,<sup>15</sup> the "chiliasm of despair," to use Garrett's apt phrase for the mood nurtured and exploited by popular nineteenth-century prophets like Brothers and Joanna Southcott.<sup>16</sup> The earthly millennium envisaged in the 1790's by Jacobins, English radicals, and millenarians (who were often radicals themselves<sup>17</sup>) had somehow failed to come about, yet the disappointment which ensued merely gave fuel to the fire, as such reverses often do. The promise of a renovated world amidst so much gloom and disillusionment glowed brighter than ever. In 1813, in the first of his four essays in A New View of Society, Robert Owen builds on the contrast between society's present misery and the felicity to come. He argues that the misery is approaching a crisis point and he announces the imminent

instauration of an earthly paradise where misery shall cease to exist. Throughout the succeeding essays recur "the keynotes of misery and felicity, enslavement and deliverance, the inevitability of change through sudden crisis."<sup>18</sup>

Such an antithesis, we have seen, runs through The Revolt of Islam and is strongly suggestive of the millenarian temper described above. Turning to Peacock, we find evidence of similar interests which, antedating his friendship with Shelley, surely stem also from the popular interest in millenarianism. A fragment "From the Revelations," written in 1801, is a paraphrase of the prophetic book:

By mystic signs th' eternal God  
To thee his fix'd intents displays:  
Behold the woes his chast'ning rod  
Prepares for future days (vii, 170).

"Paraphrase From the Seventeenth Chapter of Isaiah," written one year later, is of a similar apocalyptic nature, and eventually found its way, with some slight alterations, into Peacock's first long poem, Palmyra:

Woe to thy numbers fierce and rude,  
Thou madly-rushing multitude,  
Loud as the tempest that o'er ocean raves!  
Woe to the nations proud and strong,  
That rush tumultuously along,  
As rolls the foaming stream its long-resounding waves!  
As the noise of mighty seas,  
As the loudly-murmuring breeze,  
Shall gath'ring nations rush, a pow'rful band:  
Rise, God of Light, in burning wrath severe,  
And stretch, to blast their proud career,  
Thy arrow-darting hand!

Then on their course Despair her fires shall cast,  
 Then shall they fly, to endless ruin driv'n,  
 As flies the thistle-down before the mountain-blast!  
 (vii, 16-17).

"Ahrimanes" has as one of its epigraphs a line from Revelation--"The devil is come upon earth with great power," (vii, 265)--which later becomes the constant refrain of Mr. Toobad the Manichaean-Millenarian in Nightmare Abbey. With its depiction of Ahrimanes's present reign of evil and darkness, and prophetic hints of the future reinstatement of Oromazes, "lord of day," "Ahrimanes" has a decidedly millenarian character.

As I point out in Chapter Two, prophecy, inspired and rational, plays a significant role in Melincourt and is an aspect of the contemporary millenarian temper discussed above. Moreover, a noticeably millenarian strain runs through Melincourt generally. Besides incidental references to millenarian groups like the Huntingtonians and the Muggletonians (ii, 45), the novel abounds in pronouncements like that of Moley Mystic's that "the spirit of Antichrist is abroad" (ii, 339). This character, like his fellow reactionaries at Mainchance Villa, sees in popular agitation for reform "a type and symbol of an approaching period of public light" (ii, 341 & 396). His fears are confirmed by Mr. Fax who prophesies the rising of "the sun of freedom" with its "certain promise of a glorious day" (ii, 433). Indeed, over-all Melincourt depicts the

struggle between reform and reaction in terms of light versus darkness, good versus evil--a moral and political dualism characteristic of early nineteenth-century millenarianism and of the millenarian temper generally.

In the case of Melincourt, Peacock himself seems to be involved in the struggle, clearly aligned with what unequivocally represents the forces of light: the reform position. His next novel, Nightmare Abbey (1818), however, represents a surprising shift from Melincourt's stance.

### III

The dominant note in Nightmare Abbey is disappointment--in friendship, in love, in politics, in literature, in philosophy. The novel begins with an account of the Glowry family background, but eventually extends to give a broad cross-section of the age. The abbey's proprietor, one Christopher Glowry, Esquire, is a gloomy gentleman whose naturally "atr<sup>b</sup>ilarious temperament" seems to have been aggravated by a series of disappointments: "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" (iii, 1-2). The only off-spring of this unhappy union is a son christened Scythrop, after, significantly, a suicide victim among his maternal ancestors.

His very conception, then, overshadowed by disappointment, Scythrop seems at the novel's opening to be following already the family vocation, having been thwarted in his love for a Miss Emily Girouette:

It was his first disappointment, and preyed deeply on his sensitive spirit. His father, to comfort him, read him a Commentary on Ecclesiastes, which he had himself composed, and which demonstrated incontrovertibly that all is vanity. He insisted particularly on the text, 'One man among a thousand have I found, but a woman amongst all those have I not found (iii, 5).

In the case later of the Byronic Mr. Cypress, who has quarrelled with his wife (iii, 103), such disappointments have led to despair and an impotent "railing against humanity for not being abstract perfection" (iii, 108). Scythrop's "disappointment," however, seems to have taken another turn and resulted in an excess of enthusiasm. His troubles have come about through a combination of economic and class prejudices which, favouring a duller but richer suitor, the Honourable Mr. Lackwit, have left him disillusioned with what he had formerly believed to be "a free state of society" (iii, 5). The elder Mr. Glowry only confirms his son in his dissatisfaction with "things as they are" when he criticizes the "artificial education" of women, whom, he says, echoing (unwittingly, no doubt) Mary Wollstonecraft, society has fashioned into "mere musical dolls" (iii, 6).<sup>19</sup> This seems a curious motive for entering radical politics, but in fact Scythrop's "disappointments in love," we learn in Chapter II, have had

the further result of plunging him into certain morbid and recondite studies whence he has imbibed a "passion for reforming the world" (iii, 14).

There is much in Scythrop's political enthusiasm of the spirit of the 1790's which the younger generation of Romantics, Shelley in particular, had attempted to revive. There is also much of the disillusionment, which, following the revolutionary decade, had caused the older generation of Romantics to disavow their youthful idealisms. The spokesman for this latter group in Nightmare Abbey is Mr. Flosky, a frequent houseguest of Mr. Glowry Sr. and a man very congenial to his host's lachrymose temper. Like Coleridge, on whom he is loosely based, Flosky is a political apostate--formerly a zealous young radical, now, as a consequence of his disappointments in politics, a Tory of Burke's stamp:

He 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 fortress of tyranny and superstition was the greatest calamity that had ever befallen mankind; and that their only hope now was to rake the rubbish together, and rebuild it without any of those loopholes by which the light had originally crept in (iii, 10).

Flosky, then, at certain points in his life has represented each of the extremes of sentiment described in the preface to The Revolt of Islam, at first the "sanguine eagerness for



good" engendered by the French Revolution, then the revulsion and disillusionment which accompanied "the first reverses of hope."<sup>20</sup> At present, like his close kin in Melincourt, Mr. Moley Mystic, he is enlisted in the reactionary forces of darkness, an enemy to light in any form. Despite his conservative politics, however, Flosky-Coleridge exerts a considerable influence on the enthusiasms of the aspiring young radical and potential illuminée Scythrop Glowry. "'His eye in fine frenzy rolling'" (iii, 73), he is an enthusiast of a rather morbid type, shunning the light of day and writing "dismal ballads," yet his very morbidity and misanthropy form the complementary side of the enthusiasm embraced by Scythrop and, we find later, by the mysterious Stella, both of whom are "in a fine state of dissatisfaction with the world, and every thing in it" (iii, 29). "Light," says Mr. Flosky, "is a great enemy to mystery, and mystery is a great friend to enthusiasm." And in such enthusiasm are the seeds of disillusionment, for, as Flosky adds, "the enthusiasm for abstract truth is a very fine thing, as long as the truth, which is the object of the enthusiasm, is so completely abstract as to be altogether out of reach of the human faculties" (iii, 49).

The French Revolution is the informing presence behind love and politics in Nightmare Abbey. The wildly fluctuating spirit of the 1790's, the poles of ardent hope

and shattered disillusionment described in Shelley's preface to The Revolt of Islam, animate the incessant political and romantic intrigues of the novel's characters--particularly those of Scythrop, who, more than just caricaturing Shelley, virtually embodies the post-revolutionary generation and their particular state of mind. The novel opens to find his "sensitive spirit" deeply bruised following the "tragical event" of his break-up with Miss Girouette, whose name (French for weathercock) is some indication of the future hopes and disappointments in store for Scythrop. Like the youthful Flosky after the disappointments engendered by the Revolution in France, Scythrop becomes disillusioned with society and shuts himself up in his tower, "dismal and disconsolate" (iii, 7), where he exposes himself to the "distempered ideas of metaphysical romance and romantic metaphysics" (iii, 14) and somehow becomes an enthusiast for liberty. Thereafter, Scythrop's hopes and disappointments in both love and politics are the novel's main theme.

Deflected by his disillusionment with modern love into the murky world of radical politics, Scythrop, however, encounters a new and further distraction in Miss Marionetta Celestina O'Carroll. Identifications of this character with Shelley's first wife Harriet aside, Marionetta represents one of the poles between which Scythrop vacillates throughout the novel--most generally between love and

politics, but also between comedy and tragedy, cheerfulness and despair, temperance and enthusiasm, light and darkness, frivolity and seriousness. Alternately cold and passionate towards Scythrop, and thus keeping him in "a perpetual fever" (iii, 34), Marionetta's character itself displays conflicting poles which are indicative of more than coquettishness. She is the product of a runaway love-match between Mr. Glowry's youngest sister and a disreputable Irish officer, and the result is that she is "a compound of the Allegro Vivace of the O'Carrolls, and of the Andante Doloroso of the Glowrys" (iii, 20). Generally, however, as Glowry Sr. disapprovingly points out, she seems the exact reverse of the Glowry temperament (iii, 28). Her conversation and interests are light, and her views worldly and informed with common-sense. Confronted by Scythrop's "high-wrought enthusiasm" in Chapter III she curtly requests him to deliver himself "'like a man of this world'" (iii, 23), an admonishment which, aptly quoted from Jonson's Every Man in his Humour, jars discordantly on Scythrop's romantic and tragical temperament. She may perhaps be partially based on Henrietta the sister of Mandeville in Godwin's novel of that name. Like Marionetta cheerful and optimistic, Henrietta serves as a counterpoint to her brother, who is "no friend to light laughter and merriment."<sup>21</sup>

The character in the novel most clearly set against

Marionetta is Stella, gloomy and serious, in all respects "antithalian." Where Marionetta's conversation is "always on subjects light in nature and limited in their interest" (iii, 21), the latter is "an enthusiast in subjects of general interest" (iii, 28). In contrast to Marionetta's "mild" eyes, her eyes are "of almost oppressive brilliancy" (iii, 88), and her manner mysterious and dramatic in the extreme. Like Scythrop, Stella is "in a fine state of high dissatisfaction with the world" and embodies that peculiar and potentially volatile combination of ardent idealism and morbid imagination which also characterizes Scythrop:

Stella, in her conversations with Scythrop, displayed a highly cultivated and energetic mind, full of impassioned schemes of liberty, and impatience of masculine usurpation. She had a lively sense of all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and the vivid picture which her imagination presented to her of the numberless scenes of injustice and misery which are being acted at every moment in every part of the inhabited world, gave an habitual seriousness to her physiognomy, that made it seem as if a smile had never once hovered on her lips (iii, 93-4).

The midnight setting of Scythrop's first meeting with Stella is taken from Christabel (iii, 89), and if Geraldine is the evil genius of Coleridge's poem, Stella, for Scythrop, is clearly a kind of genius of enthusiasm.

The importance of both Marionetta and Stella, of course, lies in their respective influences on Scythrop. The novel's love interest hinges on the dilemma in which Scythrop finds himself, caught between his "esoterical"

(the recondite Stella) and his "exoterical" (the frivolous Marionetta) loves (iii, 96). The "fatal discovery" which he anxiously dreads, is the climax, and, as Butler points out, very much a theatrical one,<sup>22</sup> of the novel's comic plot. Scythrop's dilemma has thematic significance as well. In the context purely of Nightmare Abbey's literary satire, it represents the choice--not really, as Butler asserts, a choice at all--between the age's light literature of entertainment and its ostensibly more weighty "philosophical" literature.<sup>23</sup> But more broadly, I suggest, Scythrop's perpetual vacillating throughout the novel is meant to reflect that particular temper of the age discussed above.

In the discovery scene in Chapter XIII, Scythrop is described as being equidistant from both Stella and Marionetta, "central and motionless, like Mohamet's coffin" (iii, 131), but his more usual state in the novel is described by apt comparisons with a "shuttlecock" and a clock's pendulum (iii, 95). For, to refer again to Godwin's novel, like the narrator of Mandeville whose mind is "balanced between two tones"<sup>24</sup>--action and despair in that case--Scythrop's state of mind is ambivalent and prone to extremes, divided as it is, in effect, between "two tones:"

The scale of predilection always inclined to the fair one who happened to be present; but the absent was never effectually outweighed, though the degrees of

exaltation and depression varied according to accidental variations in the outward and visible signs of the inward and spiritual graces of his respective charmers (iii, 95).

Putting aside for the moment the particular circumstances of Scythrop's dilemma and focusing exclusively on his state of mind, we can see in these "degrees of exaltation and depression" something of the divided public mood described in Shelley's preface. For despite Nightmare Abbey's numerous satiric concerns--manners, politics, literature and so on--this tendency to extremes, between cheerfulness and gloom, frivolity and seriousness, runs through the novel. Scythrop's ambivalence is more than romantic in its significance, more than merely literary.

#### IV

In the most obvious sense, Nightmare Abbey is a parody of gothic conventions--the ancient house set in a remote, dreary part of the country, an atmosphere of gloom and disillusionment. More specifically, parallels have been drawn with William Godwin's gothic novel, Mandeville (1817), mentioned above, which had appeared the year before Nightmare Abbey was published.<sup>25</sup> Like Mr. Glowry, Mandeville's uncle was disappointed in love as a young man and consequently retired from the world in a gloomy remote mansion after which, in a number of particulars, the castellated abbey in Peacock's novel is undoubtedly modelled. As is the case with Mr. Glowry's

establishment, a regimen of silence and gloom is strictly observed by servants and family alike in the household of Aubry Mandeville. Indeed, Godwin's novel is alluded to in Chapter V as "Devilman, a novel." Mr. Flosky enumerates its ingredients, "Hatred--revenge--misanthropy--and quotations from the bible," all of which he sums up as "the morbid anatomy of black bile" (iii, 39). Peacock had used almost these very words when he described, in his letters to Shelley, the object of Nightmare Abbey's satire.<sup>26</sup>

However, Mandeville is much more than a gothic thriller; and in 1817 its interest, for Godwin's contemporaries, was certainly more than literary. Written in the second decade after the French Revolution, the novel is set in Cromwell's England against the background of another revolution. The sense of crisis, the hope and despair, the exhilaration and anxiety which accompanied that period of civil turmoil, would surely have seemed very relevant to Godwin's English readers, who had just witnessed the events in France and were alarmed at stirrings in their own country:

We lived in the midst of the confusions of a civil war; who could tell at what point all this violence might terminate? As the presbyterian had subdued the episcopalian, and the independent the presbyterian, might not the fifth monarchyman finally get the start of all, and level the proud fortunes of the noble and the gentleman with the dust?<sup>27</sup>

The heavy undertow of disillusionment which gives Godwin's novel its gloomy character contemporary readers would

surely have seen as reflecting the mood of their own generation.

Godwin's readers could have drawn other parallels as well. The prophecies which, as I indicate above, became so popular during the decade of the French Revolution were in great part descended from the millenarian movement of seventeenth-century Commonwealth England. Just as nineteenth-century prophets like Joanna Southcott and Richard Brothers deduced "the future destinies of nations"<sup>28</sup> by collating contemporary events with the types and symbols set forth in Revelation and Isaiah, so seventeenth-century groups like the Fifth-Monarchy men had made eschatological speculations about current political events and foreseen the imminent instauration of the millennium. One such prophetic voice in Mandeville is that of the Reverend Hilkiah Bradford. Like any orthodox millenarian, whether seventeenth- or nineteenth-century, whether religious or secular, this character identifies his age as one of those "intervals of greatest darkness and most universal apostasy" which always precede the great Renovation<sup>29</sup> (his cryptic remark that "God 'had yet reserved to himself seven thousand men, who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal'"<sup>30</sup> suggests Fifth-Monarchist affiliations). Further, he finds unmistakable confirmation of scriptural prophecies in the current condition of seventeenth century England; and, not surprisingly for



someone of his apocalyptic leanings, is convinced that "the power of Antichrist is not at an end," although the millennium, as always, is nigh:

His continual theme was that the church of Rome was no other than the spiritual Babylon, prophesied of in the book of Revelations; and the text of scripture on which he was most prone to descant was, 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.'<sup>31</sup>

Although he is chiefly obsessed with religious sectarianism, Reverend Hilkiah Bradford also indulges his penchant for typology in the field of politics, finding confirmation of biblical prophecies in occurrences such as the gunpowder plot.<sup>32</sup>

Nightmare Abbey reflects, with satiric emphasis, the same state of mind which Godwin recognized in his contemporaries and depicted against the appropriate historical background of Cromwell's England. Many of the characters in Peacock's novel have the habit of viewing things in a scriptural light. Mr. Glowry, we recall, comforts his disconsolate, love-lorn son with a commentary on Ecclesiastes, during which he insists particularly on a text concerning the infidelity of women which conveniently reflects his own disenchantment with love and marriage (iii, 5). Much later in the novel, an old Glowry family retainer named Raven similarly attempts to console Scythrop with the observation that "man is born to trouble" (iii, 135). Of a decidedly more millenarian colouring is

Scythrop's reading of a portentous significance into the meager sales of his political pamphlet, "Philosophical Gas":

'Seven copies,' he thought, 'have been sold. Seven is a mystical number, and the omen is good. Let me find the seven purchasers of my seven copies, and they shall be the seven golden candlesticks with which I will illuminate the world' (iii, 17).

Interestingly, when her first pamphlet, The Strange Effects of Faith (1801), attracted seven close disciples, Joanna Southcott also had recourse to the book of Revelation and named the seven her "seven stars."<sup>33</sup> This particular parallel may in itself be coincidental but the habit of mind behind both instances was endemic to the age. (The Avignon Society, a clandestine millennialist organization in eighteenth-century France, which had predicted the French Revolution on the authority of Revelation, had a directing council of seven.<sup>34</sup>) In any case, Scythrop's millenarian pretensions owe a direct debt to the influence of one of his father's dearest friends and most welcome guests, Mr. Toobad the Manichaeian Millenarian.

Mr. Toobad is often identified with the Bracknell acquaintance J. F. Newton from whom, we have seen, Peacock and Shelley in part derived their interest in Zoroastrianism. Indeed, he preaches an "Ahrimanic philosophy" (iii, 31-2) and, like Newton, is convinced of the current ascendancy in the world of "the Evil Principle" (iii, 11). It is probable, however, that he has something in him al-

so of the Reverend Hilkiah Bradford, and, more important, of the popular millenarian temper generally, which Bradford represents in Godwin's novel. Like Bradford, Mr. Toobad harps on a "continual theme" and has a favourite text of scripture on which he descants, in this case, significantly, from the twelfth verse of the twelfth chapter of Revelation: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come among you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (iii, 11). He searches for the "light" of the present age, "its signs, its tokens, its symptoms, its symbols, its categories, its conditions," but as yet has found only darkness (iii, 106). Like Godwin's Reverend Bradford and contemporary millenarians of an allegorizing turn of mind, he finds evidence in practically everything of the dire events foretold in Revelation. In Chapter III, he comes into "violent contact" with Scythrop at the head of a staircase and, rubbing his knees following their consequent plunge to the foot of "this accursed staircase," observes that this incident is but "one of the innumerable proofs of the temporary supremacy of the devil" (iii, 25). An unfortunate experience with a shy horse in the fens surrounding Nightmare Abbey finds him covered with mud and walking back to his host's, "repeating all the way his favourite quotation from the Revelations" (iii, 42). A discussion of ghosts in Chapter XII ends with the

appearance of a bloody shrouded figure which sends the disputants into a panic and Mr. Toobad in particular into the moat. Needless to say, this is only one further sign of Satan's present supremacy:

'You see,' said Mr. Toobad, 'you see, gentlemen, in my unfortunate person proof upon proof of the present dominion of the devil in the affairs of this world; and I have no doubt but that the apparition of this night was Apollyon himself in disguise, sent for the express purpose of terrifying me into this complication of misadventures. The devil is come among you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time' (iii, 122).

The inclusion of a millenarian in Nightmare Abbey is apt because the portentousness of Mr. Toobad's utterances is comically at odds with the novel's frequent slapstick and helps to underscore further the absurdity of the characters' overwrought anxieties. After their impact at the "ill-omened corner" of the stairway, Scythrop commiserates with Mr. Toobad on the ills of the age:

'You are perfectly in the right, Mr. Toobad. Evil, and mischief, and misery, and confusion, and vanity, and vexation of spirit, and death, and disease, and assassination, and war, and poverty, and pestilence, and famine, and avarice, and violence, and the disappointments of philanthropy, and the fruitfulness of friendship, and the crosses of love--all prove the accuracy of your views, and the truth of your system; and it is not impossible that the infernal interruption of this fall down stairs may throw a colour of evil on the whole of my future existence.'

'My dear boy,' said Mr. Toobad, 'You have a fine eye for consequences!' (iii, 25-26).

Besides sounding very like a passage in Shelley's preface to The Revolt of Islam,<sup>35</sup> Scythrop's catalogue of abuses curiously modulates into a list of personal complaints which

seem rather trivial by comparison to the widespread misery which he envisions. In any case, the particular bent here is millenarian, as it is in The Revolt of Islam. Shelley sought to depict in that poem both the atrocious abuses of the present age, "the temporary triumph of oppression,"<sup>36</sup> and the imminent dawn of an age of "universal tolerance and benevolence"<sup>37</sup>--in short, both sides of the millenarian temper, despair and hope, darkness and light. Mr. Toobad is a typical millenarian, for despite his seeming pessimism he does in fact look forward to the latter days:

He maintained that the supreme dominion of the world was, for wise purposes, given over for a while to the Evil Principle; and that this precise period of time, commonly called the enlightened age, was the point of his plenitude of power. He used to add that by and by he would be cast down, and a high and happy order of things succeed; but he never omitted the saving clause, 'Not in our time:' which last words were always echoed in doleful response by the sympathetic Mr. Glowry (iii, 11).

In this passage, we have both sides of the public mood noted by Shelley and Godwin in 1817 and its particular form in popular millenarianism. The underpinning of absurdity Peacock has not so much added as merely brought to the fore.

Peacock's letters to Shelley concerning Nightmare Abbey mention only one side of this temper, the "atrabilarious" side, no doubt suggesting to Shelley the very clear-cut antitheses of the "sacred war," as he called it--the conflict between light and darkness, rational reform and

irrational reaction. In The World's Doom, one of the numerous prophetic works to pour forth during the decade of the Revolution, alongside ardent prognostications of the coming latter days is the observation "that there is a sour and atrabilarious humour fermenting in the minds of men, the operation of which no human power can check."<sup>38</sup> Shelley noted but dismissed this "humour" among his contemporaries as merely a passing mood, certainly no match for the stealthy groundswell of regenerated enthusiasm which he thought he detected in the public mind. In The Revolt of Islam and Melincourt respectively, he and Peacock took up arms in the name of this renewed enthusiasm for Truth and Liberty which the disillusioning events of the French Revolution had temporarily eclipsed. Peacock seems in Nightmare Abbey, however, to have somewhat shifted his allegiances in the "sacred war," if not, like Mr. Flosky, to the reactionary forces of darkness, then at least away from the ardent enthusiasm emphatically embraced in Melincourt to a seemingly more equivocal, and certainly less earnest, stance.

## V

It is probable that both The Revolt of Islam and Nightmare Abbey are, in their different ways, influenced by a curious work of the revolutionary decade entitled Memoires, illustrating the History of Jacobinism (1796-97)

by Abbé de Barruel. The Memoires is the quintessential expression of what has been called the "plot psychosis",<sup>39</sup> which grew out of the public alarm and dismay surrounding the French Revolution. In the three volumes which constitute this work, Barruel outlines a vast and complex conspiracy aimed at undermining the very fabric of society, and operating on all levels--in politics, in religion, even in philosophy and letters. The source of the corruption is identified variously as the philosophes of the enlightenment, the free-Masons, but, most important, a highly influential secret society called the illuminées who, according to Barruel, "generated the Jacobins."<sup>40</sup> Founded by one Adam Weishaupt, this obscure sect evidently had as its insidious design nothing less than the entire "new modelling" of the world,<sup>41</sup> an object which it intended to realize by means of "the disorganizing systems of Liberty and Equality."<sup>42</sup> This object, however, it kept cloaked in mystery from all but a few "adepts" who graduated through a mason-like series of degrees to a full knowledge of the sect's aims. "'Silence and secrecy,' quotes Barruel from Weishaupt, 'are the very soul of the order.'"<sup>43</sup>

Shelley's avid interest in Barruel's work is curious, considering his rejection of its political stance as the "poetic aristocracy of an expatriated Jesuit."<sup>44</sup> Yet individual political differences aside, a similar strain runs through both the Memoires and much of Shelley's writing,

showing itself in a tendency to view politics and society in terms of sharp antitheses--Right versus Wrong, Good versus Evil, Light versus Darkness. Barruel, pro-monarchist and reactionary, perceives a great conspiracy of the forces of darkness, namely, political radicalism, directed against the established forces of light. Shelley, in The Revolt of Islam, outlines a similar antithesis, only according to his own radical lights--"a slow, gradual, silent change"<sup>45</sup> aimed at eventually toppling the established forces of darkness who, through the church and the aristocracy, have conspired to keep the people enmired in superstition and ignorance. Barruel's influence is clearly present in a letter which Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt in 1811:

The ultimate intention of my aim is to induce a meeting of such enlightened unprejudiced numbers of the community, whose independent principles exposed them to evils which might thus become alleviated, and to form a methodical society which should be organized so as to resist the coalition of the enemies of liberty which at present renders any expression of opinion on matters of policy dangerous to individuals. It has been for want of societies of this nature that corruption has attained the height at which we now behold it, nor can any of us bear in mind the very great influence, which some years since was gained by Illuminism, without considering that a society of equal extent might establish rational liberty on as fine a basis as that which would have supported the visionary schemes of a completely equalized community.<sup>46</sup>

Despite, then, their situations at opposite ends of the political spectrum, Shelley and Barruel shared a common view of the political universe, one based on sharply



defined antitheses. Shelley would most certainly have been included by Barruel among the forces of darkness conspiring against society, and in fact he quite evidently relished the opportunity to assume a role in Barruel's fantastic melodrama of conspiracy--but as one of the "enlightened," posed against "the enemies of liberty."

In Melincourt, as I have said, Peacock clearly takes sides with Shelley in this struggle. Moreover, alongside; and, I think, related to the dualistic millenarian temper in that novel is a very strong sense of a "plot psychosis." Interestingly, both sides in Melincourt, the reformers and the reactionaries, see conspiracies wherever they look. Peacock's satire in the Mainchance Villa episode, where caricatures of Southey, Wordsworth and Canning warn against the undermining of church and state by reformers (ii, 410), is aimed at the reaction and the alarm which characterized the conservative mind at this time. On the other hand, one of the novel's liberal characters perceives in the English system of university education "a deep-laid conspiracy against the human understanding" (ii, 131), and indeed if Mr. Falconer, and Peacock as well we can be sure, deprecates the fears of the Mainchance Villa conspirators, what he sets out to expose in this novel is itself a plot by the dark forces of reaction to extinguish "the light of human understanding" (ii, 400). In Melincourt, then, Peacock himself is as caught up in

the "plot psychosis" as his reactionary targets and his radical friend Shelley.

The absurd jacobin-baiting paranoia of the decade of Peterloo evident at Mainchance Villa finds a counterpart of kinds in the farcical gothic melodrama enacted in Scythrop's tower. Here, of course, we see the paranoia from the other side of the fence so to speak. Like the founder of the illuminées whom she eulogizes as "the sublime Spartacus Weishaupt" (iii, 94), Stella has taken a pseudonym, and the mystery surrounding her history leads Scythrop to speculate that she is "shunning an atrocious persecution." Through a combination of over-active imagination and misunderstanding, he envisions a political scenario worthy of the Mainchance Villa conspirators:

Scythrop thought of Lord C. and the Alien Act, and said, 'As you will not tell me your name, I suppose it is in the green bag.' Stella, not understanding what he meant, was silent; and Scythrop, translating silence into acquiescence, concluded that he was sheltering an illuminée whom Lord S. suspected of an intention to take the Tower, and set fire to the Bank: exploits, at least, as likely to be accomplished by the hands and eyes of a young beauty, as by a drunken cobbler and doctor, armed with a pamphlet and an old stocking (iii, 93).

In the aside with which this passage ends--an allusion to a cobbler named Carter and a surgeon named Watson who were arrested after a riot in London in 1816<sup>47</sup>--Peacock manages a glancing blow to the suspicions of Scythrop's imagined enemies as well. Indeed, it is not clear just who constitutes the forces of light and who the forces of

darkness here.

The "salt of the earth" Scythrop may be, yet his enthusiasm, abetted by characters like Stella, Mr. Flosky, Mr. Toobad and so on, has had the effect of making him a sort of composite gothic villain and radical incendiary. There are hints in him of the Byronic hero, also of the Godwinian villain, of the Shelleyan idealist, and of the Spencean anarchist. The eclecticism is intentional, for, as I have said, Scythrop embodies the mood of a generation and is thus necessarily a diverse creature. If some of his constituent elements often seem mutually exclusive--for example, his contradictory leanings towards both the radical feminist Stella and the Coleridgean Tory Mr. Flosky--this too is intentional, for Peacock has created in Nightmare Abbey a satiric vision more complex and more ambivalent than those in either of his two earlier novels. The materials and the inspiration for Nightmare Abbey's equivocal character may be found, I suggest, in Barruel's work.

Despite Butler's feeling that "allusions to secret societies are too common for one source to be picked out with certainty,"<sup>48</sup> it seems reasonable to assume that Peacock at least knew of the most notorious "source" on the secret societies. There is no mention anywhere of Peacock's having read the Memoires, but Shelley read and reread Barruel and, according to Mary's journal, was reading and

discussing the work during the period Peacock knew him. In any case, there is ample evidence in Nightmare Abbey that Peacock was familiar with Barruel's work, either directly or fairly extensively through discussion with Shelley. Indeed in the Memoires, Peacock could find ready-made the curious construction of radicalism, gothic melodrama, and reactionary paranoia presented in Nightmare Abbey. Certainly, this work in itself constitutes the mixture of "metaphysical romance and romantic metaphysics" in which Scythrop immerses himself in his tower. The recondite organization projected in Shelley's letter to Hunt is clearly adapted from Barruel's descriptions of the Illuminées in the third volume of the Memoires, and so, if only at second hand, is that planned by Scythrop Glowry. In his work Barruel paints Adam Weishaupt, the founder of the illuminées, in the lurid tones of a stock gothic villain practising his "horrid arts": "Shunning, like the ill-boding owl, the genial rays of the sun, he wraps around him the mantle of darkness; and history shall record of him, as of the evil spirit, only the black deeds which he planned or executed."<sup>49</sup> The most heinous of this villain's sins, which include murder and that characteristic hidden sin of the gothic villain, incest, are his diabolical schemes for the institution of Liberty and Equality. Such insidious designs, however, he plans to effect secretly through a gradual infiltration of society. Barruel

pictures Weishaupt "brooding over this disastrous project": "He calculated the time necessary and smiled to think that he would one day have only to give the signal for the general explosion."<sup>50</sup>

In Nightmare Abbey, we find Scythrop plotting similar projects, to be effected, moreover, through such a society as Barruel describes in the Memoires. His nightcap "pulled over his eyes like a cowl" and his dressing-gown wrapped about him "like the mantle of a conspirator," he envisages "secret tribunals" and "bands of illuminati" and lays "deep schemes for a thorough repair of the crazy fabric of human nature" (iii, 14-18). Like the infamous Weishaupt who has only "to give the signal for the general explosion," Scythrop imagines himself exercising far-reaching powers:

To get a clear view of his own ideas, and to feel the pulse of the wisdom and genius of the age, he wrote and published a treatise, in which his meanings were carefully wrapt up in the monk's hood of transcendental technology, but filled with hints of matter deep and dangerous, which he thought would set the whole nation in a ferment; and he awaited the result in awful expectation, as a miner who has fired a train awaits the explosion of a rock (iii, 16).

In fact, no explosion ensues. Perhaps Scythrop's failure in print reflects Shelley's disappointment following the poor sales of The Revolt of Islam. Shelley, we recall, also wanted to feel the pulse of the age, and, like Scythrop, eagerly expected "to be taught by the effect which I shall produce upon those whom I now address."<sup>51</sup>

Ironically, Scythrop's "illuminizing" schemes are aimed at defeating the reactionary forces of darkness who have "misled the many" (iii, 15), and yet his weapons are darkness and obscurity. Weishaupt speaks of enlightenment, yet his society is based on "silence and secrecy." Indeed, Barruel's method is to portray Weishaupt and his followers as demons of darkness and obscurity thinly disguised as angels of light: "In competition with the Sophisters, these men will surpass them in the arts of exhibiting error in false and delusive colours; of disguising the vicious passions under the mask of virtue; and of clothing impiety in the garb of philosophy."<sup>52</sup> The method in Nightmare Abbey is not quite so heavy-handed, and Peacock certainly does not share Barruel's reactionaryism, yet where in Melincourt he saw a clear-cut struggle between light and darkness, reform and reaction, here he sees political ambiguity. On one hand, Scythrop displays a reverence for reason and such abstract ideals from the Enlightenment as Equality and the Rights of Man (or Woman, from Stella's Wollstonecraftian perspective). On the other hand, he is equally drawn by the antirationalism of continental reactionaries, and like Mr. Flosky is a student of "the sublime Kant," whom Barruel and English conservatives under Barruel's influence inexplicably attacked as a "cypher of illuminism,"<sup>52</sup> thus adding to the ideological confusion. As if this were not enough, one of the marriages with which

Nightmare Abbey ends--and a very ambiguous comic ending it is by contrast with the earlier novels--one of these marriages is between the Wollstonecraftian radical Stella and the Coleridgean Tory Mr. Flosky. The ambiguity often charged to Peacock might, I think, be more properly attributed to Peacock's age. Peacock himself seems clear-sighted enough here.

## VI

The "philosophical balance" with which the pros and cons of progress are weighed in Headlong Hall is present in Nightmare Abbey, although in the latter case the qualities being measured seem to be the merits of Thalia and Melpomene, Allegra and Penserosa. This is not, however, to say that the book is not in any way "engaged" politically or philosophically. It is true that in a sense Peacock's purpose seems mainly to assert the ascendancy of comedy over tragedy, to, as he told Shelley, "'make a stand' against the 'encroachments' of black bile" in modern literature. Such intentions in themselves, though, hint at engagement of a kind, for they suggest the idea of a struggle, even a "sacred war," but not as Shelley, nor indeed as Peacock in Melincourt, understood it.

Perhaps "sacred war" is something of a misnomer when applied to Peacock's particular form of engagement in Nightmare Abbey. It is characters like Scythrop,

after all, who see themselves engaged in sacred warfare, as do also, undoubtedly, both the reformers and the reactionaries of Melincourt. In fact, the latter two factions in Nightmare Abbey seem to have joined forces insofar as they are viewed in conjunction as negative, regressive forces, for partylines are not nearly as important here as they are in Melincourt. Certainly, such distinctions exist, but only nominally, and only, in the end, to emphasize their irrelevance from a broad cultural view. What, indeed, are the politics of Nightmare Abbey's characters? Scythrop is a radical leveller but his platform is as esoterically elitist as the obscure rites he has picked up from Barruel; and in his taste for "metaphysical romance and romantic metaphysics", he has much in common with Mr. Flosky. In addition, the motivating force behind both characters is disillusionment of some kind, as we have seen. And what of Mr. Toobad the Manichaeian millenarian? His observations on the degeneracy of the present are amenable to the gloomy conservatism of Mr. Glowry, and his despotic treatment of his daughter Celinda (alias Stella), in Chapter VI, also suggests an identification with established power, as does Mr. Glowry's similar treatment of Scythrop in Chapter IV. Yet, Mr. Toobad also looks forward to a future instauration of the millennium, and in this respect is certainly aligned with a radical strain of the age's



spirit. What, then, are the battle-lines in Nightmare Abbey?

Some fairly clear ones are drawn in Chapter XI when Mr. Hilary invokes the spectre of "a conspiracy against cheerfulness" (iii, 110). Here again is evidence of a "plot psychosis," but with the difference that the conspiracy in question is not aimed at undermining either Liberty or Tyranny, but hope itself. Indeed, when Mr. Hilary makes this statement, he is immediately assailed by a medley of voices, not belonging to any one faction but all nevertheless having taken their part in this "conspiracy against cheerfulness"--the millenarian Mr. Toobad protesting the supremacy of the devil, Mr. Listless citing his aristocratic privilege of ennui, Mr. Flosky venting his Tory disdain for the "reading public," Scythrop lamenting the failure of his "great general designs" (iii, 110). Mr. Hilary wins something of a victory here, for at the end of this episode, following the singing of a particularly gloomy "tragical ballad" by the Byronic Mr. Cypress, he proposes a lively catch which "was so well executed by the spirit and science of Mr. Hilary, and the deep tri-tone voice of the reverend gentleman [Mr. Larynxe] that the whole party, in spite of themselves, caught the contagion, and joined in chorus at the conclusion" (iii, 113).

Mr. Hilary's "spirit and science" of cheerful-

ness implies more than a predisposition to merry songs, however. "The highest wisdom and the highest genius," he argues, "have been invariably accompanied with cheerfulness" (iii, 109). The case made for cheerfulness is thus a case for civilization and its continued progress, but Hilary tempers his enthusiasm with a realistic view of "our mixed and imperfect nature" (iii, 107). The solution is not to polarize the contradictory elements of human nature and wage a dualistic war of light against darkness, hope against despair, but "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" (iii, 109). In a sense, this is a truly conservative position, although it should not be identified with the superstitious brand of Toryism found among the Mainchance Villa reactionaries. Philosophically, Mr. Hilary's position suggests the more genial side of eighteenth century optimism, as put forward by David Hartley, for example:

If the Misery of this Life should, in certain Cases, outweigh the Happiness, it cannot, however, do this in any great Degree. There must, from the Nature of our Frame and Circumstances here, be many Intervals of Ease, Chearfulness, and even positive Pleasure. Dejection and Despondency are therefore as unsuitable to our present Situation, as a vain Confidence, and foolish Hope, of uninterrupted Happiness.<sup>54</sup>

The consequences of such "vain Confidence, and foolish Hope" are amply evident in the farcical slapstick

of Headlong Hall and in the thwarting of Scythrop's schemes in both love and politics. But neither Headlong Hall nor Nightmare Abbey advocates a "statu-quo-ite" philosophy like that of Mr. Jenkison. Rather they indicate the possibility, indeed the inevitability, of progress, but at the same time they warn against excesses of enthusiasm, on either the pro or con sides of the question. Nightmare Abbey's most substantial contribution to the debate lies in its recognition that not only do such extremes actually hinder the continued progress of civilization but they are in fact two sides of the same coin. In the following passage, Scythrop, as ever, is prone to vanity and self-pity, but he does reveal Nightmare Abbey's satiric premise:

There is great good in human nature, but it is at present ill-conditioned. Ardent spirits cannot but be dissatisfied with things as they are; and according to their views of the probabilities of amelioration, they will rush into the excesses of either hope or despair--of which the first is enthusiasm, and the second misanthropy; but their sources in this case are the same, as the Severn and the Wye run in different directions, and both rise in Phlinlimmon (iii, 70).

Here is the dilemma as Shelley described it in his preface to The Revolt of Islam and as it is evident in the two-sided millenarian temper satirized in Scythrop and Mr. Toobad. It constitutes the common rationale of Nightmare Abbey's forces of darkness, from the radical Scythrop and Stella to the Tory Mr. Flosky, from Mr. Toobad's millenarian fervour to Mr. Cypress's Byronic despair.

Enthusiasm is not proscribed utterly in this novel, however. There is at least one enthusiast in Nightmare Abbey who seems to enjoy Peacock's sanction and who is, moreover, among the novel's forces of "sunshine and music." Mr. Asterias the ichthyologist has been identified with a number of eighteenth-century scientists, one of whom Peacock specifically identifies in a note (iii, 66n.).<sup>55</sup> His role in Nightmare Abbey is primarily as an active exponent of Mr. Hilary's "spirit and science" of cheerfulness. Where Hilary is a classical humanist, Asterias represents the different, although ideally complementary, scientific bent of mind. Thus, Mr. Hilary rebukes the morbid turn taken by the age's "speculative" energies--in misanthropy and cosmic pessimism--and sets up against it "the cheerful and solid wisdom of antiquity" (iii, 109), while Asterias puts to shame the age's squandering of its active energies in such figures as Byron's corsair and Scott's outlaws, by the example of his own wide-ranging and fearless expeditions throughout the world in pursuit of scientific knowledge. Asterias is, it is true, a typical Peacockian crotcheteer, what with his obsession with finding a genuine mermaid and his eccentric, though by no means singular, astrological and euhemerist ideas about mythology,<sup>56</sup> but in this case the idée fixe offers a saving stability against the dangerously extreme fluctuations of spirit to which Scythrop and his contem-

poraries are subject. Mr. Asterias has looked in vain for his mermaid "and reaped disappointment, but not despair" (iii, 58). Along with the "cheerful and elastic" Mr. Hilary (iii, 4), he is numbered among the forces of light in Nightmare Abbey.

The "passion for reforming the world" which afflicts the principle character of Nightmare Abbey, it has been pointed out,<sup>57</sup> is the topic of a chapter in Robert Forsyth's Principles of Moral Science (1805), a book which Peacock knew well. In this chapter, Forsyth warns against the dangers of enthusiasm and the extreme poles of sentiment to which the deluded enthusiast is prone, a warning clearly pertinent to Peacock's concerns in his novel. It has been further shown that Forsyth is the "Scotch philosopher"<sup>58</sup> whom Shelley justified himself against in his preface to Prometheus Unbound, the year following Nightmare Abbey's publication. Butler is undoubtedly correct in suggesting that Shelley was at the same time responding here to Peacock's cautionary portrait of the enthusiast Scythrop Glowry, who is the victim of the "passion" proscribed by Forsyth in his book. However, as his letters to Peacock indicate, Shelley was quick to recognize in "the misdirected enthusiasm of Scythrop what J[esus] C[hrist] calls the salt of the earth." Peacock, it is fairly certain, had recognized this saving quality in his friend and in all enthusiasts like him. Nightmare

Abbey is not intended to be a denunciation of the enthusiasm for progress, so much as a corrective aimed, to quote Forsyth in another chapter of his book, at "those ardent minds which, when well directed, form the salt of the earth."<sup>59</sup>

#### CHAPTER FOUR: CROTCHET CASTLE

The idea of the master or mistress of the mansion living apart from their domestics was...never entertained. The highest end of the board, the most commodious settle by the fire,--these were the only marks of distinction; and the servants mingled, with deference indeed, but unproved and with freedom, in whatever conversation was going forward.

Sir Walter Scott, The Abbot (1820)

Appearing in 1831, Crotchet Castle would be Peacock's last novel for thirty years, and strictly speaking is Peacock's last novel of the Romantic age, although it has been remarked that Gryll Grange (1861) shows little evidence of having been written in the age of Dickens and Eliot. In any case, if Crotchet Castle is not Peacock's final work of satire, it is in many ways certainly his most definitive. The decade which commenced with its publication was something of a watershed not only for Peacock but for the age which Peacock satirized, for it saw the passing of the first Reform Bill in 1832 and, just five years later, the beginning of Victoria's reign. Where the 1790's were a decade of tumultuous upheaval, the 1830's were largely one of consolidation. Many social and political trends, begun in the eighteenth century and accelerated mightily by the French Revolution, were in this decade beginning to take some definite form and harden into a status quo. The extreme swing towards

conservatism which the intervening decades had witnessed was an alarmist reaction to the events in France and had by now run its course. The broader movement was towards liberalism and reason. Crotchet Castle seems acutely aware of this consolidation of the liberal spirit of the age. As Marilyn Butler very aptly observes: "Where The Misfortunes of Elphin was primarily a satire on Toryism, Crotchet Castle is a satire on a world in which liberalism has become orthodoxy."<sup>1</sup>

This is not, however, to say that in the earlier satires--Melincourt certainly as much as The Misfortunes of Elphin--Peacock perceived the evil in conservatism, while now in Crotchet Castle he saw it in liberalism, any more than it is to say that Peacock is exclusively either a conservative or a liberal anywhere in his works. Butler's view, indeed, needs to be qualified, for it suggests a rather abrupt shift in both Peacock and his age. The Misfortunes of Elphin, after all, appeared a scant two years before Crotchet Castle, and a similar two year interval separates the fall of Wellington's ministry in 1830 and the Reform bill of 1832. Much also of what Peacock satirizes in Crotchet Castle he satirized in the preceding romance and, more than a decade earlier, in Melincourt.

Indeed, perhaps nowhere else in his works is Peacock more liberal in his sympathies than in Melincourt,



using his satire to undermine party-line Toryism in all its forms: its spurious Burkean apologetics, its rotten boroughs and corrupt electoral system. Yet the philosophic-radicalism of the novel's protagonists, I have pointed out, finds its venal reflection in the "enlightened" self-interest of their Tory protagonists. The "pleasure principle" followed by the latter faction is not, however, directed at "the greatest number," but it is an outgrowth of liberal rationalism--liberal rationalism, indeed, used as a tool of political and personal expediency. Perhaps Peacock's most engaged satire and certainly his most partisan, Melincourt nevertheless does not ultimately draw a clear dividing line between liberal and conservative.

If fifteen years later in Crotchet Castle, the dividing line seems clearer, it is partly because, by the 1830's, the muddle of ideological oppositions and contradictions depicted in Melincourt had to some degree been sorted out and the separate issues seen more distinctly. The credit for this clearer perspective is due less perhaps to the particular wisdom of the time than to the fact that many lines of thought and activity just being generated in the post-revolutionary years had by now assumed distinct and recognizable forms. Although the philosophic radicalism associated with a figure like Godwin was now a thing of the past, as Hazlitt ruefully noted in 1825,<sup>2</sup> Bentham's more practical and legislative brand was easily

assimilated by the liberal orthodoxy of the 1830's and had now nothing "radical" about it. Liberal rationalism underwent an even more striking transformation in its emergence in the phenomenon of political economy. Tracing its origins back to ideas in the eighteenth century, which were formulated in the first decades of the nineteenth century by Malthus, Ricardo and others into a full fledged "science," political economy exerted perhaps the single most powerful influence on nineteenth-century society and politics.<sup>3</sup> Crotchet Castle dramatizes and examines these and other characteristics of the new age being ushered in by the 1830's. If Peacock looks back in this novel at issues previously dealt with in his satire, it is because these issues are now the fully-formed products of the intellectual and political ferment of the post-revolutionary decade witnessed in Headlong Hall, Melincourt, and Nightmare Abbey (and the romances). They either contradict or, more often, in fact, validate his positions in these earlier works.

To call Crotchet Castle Peacock's most definitive satire, then, is not, I think, to conveniently round off the fifteen or so years of Peacock's most fruitful literary period with a fully matured and inevitable masterpiece. It is not even to view the novel from an exclusively literary view-point, although Crotchet Castle, if not fundamentally different from anything which pre-

ceded it, does represent something of an advance in technique. Aesthetic considerations, in any case, are, here and elsewhere in Peacock, subordinate to, and in a real sense dependent upon, the question of the satire's intellectual soundness, and it is by this criterion that Crotchet Castle can be considered definitive.

## II

Like Headlong Hall, Crotchet Castle gives in its first chapter a brief account of its host-character's genealogy. Unlike Harry Headlong, however, Ebenezer Mac Crotchet is not of a very distinguished or long lineage. Where the squire of Headlong Hall, through an ancestry reaching farther back than the Deluge, enjoys a long and ancient association with the mountainous Welsh countryside of his family seat, Mr. Crotchet has no claims on his Thames valley estate and its castellated villa beyond those of strictly legal ownership and a spurious coat of arms. In addition to having Jewish blood by way of maternal family connections, Crotchet is also half Scottish on his paternal side, the offspring of a commercial adventurer from Scotland who made his fortune in London. Consequently, "Mr. Mac Crotchet had derived from his mother the instinct, and from his father the rational principle, of enriching himself at the expense of the rest of mankind, by all the recognized modes of

accumulation on the windy side of the law" (iv, 2). The anti-semitic stereotype is obvious enough and not uncharacteristic.<sup>4</sup> While it is no less usual to attribute greed to the Scots, there is more to the "rational principle" of acquisition, which is the legacy of Crotchet's Scottish heritage, than simple prejudice, although Peacock clearly had no love for the Scots in any case.

With his mixed ancestry, Crotchet is obviously meant to be a newcomer to the English landed gentry, even something of an intruder like the marauding Scots of former days whom Peacock refers to elsewhere,<sup>5</sup> with perhaps an oblique glance at their modern day successors, the political economists. Indeed, Peacock explicitly makes this latter association in his Paper Money Lyrics, written during the winter of 1825-26 and privately printed in 1837. Peacock's general target here, as he points out in a preface, is "that arch class of quacks, who call themselves political economists" (vii, 99), but in this series of short poems with titles like "Lament of the Scotch Economists" and "Caledonian War Whoop," he singles out "Scottish Philosophy" as the moving force behind the pernicious "economic science" (vii, 104):

Come, sing as we've said it--Oho! Oho!  
Sing 'free trade and credit'--Oho! Oho!  
Sing 'Scotch education,'  
And 'o'er-population,'  
And 'Wealth of the nation'--Oho! Oho! (vii, 137).

Mr. Crotchet himself is not a political economist but in

his financial adventures in London, he must have been an active exponent of the principles of political economy. Moreover, having retired now from active business life, Mr. Crotchet has turned his "Caledonian instinct" into more speculative channels:

Amongst other things, he took very naturally to political economy, read all the books on the subject which were put forth by his own countrymen, attended all the lectures therein, and boxed the technology of the sublime science as expertly as an able seaman boxes the compass (iv, 7).

Mr. Crotchet's aptitude for political economy, then, is an inevitable consequence of both his dual heritage and his former profession. It has, indeed, been suggested that this character is in some part based on David Ricardo who, in addition to being a preeminent political economist, was also a London financier of Jewish descent who retired to a country estate and may even, like Mr. Crotchet, have been a collector of antique statuary.<sup>6</sup> More significant, however, are Mr. Crotchet's Scottish background and his related passion for the "sublime science," for they represent, in Peacock's view, the debasement of a tradition with its roots in the Enlightenment, the Scottish Enlightenment in particular.

Peacock, it has often been noted by his commentators, is in many respects himself a figure of the Enlightenment. His political and philosophical leanings are generally in the debt of the eighteenth century, as indeed were those

of the younger Romantics as a whole, and his view of history is, as I show in my introduction, typical of the Enlightenment--broad, speculative, highly rational. Not surprisingly, then, the Enlightenment, and specifically its central historical thesis of a continually evolving and progressive civil society, play an important role in Crotchet Castle, although Peacock's approach here is mainly revisionist in nature. Of course, fifteen years earlier, Headlong Hall had strongly qualified the ideas of progress and human perfectibility, but no more, really, than the eighteenth-century historians themselves had. Like the latter, Peacock shows himself in Headlong Hall to be aware of the dangers inherent in man's innately progressive nature, but at the same time he accepts man's nature as namely that--innately progressive--and accepts that man and civil society will progress, albeit with frequent and occasionally calamitous consequences. Melincourt contains at least a potential criticism of the social and economic development predicated, and in ways encouraged, by the Enlightenment. Such phenomena as paper credit, Malthusianism, and more broadly, the swiftly rising commercialism of the age are certainly traceable to certain eighteenth-century tendencies. However, Melincourt was written during the decade of Peterloo. The post-revolutionary reactionism of that period, although eminently worthy of satiric treatment, tends to obscure the his-

torical issue and, in some respects, to limit Peacock to effects rather than their causes. It would take the decade or so that followed Melincourt for the clearer, more detailed perspective of Crotchet Castle to develop.

One of the contributing voices of this decade was that of William Cobbett--in his Political Register, his History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland (1824) and the famous Rural Rides which appeared the year Crotchet Castle was being written. Cobbett's dislike of political economy is well-known, and certainly Peacock's animus towards paper-credit is largely due to Cobbett's influence. Equally important is Cobbett's dislike of "the Scotch feelosofers"<sup>7</sup> to whom Cobbett attached the blame for much of what he criticized in the age--among other things, political economy, and, in a broader yet related connection, a doctrinaire view of history which, according to Cobbett, served only to justify certain pernicious aspects of the present social order. In the latter area, Cobbett's main targets are "Hume and the Scotch historians."<sup>8</sup> "Read modern romancers, called historians," he sneers in his History of the Reformation, "every one of whom has written for place or pension; read the statements about the superiority of the present over former times, about our prodigious increase in population, wealth, power, and, above all things, our superior freedom."<sup>9</sup> It is not always clear whether by "Scotch feeloso-

fers" Cobbett means the eighteenth-century Scottish historians like Hume, or contemporary Scottish political economists like John Ramsey McCulloch, whom Cobbett frequently singles out for attack in The Political Register. Indeed, it is possible that the ambiguity is often quite deliberate, for both schools are, in Cobbett's view, closely connected. What, after all, are men like David Hume and Adam Smith, writing upon "population, wealth, power," but the forerunners of "Scotch political economy" and, more than this, its authorities? Such is surely the import of Peacock's Mr. Mac Quedy.

Mac Quedy, indeed, is the key to the "Scotch" satire of Crotchet Castle, the chief apologist for the "pound-shilling-and-pence philosophy" (iv, 59) which has produced the new class represented by Mr. Crotchet. This character has been identified with various economists of Peacock's time, although it seems likely that William F. Kennedy is correct in seeing him as a type of the nineteenth-century political economist.<sup>10</sup> In any case, to his mastery of the central preoccupations of political economy, including "rent, profit, wages, and currency" (iv, 17), "exchangeable value" (iv, 44) and "the division of labour" (iv, 71), Mac Quedy brings a certain amount of historical acumen. And, significantly, Peacock has put the language of the eighteenth-century historians into Mac Quedy's mouth to complement his political economist's



jargon. Like a Ferguson or a Robertson, Mac Quedy discourses on "the progress of civilization" and compares savage man to civilized man (iv, 26). As much too like Ferguson as Adam Smith, he stipulates "respect for property" as a required condition for the "perfectly civilized state" (iv, 34-5). And perhaps like almost every one of the Scottish historians, he begins his discourses with the requisite "In the infancy of society..." (iv, 70-1).

Probably, then, Peacock created this composite political economist-philosophical historian in part out of hints from Cobbett, particularly the latter's attacks on "Scotch philosophy" in his History of the Protestant Reformation and the Rural Rides. Specifically, Mac Quedy may represent, in this connection, certain of the views put forward by James McCulloch, mentioned above, an actual political economist of Peacock's acquaintance. Commentators as far back as Henry Cole have in fact suggested McCulloch as a probable model for Mac Quedy; however, the identification has always been a fairly general one, based mainly on Cole's claim that Peacock himself had told him that Mac Quedy was McCulloch.<sup>11</sup> Kennedy, moreover, has extended the list of Mac Quedy's prototypes to include two other contemporary political economists: James Mill and Robert Mushet. To the latter, indeed, Kennedy and others have attributed the phrase used by Mac Quedy, "In the infancy of society," on the basis of

a well-known anecdote of Sir Edward Strachey's.<sup>12</sup> For Mac Quedy's general historical bent, however, Peacock was more likely thinking of McCulloch's Principles of Political Economy, which appeared one year before Crotchet Castle's publication, although the bulk of it had appeared previously in the form of articles in the Edinburgh Review.<sup>13</sup>

As the subtitle of this work suggests, A Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Science, McCulloch's approach to the subject of political economy is very much an historical one, drawing on the method of the Scottish philosophical historians. Like, for example, Adam Smith, McCulloch speaks often of "the progress of mankind from poverty and barbarism to wealth and civilization,"<sup>14</sup> a phrase echoed in Mac Quedy's discourses on "the progress of civilization." The political economist, like the historian, says McCulloch, "should study man in every different situation--he should have recourse to the history of society, arts, commerce, and civilization--to the works of legislators, philosophers, and travellers--to everything, in short, that can throw light on the causes which accelerate or retard the progress of nations."<sup>15</sup> Significantly, the phrase attributed to Mueset in Strachey's account also occurs in McCulloch's work and is strongly suggestive of eighteenth-century philosophical history with man's innately progressive nature as its thesis:

In the infancy of society, indeed, being destitute of that knowledge which is the result of long experience and study, without that dexterity which is the effect of practice, and without the guidance of those instincts which direct other animals, man seems to occupy one of the lowest places in the scale of being. But the faculties of most animals come rapidly to maturity, and admit of no further increase or diminution; whereas the human species is naturally progressive.<sup>16</sup>

What makes such passages especially pertinent to Peacock's Mr. Mac Quedy, as I will show, is the fact that the broad scheme of human progress which McCulloch has derived from the Scottish historians appears, in McCulloch's and Mac Quedy's views at least, to have culminated in nineteenth-century Scotland and its most illustrious science, "Scotch political economy."

Walter Bagehot said of Adam Smith that he wanted to show "how from being a savage, man rose to be a Scotchman,"<sup>17</sup> a sentiment shared by Mr. Mac Quedy, who clearly looks north for his model of polished civil society. To the Reverend Dr. Folliot's observation that the world could learn much from the Scots in "the art and science of fish for breakfast," Mac Quedy adds:

And in many others, sir, I believe. Morals and metaphysics, politics and political economy, the way to make the most of all the modifications of smoke; steam, gas, and paper currency; you have all these to learn from us; in short, all the arts and sciences. We are the modern Athenians (iv, 16).

The parallel between nineteenth-century Scotland and Plato's Athens becomes something of a motif in the novel and raises questions which will be treated presently in this

chapter. Here, in any case, it should be noted that Mac Quedy's claims for his country's pre-eminence in "all the arts and sciences" echo the assurance and optimism of the Scottish Enlightenment, and certainly Peacock's was not the first satire of the "modern Athenians." As early as 1754, John Witherspoon had made a witty rebuttal of "The Athenian Creed" with its founding belief in "a progressive motion towards the zenith of perfection, and meridian of glory"--namely, eighteenth-century Scotland.<sup>18</sup> Somewhat less than a century later, with some hints from Cobbett and McCulloch, Peacock presents in the character of Mr. Mac Quedy a set of similarly satirized assumptions concerning the progress of man. In this instance, of course, it is nineteenth-century Scotland which is the model of advanced society; however, like McCulloch's, Mac Quedy's language is that of his eighteenth-century countrymen, as is his method. Moreover, a Scotsman and a political economist, he is a fitting heir to Adam Smith.

But what are the accomplishments of Mac Quedy's "modern Athenians?" Reverend Dr. Folliot questions Mac Quedy on this point, saying:

Athenians, indeed! Where is your theatre? who among you has written a comedy? where is your attic salt? which of you can tell who was Jupiter's great grandfather? or what metres will successively remain, if you take off the first three syllables, one by one, from a pure anapaestic acatalectic tetrameter? Now, sir, there are three questions for you; theatrical, mythological, and metrical; to every one of which an Athenian would give an answer that would lay one

prostrate in my own nothingness (iv, 19).

Admittedly Folliot here betrays his own rather limited and pedantic conception of the ideal represented by ancient Athens. Perhaps his earlier admonishment to Mac Quedy, simply to "leave the name of Athenians to those who have a sense of the beautiful" (iv, 16), comes closer to the mark. In any case, Folliot comes ever so much closer than Mac Quedy, who not only fails to comprehend the aesthetic values of Hellenic culture, but even asserts the Scots' superiority over the ancient Athenians in purely intellectual matters. Like McCulloch, who patronizingly observes that "the ancients were...entire strangers to those interesting and important questions arising out of the rise and fall of rents and wages, which form so important a branch of economical science,"<sup>19</sup> Mac Quedy exclaims: "Metaphysics, sir, metaphysics. Logic and moral philosophy. There we are at home. The Athenians only sought the way, and we have found it; and to all this we have added political economy, the science of sciences" (iv, 20-21).

It was an unintentional irony that Peacock should have put into a political economist's mouth the phrase which more than forty years later John Henry Newman would use to express the need for a more comprehensive humanistic science, a "science of sciences," with which to restore some order and meaning to a fragmented and increasingly specialized field of knowledge.<sup>20</sup> In its present context, of

course, Mac Quedy's "science of sciences," like all other such intellectual panacea in Peacock's fiction, is merely an idée fixe, albeit of a much more dangerous nature than craniology or landscape gardening. Indeed, in Science and the Modern World, Alfred North Whitehead feels that nineteenth-century political economy "riveted on man a certain set of abstractions which were disastrous in their influence on modern mentality,"<sup>21</sup> and certainly Mac Quedy's characteristic mode of viewing man and society tends towards such an end. As we have seen, to Folliot's belief that "a sense of the beautiful" is essential to the true Athenian, Mac Quedy obtusely replies: "Then, sir, I presume you set no value on the right principles of rent, profit, wages and currency" (iv, 16-17). Moreover, such "right principles" are apparently, to Mac Quedy's (and McCulloch's) way of thinking, the highest achievements of polished civil society, as indeed they are the legacy, seen from a very limited perspective, of the Scottish Enlightenment. To Folliot, however, and to Peacock too, we can be sure, they represent "a hyperbarbarous technology, that no Athenian ear could have borne" (iv, 21), the very antithesis, in fact, of what constitutes civilized culture, and thus a debasement, if historically in some respects an inevitable outgrowth, of Enlightenment values. Hence Cobbett's jibe at "a modest Scotch writer":

But, do I not, all this while, misunderstand the

matter? And, by intellect, does not the Scotchman mean the capacity to make, not books and pictures, but checks, bills, bonds, exchequerbills, inimitable notes, and the like? Does he not mean bar-jobbing and stock-jobbing, insurance-broking, annuities at ten per cent, and all the 'intellectual' proceedings of 'Change Alley?'<sup>22</sup>

It is this ignominious cultural background, then, which has produced the phenomenon of Mr. Crotchet, with his fortune gained through speculation in the "alley" and a related penchant for other, more intellectual, forms of speculation. This character is in some ways as much a product of the Enlightenment as another of Peacock's host-characters, Squire Headlong, but with an important difference. The squire is a living embodiment of "perfectibility" and his family's history an account in small of the progress of civil society via eighteenth-century euhemerist mythology. He is not merely host to the characters assembled at Headlong Hall but the moving genius behind the novel's events and ultimate comic resolution-- and all by a curious kind of historical necessity. He is in a very real way a cultural force, calamity prone, it is true, and perhaps not very discriminating in his enthusiasms, but still potent and capable of positive change. Crotchet, on the other hand, represents a less creditable strain of Enlightenment thought. He is the progeny of The Wealth of Nations, or, more accurately, of its debasement by the likes of Mac Quedy-McCulloch, who is the apologist for a narrow, and finally mean-spirited

mercantilism which goes against the very grain of the expansive and inquiring spirit of the Enlightenment, but which nevertheless can still claim its parentage in certain Enlightenment ideas if not ideals. With his mixed Hebrew and Caledonian heritage, Crotchet represents the commercial spirit in both its practical and its theoretical aspects, and just as Squire Headlong symbolizes human "perfectibility," as variously censured and panegyricized by Rousseau and Godwin, Crotchet is himself a worthy embodiment of "The March of Mind," which ominously shows itself throughout Crotchet Castle in such diverse forms as popular education, political economy, steam power and so forth.

This is not to say that Crotchet himself is entirely incapable of genuinely broad views. For example, he gives a spirited defence of his nude statuary against Reverend Folliot's prudish objections (but on the authority, significantly, of Diderot, a figure of the French, not the Scottish, Enlightenment). It is rather what he represents which is dangerous. He is "half-informed," as Lady Clarinda says of him, and "thinks Mr. Mac Quedy an oracle" (iv, 56). Though a hospitable and generous host, "nothing would induce him to give sixpence to the poor, because he holds that all misfortune is from imprudence, that none but the rich ought to marry, and that all ought to thrive by honest industry, as he did" (iv, 56). Looking



back to Malthus and beyond him to Adam Smith, and anticipating both Messrs. Bulstrode and Bounderby, Mr. Crotchet is indeed a fit host for this novel of talk written in the 1830's.

### III

A conflict between sentiment and calculation forms the historical and social background of Crotchet Castle. It is also a strong presence in the novel's foreground action. In the opening chapter, we are introduced to Mr. Crotchet and his singular cultural heritage. Moreover, we are told of a son, the "hope of his name and race," who has, when the novel opens, become a junior partner in a loan-jobbing firm where he now applies "his science-illuminated genius to the blowing of bubbles" (iv, 7). There is also a daughter, whose name Lemma is, significantly, Greek for profit or gain, and who, endowed by her father with an ample dowry, is "thus eminently qualified to be the companion of any masculine luminary who had kept due pace with the 'astounding progress' of intelligence" (iv, 10). It is the son, Crotchet Jr., however, who occupies a pivotal place in the novel's love interest, not because he has an especially large speaking role in this voluble novel of talk--for a Peacockian character he is a virtual nonentity in this respect-- and certainly not because he is in any way suited for romantic intrigue.

Rather, it is Crotchet Jr.'s very deficiencies as both a character and a man which constitute his importance to the story.

We learn that he had, some time before the commencement of the novel's action, been on the point of increasing his fortune by marrying the daughter of a great banker named Timothy Touchandgo who, before that was possible however, was forced to flee the country when his bank failed. As a result, the fortune which young Crotchet had intended to marry not forthcoming, "this tender affair of the heart was nipped in the bud" (iv, 8). When the novel opens, the forlorn young lady, Susannah Touchandgo, lives in rural retirement in North Wales where, like Marianna at the Grange, she sometimes pines for her "faithless Strephon," but is thriving nevertheless amidst her wholesome rustic surroundings:

The young lady's personal appearance, consequently, formed a very advantageous contrast to that of her quondam lover, whose physiognomy the intense anxieties of his bubble blowing days, notwithstanding their triumphant result, had left blighted, sallow, and crow's-footed, to a degree not far below that of the fallen spirit who, in the expressive language of German romance, is described as 'scathed by the ineradicable traces of the thunderbolts of Heaven;' so that, contemplating their relative geographical positions, the poor deserted damsel was flourishing on slate, while her rich and false young knight was pining on chalk (iv, 9).

The analogy with a "fallen spirit" is apt, and perhaps suggests the corruptive social and cultural influences which have produced Crotchet Jr. Such influences

have clearly been operating upon Crotchet Jr.'s latest betrothed, Lady Clarinda, who is mourned by a former suitor named Captain Fitzchrome, "as over a fallen angel" (iv, 41). Lady Clarinda is the daughter of a certain Lord Foolincourt, one of the old nobility and the owner of a borough, who has fallen on hard financial times. It is with the intention of improving their family's prospects, and their own, that Clarinda and her brother Lord Bossnowl are arranging for a double marriage with Crotchet Jr. and his sister. Obviously here, we have a match between the old nobility, venerable and connected, but swiftly declining, and an aggressive new class of businessmen and industrialists eager for some kind of social legitimacy. In Lord Bossnowl's case, this is not such a bad thing perhaps, as he is merely a fop, very much in the line of other foolish young lords in Peacock like Lord Littlebrain of Headlong Hall and the malignant Lord Achthar of Melincourt. Lady Clarinda, on the other hand, clearly deserves better. She possesses wit, intelligence, and is one of the most likeable of a host of likeable female characters in Peacock's fiction.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, she recalls some of Shakespeare's witty comic heroines. Moreover, despite her apparent submission to the dictates of a materialistic, status-hungry society, she has no illusions about that society and gives ample evidence of seeing through its follies at every instance. Yet when the novel

opens she seems intent upon marrying the cold and rather inhuman Crotchet Jr., and for no other reason than that he has wealth.

In Chapter III, we are introduced to Captain Fitzchrome who, more by design, perhaps, than accident, has wandered onto the Crotchet estate during the course of a picturesque tour. Here he happens to meet Clarinda and it is revealed that they were formerly lovers, but not before he learns from Reverend Folliot of Clarinda's imminent marriage plans. Upon being reproached by Fitzchrome for sacrificing her heart to Mammon, Clarinda cynically replies:

Do you know, though Mammon has a sort of ill name, I really think he is a very popular character; there must be at the bottom something amiable about him. He is certainly one of those pleasant creatures whom every body abuses, but without whom no evening party is endurable. I dare say, love in a cottage is very pleasant; but then it must positively be a cottage ornée: but would not the same love be a great deal safer in a castle, even if Mammon furnished the fortification? (iv, 37).

It is never clear whether Clarinda is entirely serious in what she says, but Fitzchrome takes her at her word here, complaining: "Oh Lady Clarinda! there is a heartlessness in that language that chills me to the soul" (iv, 37).

Although as a character the Captain does not possess even Crotchet Jr.'s malevolent deadpan presence, he is obviously meant to be as ardent and genuine in his love for Clarinda as Crotchet Jr. is cold and self-interested. He

is also, as Clarinda points out later, apt to be "rhapsodical" (iv, 58). Even so, and notwithstanding Clarinda's own teasing nature, Fitzchrome is correct in seeing more in Clarinda's "heartlessness" than mere coquetry.

Indeed, despite diverging social backgrounds, Lady Clarinda and Crotchet Jr. are, in a broad sense, cut from the same cloth, for they have both, in their own ways, been educated in what Southey called "our heart-chilling and heart-hardening society."<sup>24</sup> If Crotchet Jr. has coolly jilted Susannah Touchandgo after her sudden change in fortune, so Lady Clarinda seems at some point to have broken off her "affair of the heart" (iv, 36) with Captain Fitzchrome, and from motives no less mercenary than those of her latest intended. The latter, of course, has received his instruction at his father's knee in the principles of political economy. There is nothing to suggest that Clarinda has received such a thoroughgoing education in the "dismal science," yet her apparent attitude towards love and marriage gives every indication of at least an essential understanding of its principles. The "doctrines of worldly wisdom" (iv, 130) with which she repels Fitzchrome's ardent advances are as pragmatic as those of political economy, and are drawn, moreover, from a particular source. When the Captain expresses his sorrow at her expedient philosophy, she replies:

What, because I have made up my mind not to give away

my heart when I can sell it? I will introduce you to my new acquaintance, Mr. Mac Quedy: he will talk to you by the hour about exchangeable value, and show you that no rational being will part with anything, except to the highest bidder (iv, 41).

Mac Quedy is again introduced as Clarinda's preceptor later, in Chapter V, when at a dinner Clarinda gives Fitzchrome thumbnail sketches of Mr. Crotchet's guests:

Well next to him [Mr. Henbane, the toxicologist] sits Mr. Mac Quedy, the Modern Athenian, who lays down the law about every thing, and therefore may be taken to understand every thing. He turns all the affairs of this world into questions of buying and selling. He is the Spirit of the Frozen Ocean to anything like romance and sentiment. He condenses their volume of steam into a drop of cold water in a moment. He has satisfied me that I am a commodity in the market, and that I ought to set myself at a high price. So you see he who would have me must bid for me (iv, 57-58).

At such sentiments, expressed in "their naked deformity," the idealistic Fitzchrome professes himself shocked, and yet Clarinda, half in jest we can be certain, assures him on Mr. Mac Quedy's authority "that they are the cream of the most refined philosophy" (iv, 41). The "cream" of Mr. Mac Quedy's "pound-shilling-and-pence philosophy" they may be, but they are "refined" only in the dangerously exclusive sense in which culture is defined by the likes of Mac Quedy and the Modern Athenians. Not only love and marriage, but "romance and sentiment," indeed "all the affairs of this world" are resolved into "questions of buying and selling" in this philosophy. Value ceases to have a moral or even an aesthetic basis--

all is judged according to its market price.

It is significant that Fitzchrome finally wins Clarinda, but only at the novel's end during the Yule-tide celebrations held in Mr. Chainmail's great baronial hall. The process which leads up to this reconciliation, if perhaps just a bit less contrived narratively than similar arrangements in Peacock's other novels, is nevertheless prepared for on an intellectual level at least. At Mr. Crotchet's modern castellated villa, any sympathy between the Captain and Clarinda is necessarily obstructed by the presiding commercial spirit of the place. Both Crotchet Castle and its owner are products of this spirit, enlightened, rational, and closed off from the past, for all goes forward in "The March of Mind." Romance and sentiment are excluded here, as they are in that other closed system, political economy. However, once removed from this locality, the novel's action begins on a very different course, literally, as Butler has pointed out of "The Voyage" in Chapters IX and X, into the past. "It [the Thames voyage] takes the moderns of Crotchet Castle back in time, to Medieval Oxford, and then to Wales, which stands notionally for the infancy of society."<sup>25</sup>

No very striking transformations in sensibility are effected during the voyage itself. In itself, indeed, this expedition is a rather academic exercise, a guided tour into history, with commentary by Messrs. Mac Quedy and

Chainmail, speaking for moderns and ancients respectively. It is what happens once off the boat which is significant. Exasperated by Clarinda's "worldly wisdom," and perhaps also by his disputatious fellow travellers, the Captain, suffering from "le coeur navré," abandons this Thames expedition and wanders off into the same Welsh mountains where the similarly afflicted Susannah Touchandgo has taken refuge from the world. He in turn is followed, not long afterwards, by Mr. Chainmail the medievalist, who has gone ashore in order to pursue some antiquarian investigations in the vicinity. The two meet by chance at a secluded Merionethshire inn where Mr. Chainmail asks the Captain why he left the others, and, upon being told, offers his opinion that Clarinda's heart is in fact the Captain's. The ensuing discussion serves to put the question on a broad historical plane not unlike that on which poetry is discussed in "The Four Ages":

CAPTAIN FITZCHROME.

Hearts are not now what they were in the days of the old song, 'Will love be controlled by advice?'

MR. CHAINMAIL.

Very true; hearts, heads and arms have all degenerated most sadly. We can no more feel the high impassioned love of the ages, which some people have the impudence to call dark, than we can wield King Richard's battleaxe, bend Robin Hood's bow, or flourish the oaken graff of the Pindar of Wakefield. Still we have our tastes and feelings, though they deserve not the name of passions; and some of us may pluck up spirit to try to carry a point, when we reflect that we contend with one no better than ourselves (iv, 145).

The episodes which follow do not directly involve



Clarinda or the Captain at all. Indeed, centrally they depict the romance which develops between Mr. Chainmail and the forlorn Miss Touchandgo, whom the young medievalist courts amidst the wild scenery of Merionethshire. However, set far as it is from the worldly concerns of Crotchet Castle, this romantic sub-plot touches on the Captain's and Clarinda's dilemma, for it demonstrates the possibility of genuine love even in an age of calculation. It should be remembered, of course, as Mr. Chainmail suggests above, that the modern, civilized man cannot hope to love in precisely the same way as his more robust ancestors did (any more, indeed, than he can live like them). Thus for "passion" are substituted "tastes and feelings," qualities which both Mr. Chainmail and the Captain can rightfully claim, and which, moreover, are amenable to that ideal of humane conduct so grievously lacking in a world of Crotchets and Mac Quedys. On the evidence of some of his other beliefs voiced elsewhere in the novel, Mr. Chainmail seems an unlikely compromiser. Yet despite his often dogmatic medievalism, Mr. Chainmail is as typical a specimen of polished man as Captain Fitzchrome. Even his antiquarian interests suggest civilized tastes and quite clearly bear out Mr. Mac Quedy's earlier dictum that "Men never begin to study antiquities till they are saturated with civilization" (iv, 34). If he ranges the Merionethshire hills in search of "unsophisticated scenery" (iv,

158), it is with the thoroughly modern eye of the picturesque tourist. This is not to disparage Mr. Chainmail's primitivism, only to recognize, as he himself does in his less dogmatic moments, an inescapable fact of culture. Moreover, it is this point which underlines the courtship and eventual marriage of Mr. Chainmail and Susannah Touchandgo.

Susannah, we recall, is the jilted bride of the stock-jobbing, loan-jobbing Crotchet Jr., and the daughter of yet another bubble-blower, the absconded Timothy Touchandgo. Her present rusticity notwithstanding, then, her family background and connections are commercial-- a circumstance not likely to appeal to Mr. Chainmail who has earlier told the Captain that he will only have a lady of gentle blood (i, 147). Indeed, in the course of their courtship, Susannah divines Mr. Chainmail's prejudice and begins to fear that her name and parentage will "present an insuperable barrier to his feudal pride" (iv, 171). What Peacock is depicting here, in effect, is the apparently irreconcilable rift between the Ancients and the Moderns. This same situation exists potentially in Headlong Hall when the well-descended Squire Headlong, against his aunt's objection, proposes to marry a young lady of no distinguished background, and a Saxon at that. The squire marries the girl, rationalizing his breach of ancient custom with the very "modern" notion that he is

more "enlightened" than any of his ancestors. In fact, he is simply accepting the idea of progress, that such change is inevitable in a culture. A similar solution is effected in Crotchet Castle when Mr. Chainmail does finally learn the truth about Susannah:

She told him her history; but he was out of reach of repentance. 'It is true,' as at a subsequent period he said to the captain, 'she is the daughter of a money-changer; one who, in the days of Richard the First, would have been plucked by the beard in the streets; but she is, according to modern notions, a lady of gentle blood. As to her father's running away, that is a minor consideration. I have always understood, from Mr. Mac Quedy, who is a great oracle in this way, that promises to pay ought not to be kept; the essence of a safe and economical currency being an interminable series of broken promises. There seems to be a difference among the learned as to the way in which the promises ought to be broken; but I am not deep enough in their casuistry to enter into such nice distinctions (iv, 184).

Like Clarinda, then, Mr. Chainmail rationalizes his position by wittily exploiting a principle of political economy. The difference is that by doing so he has secured his happiness. By conceding to modern mores to the extent that he does not allow his medieval prejudices to thwart his love for Susannah, Mr. Chainmail follows both his reason and his feeling. Clarinda, by contrast, has followed neither. By surrendering entirely to the calculating spirit of the age and allowing herself to be led by the dry precepts of Mac Quedy's "dismal science," she seems willing to sacrifice her happiness for gain, just as that unregenerate "fallen spirit," Crotchet Jr., has done in

trampling on Susannah Touchandgo's love, "as the renegade tramples on the emblems of a faith which his interest only, and not his heart or his reason, has rejected" (iv, 163). In the end, Clarinda accepts her true love, Captain Fitzchrome, and through nothing but a swift glance (iv, 210), but the ballad with which she has prefaced this tacit recognition, sung amidst the archaic celebrations at Chainmail Hall, is explanation enough for her abrupt turn-about:

In days of old  
 Lovers felt true passion,  
 Deeming years of sorrow  
 By a smile repaid.  
 Now the charms of gold,  
 Spells of pride and fashion,  
 Bid them say good morrow  
 To the best-loved maid.

Through forests wild  
 O'er the mountains lonely,  
 They were never weary  
 Honour to pursue:  
 If the damsel smiled  
 Once in seven years only,  
 All their wanderings dreary  
 Ample guerdon knew.

Now one day's caprice  
 Weighs down years of smiling,  
 Youthful hearts are rovers,  
 Love is bought and sold:  
 Fortune's gifts may cease,  
 Love is less beguiling,  
 Wiser were the lovers,  
 In the days of old (iv, 210).

#### IV

If a satisfactory resolution is reached on the personal level in Crotchet Castle, one is only partially

glimpsed in the broader cultural controversy which frames the story's love interest. In 1829, two years before the publication of Crotchet Castle, appeared Southey's Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society, called by J. S. Mill "the gloomiest book ever written by a cheerful man."<sup>26</sup> The historical view taken by Southey in this work is very like that of Cobbett in his above cited History of the Reformation and the Rural Rides--before the Reformation men were happy and prosperous, whereas since then their condition has steadily worsened, and at the root of the problem is commercialism. With the Reformation, the old Catholic institutions such as monasteries and alms-houses were abolished, and "a trading spirit thus gradually superseded the rude but kindlier principle of the feudal system: profit and loss became the rule of conduct; in came calculation, and out went feeling":<sup>27</sup>

Too truly must it be said that every man oppresses his neighbour, or is struggling to oppress him. The landlord racks his tenant; the farmer grinds the labourer. Throughout the trading part of the community every one endeavours to purchase at the lowest price, and sell at the highest, regardless of equity in either case. Bad as the feudal times were, they were less injurious than these commercial ones to the kindly and generous feelings of human nature, and far more favourable to the principles of honour and integrity.<sup>28</sup>

The above is certainly not now a very original sentiment, nor was it in 1829. It had been expressed in one form or another since the beginnings of the medieval revival in the late eighteenth century,<sup>29</sup> and it was an

indispensable element in Burke's Tory rhetoric and that of many other Tory polemicists after Burke. Indeed, like the medieval revival generally, it probably arose out of reaction to Enlightenment rationalism and the swiftly expanding commercialism of the eighteenth century. A form of it is, we have seen, present in Melincourt in which the chivalrous Sylvan Forester battles the mean-spiritedness and calculating self-interest of "things as they are." However, in this earlier novel, the middle ages exist as a rather romantic concept, representing more an ideal rule of conduct than any sort of general social program. There is, it is true, Forester's feudal, paternalistically run estate, but in the main, despite its radical leanings, Melincourt depicts the medieval period as an age of idealism and honour, in the manner of Burke. Against the spirit of calculation it sets the spirit of chivalry. Crotchet Castle, almost fifteen years later, views both the problem and its resolution in much more detailed sociological terms.

Central to the novel in this connection is a debate regarding the merits of medieval life, carried on between Mr. Mac Quedy and Mr. Chainmail during the Thames Voyage in Chapters IX and X. Ostensibly, this dispute concerns itself with the historical accuracy of Sir Walter Scott, whether this writer has misrepresented the middle ages, and if so, whether by over-idealizing them or de-

picting them as much worse than they were. Chainmail inclines to the latter view; Mac Quedy to the former. Where Mac Quedy dismisses the middle ages as "a period of brutality, ignorance, fanaticism, and tyranny" (iv, 118), Chainmail vigorously defends them, evoking figures like Richard I, "the mirror of chivalry, the pattern of honour, the font of generosity," and documents like the Magna Charta, "the first step of liberty" (iv, 119). Hence Scott, "the enchanter of the north," has represented the middle ages too brightly for one and too darkly for the other. P. D. Garside has pointed out that this debate faithfully reproduces the sides taken in various reviews of Scott's medieval novels during the 1820's;<sup>30</sup> however, the issue has implications which extend beyond Scott's contemporary critical reputation. Indeed, Reverend Folliot enters into the debate "as an impartial man" and in fact his quarrel with Scott is the only genuinely literary one, that Scott's works "contain nothing worth quoting" (iv, 121), whereas both Chainmail and Mac Quedy appear to be criticizing Scott on extra-literary grounds--grounds, moreover, which formed the substance of an historical debate dating from the eighteenth century, but still vital during the 1820's in the works of Cobbett and Southey.

"HUME and other historians rail against the feudal system," complains Cobbett in the Rural Rides, "and we,

'enlightened' and 'free' creatures as we are, look back with scorn, or, at least, with surprise and pity, to the 'vassalage' of our forefathers."<sup>31</sup> On the contrary, argued Cobbett and Southey in their revisionist and essentially Catholic histories, we should look back to the middle ages for a model of the ideal society. Where Hume saw the Protestant Reformation as having freed England from the oppressive Romish yoke, they lamented the mean-spirited acquisitiveness which they associated with Protestantism. Certainly, Mr. Chainmail, with his feudalistic sympathies, is clearly in line with Cobbett and Southey here, and Mr. Mac Quedy, Scotsman, political economist and Modern Athenian, is a perfectly appropriate spokesman for the orthodox Enlightenment view put forward by Hume and the "Scotch historians":

'There is a beautiful structure,' said Mr. Chainmail, as they glided by Lechlade church; 'a subject for the pencil, Captain. It is a question worth asking, Mr. Mac Quedy, whether the religious spirit which reared these edifices, and connected with them everywhere an asylum for misfortune and a provision for poverty, was not better than the commercial spirit, which has turned all the business of modern life into schemes of profit, and processes of fraud and extortion. I do not see, in all your boasted improvements, any compassion for that kindly feeling which, within their own little communities, bound the several classes of society together, while full scope was left for the development of natural character, wherein individuals differed as conspicuously as in costume. Now we all wear one conventional dress, one conventional face; we have no bond of union, but pecuniary interest, we talk any thing that comes uppermost, for talking's sake, and without expecting to be believed; we have no nature, no simplicity, no picturesqueness: every thing about us is as artificial and as complicated as our steam-machinery:



our poetry is a kaleidoscope of false imagery, expressing no real feeling, portraying no real existence. I do not see any real compensation for the poetry of the twelfth century.

MR. MAC QUEDY

I wonder to hear you, Mr. Chainmail, talking of the charity of a set of lazy monks and beggarly friars, who were much more occupied with taking than giving; of whom, those who were in earnest did nothing but make themselves, and everybody about them, miserable, with fastings and penances, and other such trash; and those who were not, did nothing but guzzle and royster, and, having no wives of their own, took very unbecoming liberties with those of honest men. As as to your poetry of the twelfth century, it is not good for much (iv, 124).

But the subject clearly comprehends more than poetry, for as Reverend Folliot has said just prior to the above passage, "Gentlemen, you will never settle this controversy, till you have first settled what is good for man in this world" (iv, 121). The essence of this controversy, indeed, is philosophical, and it is doubtful whether Peacock himself believes any solution is possible, although, as I will show, something of a compromise is at least suggested, if not arrived at, in the novel. But its social aspects are clearly enough defined, for Mr. Chainmail's complaint that the kindly "religious spirit" has been usurped by a calculating and heartless "commercial spirit" does not arise from any specifically religious preoccupation. Chainmail values the "religious spirit" for its charity and benevolence, for its role as an organic unifying force in society, as, we have seen, did both Cobbett and Southey, who contrasted it with the spirit which produced "this

hard-hearted system," as Cobbett called it.<sup>32</sup> The cause is historical, the demise of the Catholic church in England during the Reformation, but the consequent erosion of the "religious spirit" is primarily social in its effects.

Thus Southey in the Colloquies:

Men are benevolent when they are not selfish: but while gain is the great object of pursuit, selfishness must ever be the uppermost feeling. I cannot dissemble from myself that it is the principle of our social system, and that it is awfully opposed to the spirit of Christianity.<sup>33</sup>

The question of "what is good for man in this world" does not go unanswered in Crotchet Castle. Indeed, this novel offers a cacophonous plethora of answers, which threatens at times to drown out even the possibility of any single solution--but not entirely. El Dorado largely remains an elusive ideal in Crotchet Castle, even an absurd one when considered in connection with the panti-socratic aspirations of the youthful Mr. Skionar (Coleridge) and his "dear friends," Mr. Wilful Wontsee (Wordsworth) and Mr. Rumblesack Shantsee (Southey), "who used to see visions of Utopia, and pure republics beyond the western deep" (iv, 59). The old millennial dream of the Americas, whose spell caught even Peacock in 1818 when he wrote to Shelley of the "wonderful spectacle" presented in Morris Birbeck's Notes on America (viii, 205), is here debunked. Crotchet Castle's America is nothing more than a refuge for scheming speculators and adventurers like Ti-

mothy Touchandgo and, eventually, Crotchet Jr. (Indeed, Birbeck's prairie settlements had failed by Crotchet Castle's time, as had the various Owenite communities established in America during the 1820's.) Still, there remains the hint of an alternative to the "March of Mind." It is the barest hint and exists not so much in the form of a distinct position as in a set of loosely linked inferences, but it is there.

The novel's first major debate on progress occurs following a dinner debate in Chapter VI ("Theories"). The scene is Crotchet Castle, and the debate is sponsored, ironically enough, by Crotchet Jr., who announces that, money being all that is required "to regenerate society," he will provide a large sum for the purpose if the present company can agree on a way to dispose of it. Their goal is "a grand and universally applicable scheme for the amelioration of the condition of man" (iv, 81). The use of such grandiose language for schemes of social regeneration is nothing new in Peacock. Much earlier in Headlong Hall, Mr. Foster the perfectibilitarian has used similar Godwinian rhetoric, and his general premises are those of the debaters in Crotchet Castle. (Interestingly, the claret consumed during the latter novel's discussion is "vintage of fifteen", the year of Headlong Hall's composition.) In Headlong Hall, however, the debate ranges through a very broad and speculative eighteenth-century

background, dealing with the question in sweeping, universalist terms. By contrast, Crotchet Castle's discussion covers no more, really, than the preceding decade. Although this debate is by no means limited in its general application, its terms, its disputants and their theories are firmly rooted in the 1820's.

Mr. Mac Quedy initiates the debate by appropriately beginning, in the manner of the Scottish historians and, as we have seen, of certain eminent political economists of the time, at "the infancy of society," when, according to the tenets of political economy, government was invented "to save a percentage" (iv, 71). He is immediately interrupted by Reverend Folliot who questions the assertion and opens the way for a medley of objections from the other debaters. The argument which follows resolving nothing, Crotchet Jr. then intervenes to remind the company of their search for a general scheme of social regeneration. The proposals are diverse and of varying degrees of general application:

MR. MAC QUEDY.

Build lecture rooms and schools for all.

MR. TRILLO.

Revive the Athenian theatre: rejuvenate the lyrical drama.

MR. TOOGOOD.

Build a grand co-operative parallelogram, with a steam-engine in the middle for a maid of all work.

MR. FIREDAMP.

Drain the country, and get rid of malaria, by abolishing duck-ponds.

DR. MORBIFIC.

Found a philanthropic college of anticontagion-

ists, where all the members shall be inoculated with the virus of all known diseases. Try the experiment on a grand scale.

MR. CHAINMAIL.

Build a great dining-hall: endow it with beef and ale, and hang the hall round with arms to defend the provisions (iv, 78).

Any chance of harmony among the above disputants appears unlikely and Reverend Folliot advises Crotchet Jr. to keep his money (i, 84). In the end, the only subject on which the company can agree is "deliberative dinners." The chapter concludes, as such chapters usually conclude in Peacock, with a drinking song, and "the schemes for the world's regeneration evaporated in a tumult of voices" (iv, 85).

However, if we look closer it will be found that Peacock has set up some interesting oppositions in this debate, and, moreover, very obliquely suggested grounds for reconciliation of a kind. Of course, Mr. Mac Quedy's is the dominant voice in the discussion, as his views represent the liberal orthodoxy which constitutes "things as they are" in Crotchet Castle: the narrow utilitarianism, the laissez-faire economics, the belief in popular education, all claiming their origins in the Enlightenment. His language is that of several works on political economy which appeared during the 1820's, and which Peacock owned, McCulloch's Principles of Political Economy (1825), discussed above, and James Mill's Elements of Political Economy (1821).<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Mac Quedy's statements, "Political economy is to

the state what domestic economy is to the family" (iv, 73), and "The family consumes, and so does the state" (iv, 74), are taken from the first pages of Mill's work,<sup>35</sup> and the responses they raise are significant. Folliot argues that the analogy is false because in the family there is a "paterfamilias," who ensures through a just distribution that there will be nothing of the gross inequality which is to be found in the state, where there is "all hunger at one end, and all surfeit at the other" (iv, 73). The family, then, is a sort of last refuge for "kindly feeling" amidst the general heartlessness of a commercial society.

Although Reverend Folliot is Mr. Mac Quedy's most fierce antagonist, Mac Quedy encounters more effective intellectual opposition in other quarters. Indeed, Folliot's rigid Tory-Anglicanism is his strength and his weakness as a potential mouthpiece. His ideal of the benevolent family is perhaps applicable to the upper middle class gentry depicted by Jane Austen or to Cobbett's prosperous yeoman class, but it hardly seems to go far enough to be usefully applied to the general populace of an industrial society. Still, he is on to something, as one of his fellow debaters, the co-operationalist Mr. Toogood, agrees:

The reverend gentleman has hit the nail on the head. It is the distribution that must be looked to: it is the paterfamilias that is wanting in the state. Now here I have provided him (Reproducing his diagram) (iv, 75).

Mr. Toogood's diagram might well be A New View of Society (1813), whose author, Robert Owen, Mr. Toogood is modelled after. In any case, it is one of the numerous books and pamphlets in which Owen outlined his plans for organizing society's poor into productive manufacturing and agricultural communities.

Peacock may have known the New View or at least encountered its ideas and certain particulars about its author. Owen's name was much in the news during the 1820's, in connection with the impressively successful experiment at New Lanark and with the much less successful Owenite communities set up in America and Wales (two localities, incidently, which play important symbolic roles in Crotchet Castle). It is probable that Peacock read Colonel Torrens's famous indictment of Owen in the October 1819 Edinburgh Review. Although Torrens, an orthodox political economist, believed Owen's principles to be "radically erroneous," he praised Owen the man as an "amiable enthusiast,"<sup>36</sup> as did Southey who called Owen, in his Colloquies, "that most beneficent and most practical of all enthusiasts,"<sup>37</sup> while also disagreeing with Owen's schemes-- terms in which Peacock's well-meaning Mr. Toogood is presented. In his Rural Rides, Cobbett makes brief deprecating mention of "the plans of Mr. Owen,"<sup>38</sup> and perhaps the "grand co-operative parallelogram" envisaged by Mr. Toogood (the actual shape suggested by Owen for his communities)

owes something to Cobbett's facetious references to Owen's "parallelograms of paupers."<sup>39</sup> The name Toogood obviously arises from the sort of criticism voiced by Southey of Owen that "he promises too much."<sup>40</sup>

Owen believed that laissez-faire economics had destroyed the proper harmony which should exist between men, and he set out to oppose the "dismal science" on this count. Hence the frequent attacks levelled at him by political economists. "Benevolence and charity, when not under the guidance of economical science," warned Torrens, "frequently degenerate into ministers of mischief, aggravating the misery they endeavour to relieve, and resembling, in their effects, those splendid but baneful meteors, which throw a deceitful lustre over the disorder they create."<sup>41</sup> The doctrines of Mr. Mac Quedy are similarly opposed to those of Mr. Toogood, although here it is the latter who takes the offensive, surely because political economy is a major aspect of the social orthodoxy which Peacock is attacking in Crotchet Castle. In any case, a partial alliance is effected between Mr. Toogood and Reverend Folliot, as against the heartless system of political economy, in their concurrence on the need for the regulatory and benevolent "paterfamilias." The difference, of course, lies in the fact that Folliot speaks only of the individual family, while Toogood speaks collectively--his "paterfamilias" comprehends society as a whole and



refers specifically to the paternalistic communal systems of New Lanark and New Harmony. To this peculiar alliance we might also add Mr. Chainmail, for what is the "great dining hall" which he advocates building but the feudal version of a paternalistic society? At Chainmail Hall he lives "en famille" with his domestics after the fashion of the twelfth century (iv, 146), which in essence is not far from the communalism of Mr. Toogood's rather excessively rational parallelogram. Thus perhaps the "tumult of voices" which ends this debate has a potential semblance of harmony after all. Certainly there is evidence here of a consistent, if diversely constituted, alternative to Mr. Mac Quedy's "pound-shilling-and-pence" philosophy.

But a viable alternative emerges only at the novel's end, and then still rather tentatively. It is prepared for in the debate discussed above and also in the debate between Messrs. Chainmail and Mac Quedy, which occurs during the Thames voyage. There, we recall, Mr. Chainmail has reiterated the need for a stronger "bond of union" in society than mere "pecuniary interest." During this same discussion, Reverend Folliot concurs with the young medievalist on this point, delivering perhaps the most eloquent attack on the "commercial spirit" to be found in the novel:

'I say, the nation is best off, in relation to other nations, which has the greatest quantity of the common necessaries of life distributed among the greatest number of persons; which has the greatest number of honest hearts and stout arms united in a common interest,

willing to offend no one, but ready to fight in defence of their own community against all the rest of the world, because they have something in it worth fighting for. The moment you admit that one class of things, without any reference to what they respectively cost, is better worth having than another; that a smaller commercial value, with one mode of distribution, is better than a greater commercial value, with another mode of distribution; the whole of that curious fabric of postulates and dogmas which you call the science of political economy, and which I call politicae oeconomicae inscientia tumbles to pieces' (iv, 127-128).

Folliot seems here to be advocating a society very close to Mr. Chainmail's ideal feudal society, although his "greatest number" curiously suggests--curiously for a Tory like Folliot--something of a utilitarian cast. In any case, the genuine "bond of union" so lacking in the modern commercial state is momentarily realized amidst the baronial splendour of Chainmail Hall in Chapter XVIII.

The occasion is Christmas and the guests comprise, besides the Crotchet Castle regulars, Mr. Chainmail's neighbours and his tenants and domestics. All of them, "gentle and simple," sit together at long wooden tables, the line of social demarcation being simply an open fireplace in the centre of the hall (iv, 193-94). The dominant idea is social union, the "harmony" so conspicuously absent in the world of Crotchet Castle, and of course medieval communalism serves as the model. Peacock could have had any number of sources in mind here. Butler's suggestion, developed at some length in her study, that J.S. Mill's brief flirtation in 1829-31 with Saint-Simonianism may be

a possible influence is interesting but hardly supported by even a phrase in the novel hinting at such an association. More likely as sources, it seems to me, are popular accounts of medieval life which were numerous in this decade: for example, Southey's descriptions in the Colloquies and Cobbett's in his History of the Reformation; the large farmhouse kitchen, pictured in Rural Rides, with its long oak table where the farmer and his family shared their meals with their labourers, and similar descriptions in Scott's medieval novels of the 1820's.

The brief mêlée which interrupts this harmonious celebration is drawn, as commentators have pointed out,<sup>42</sup> from actual popular unrest of the period, although several of the characters note an unpleasant parallel with the Jacquerie of the middle ages (on hints, probably, from Southey: "And yet you have spirits among you who are labouring day and night to stir up a bellum servile, an insurrection like that of Wat Tyler, of the Jacquerie"<sup>43</sup>). Rather, however, than discrediting Mr. Chainmail's ideas,<sup>44</sup> this abrupt intrusion of the 1830's into the feudal harmony of Chainmail Hall serves in a sense to support them, for it is the combined force of the diverse company gathered here which saves the day. Momentarily forgetting their differences to defend successfully Chainmail Hall, Mac Quedy, Folliot, Trillo and the rest of them constitute what Folliot himself has called for earlier: "honest hearts and stout arms with a

common interest." And as Mr. Chainmail affirms, "The Twelfth century has served you well. Its manners and habits, its community of kind feelings between master and man, are the true remedy for these ebullitions" (iv, 204).

But Peacock is not so backward-looking as to abandon the present entirely. Mr. Chainmail's "community of kind feelings" echoes similar phrases from Southey's Colloquies describing the harmonious society of the middle ages--"kindly attachments," "natural ties," "domestic affections," "kindly feelings"--yet even the conservative Southey, while dubious about Owen's radical solutions, could appreciate similarities between his own feudal sympathies and Owen's plans for rational reform,<sup>45</sup> as indeed Peacock does here. Like Southey and his detractor Cobbett, Owen too deplored the "jarring interests" caused by the age's capitalistic ethic which he felt were "on the extreme point of severing all the old connections of society."<sup>48</sup> Further, his solution was not dissimilar to those proposed by the feudalists. In his Report to the County of Lanark (1821), he speaks of arrangements for communities "by which the inhabitants may be prepared in one establishment, where they will eat together as one family"<sup>47</sup>--in other words, Cobbett's old fashioned farm kitchen or Mr. Chainmail's baronial hall, but on a larger scale and adapted to the changed needs of the age. Thus, when Mr. Chainmail offers "the manners and habits" of the

twelfth century as a remedy for the social ills of the present, Mr. Toogood gives his, significantly qualified, assent: "Something like it: improved by my diagrams: arts for arms" (iv, 204). The latter phrase refers specifically to Owen's pacifism, but it also serves to emphasize that the more barbaric, if picturesque, features of Mr. Chainmail's cherished twelfth century are incompatible with life in a modern society. The values which are brought out in this concluding episode have, finally, nothing to do with medieval armour or wassail bowls or any other of the accoutrements of Chainmail Hall, but with social union, with ties stronger than those of the mere "pecuniary interest" which supports the dubious frontier haven of free enterprise to which Timothy Touchandgo, followed by Crotchet Jr., have escaped. And here, despite the absurd excesses of their respective crotchets, is where Mr. Chainmail the medievalist and Mr. Toogood the Owenite co-operationalist concur and the other guests of Chainmail Hall with them. It is, then, this spirit which closes the episode--in the dance "in which all classes of the company mingled," even in the "mellifluous concert of noses" which follows as the fatigued guests eventually retire from the celebrations (iv, 211).

## V

"It is felt," said J. S. Mill in his Spirit of the

Age (1831), "that men are henceforth to be held together by new ties, and separated by new barriers; for the ancient bonds now no longer unite, nor the ancient boundaries continue."<sup>50</sup> This consciousness of change, constituting, according to Mill, "the spirit of the age," informs the whole of Crotchet Castle, both in its action and its argument--with a difference, however. For Mill this mood has resulted only in bitter divisiveness, "the wisdom of ancestors, and the march of intellect bandied about from mouth to mouth: each phrase originally an expression of respect and homage, each ultimately usurped by the partisans of the opposite catchword, and in the bitterness of their spirit, turned into sarcastic jibes of hatred and insult."<sup>49</sup> While such divisions do exist on the surface of Crotchet Castle, there is evidence below the surface of a more general, if perhaps not clearly defined, spirit of reconciliation. Indeed, the rather inchoate synthesis of opinion, which is tentatively effected in this novel, has a legitimate basis in contemporary thought and opinion. However, where such opinion remains divided in Peacock's sources--Cobbett, for instance, would never have countenanced an identification of his feudalism with Owen's rational brand of communalism--grounds of reconciliation emerge in Crotchet Castle. Much as the historian of ideas does, Peacock draws together seemingly diverse strands of popular thought by locating a common philosophical base, while

also managing to retain the diversity for its dramatic and historical value. Perhaps nowhere else does he do it as deftly as in this novel which quite definitively rounds off a body of work spanning the first three decades of the nineteenth century.

## CHAPTER FIVE: GRYLL GRANGE

We shall be obliged to confess, what we should long ago have known, that the really precious things are thought and sight, not pace...It does...a man, if he be truly a man, no harm to go slow; for his glory is not at all in going, but in being.

John Ruskin, Modern Painters (1843)

Peacock's last novel, Gryll Grange (1861), shows little evidence of the thirty year gap separating it from the other novels. But for certain of its topical concerns it might have been written shortly after Crotchet Castle. The basic format of the novel of talk remains virtually unchanged since Headlong Hall, though with some refinements and an increasingly defter touch evident throughout the successive novels. There is also a remarkable continuity with respect to some of the subjects treated. For example, popular education, anathema to Reverend Doctor Folliot, is still an important concern thirty years later, still viewed as culturally debilitating, although in Gryll Grange the danger is much more widely diffused, indeed more truly a cultural danger than in Crotchet Castle, where it is mainly a social problem (despite its advocates' claims that it is in fact a solution to such). Political economy is still ridiculed, but with much less violence than in Crotchet Castle. Its chief representative, Mr. MacBorrowdale, is a Scot like Mr. Mac Quedy, but he is a



more congenial figure, not in the least given to Mac Quedy's windy dogmatism. Indeed, of the novel as a whole a reviewer in the Saturday Review remarked that "we never feel we have been delivered up to a learned bore."<sup>1</sup> Though certainly, as George Saintsbury aptly observed,<sup>2</sup> not the work of a cranky old man, Gryll Grange shows signs nevertheless of Peacock's age in the mellowness of its satire.

In Thackeray's words "a jolly old worldling"<sup>3</sup> when he wrote his last novel, Peacock did not, however, let mellow old age dull his remarkable insight into the interaction of ideas and opinions, which is so fundamental to his satire. If "The Author of Headlong Hall," as he is called on the title-page of Gryll Grange, appears to have been unaffected by the revolution occurring in the English novel during the 1840's, he could not be said to have been similarly unaffected by many of the issues of that decade and the decade following. Indeed, Peacock's area of concerns in Gryll Grange is as broad as ever. The novel's greater air of detachment, noted by many commentators, is philosophical in nature; it does not indicate indifference. The peculiar features of the age, its controversies, its manners and morals, its spirit, are all aspects of a larger question, a question asked on a number of levels in every one of Peacock's novels since Headlong Hall: what is good for man in this world?

The question as it presented itself to Peacock when he wrote Gryll Grange must have suggested a very apt parallel with Cicero's De Natura Deorum, one of the texts informing Gryll Grange.<sup>4</sup> Of course, Cicero's work deals broadly with much the same concerns as Peacock's, in particular with how happiness is best secured in this world. However, Peacock might also have been aware of an equally important personal parallel with Cicero. When they wrote their respective works both Peacock and Cicero were old men. They had each suffered the loss of loved ones (daughters in either case, as well as wives), were each retired from active life. Further, though generically very different sorts of works, Gryll Grange and De Natura Deorum are products of philosophical old age. Their difference in emphasis is only historical in origin. Cicero prefaces his dialogue by saying that he will speak of "religion, piety and holiness, about ritual, about honour and loyalty to others, about temples, shrines and solemn sacrifices," for all of these matters, he adds, ultimately depend upon "this question of the nature of the immortal gods."<sup>5</sup> Peacock also touches incidentally on matters of ritual and faith, although with more cultural than religious concerns in mind, and he is not in any profound sense interested in the nature of the gods. Yet he addresses from a similarly broad and philosophical perspective a fundamental concern of his own time--the nature of man and his prospects--and

all the specific matters which he treats in Gryll Grange, like those treated by Cicero, in some way bear on this central concern.

## II

Of Epicureanism and Stoicism, the two opposing philosophies in Cicero's dialogue, Epicureanism is unquestionably the more favoured philosophy in Gryll Grange. The "Hogs of Epicurus' sty," to quote a phrase from a verse letter addressed to Peacock (viii, 480), literally surround the country estate of the novel's title:

Gregory Gryll, Esq., of Gryll Grange in Hampshire, on the borders of the New Forest, in the midst of a park which was a little forest in itself, reaching nearly to the sea, and well stocked with deer, having a large outer tract, where a numerous light-rented and well-stocked tenantry fattened innumerable pigs, considered himself well-located for what he professed to be, Epicuri de grege porcus (v, 13).

Not only "a pig from the herd of Epicurus," Mr. Gryll believes himself to be lineally descended from Gryllus: in Homer's account a shipwrecked Greek who, transformed by Circe into a hog, chose to remain a beast despite the exhortations of Odysseus. In a note, Peacock cites Plutarch's and Spenser's respective treatments of this story, and characteristically favours Plutarch's sympathetic view of Gryllus over the puritan disapproval of Spenser (v, 14-15n.). Yet, though here, as elsewhere in Peacock, Epicureanism frequently shows itself in copious amounts of song and drink, its more temperate, philosophical aspect

is also evident. If Mr. Gryll likes to dine well he also likes to dine quietly, with quiet friends at a table where civilized, informed talk is the rule (v, 15). Indeed, the chief value at Gryll Grange seems to be the Epicurean one of mental tranquillity, and Mr. Gryll's household, in Peacock's opening accounts, is characterized by an atmosphere of "quiet enjoyment" (v, 16). Others of the novel's characters appear to share Mr. Gryll's philosophy:

Reverend Dr. Opimian who, rejoicing in the name of an ancient Roman wine, lives like the gods of Epicurus "above the cares of the world" (v, 18-19), and the eccentric, tower-dwelling Mr. Falconer who has "aimed at living, like an ancient Epicurean, a life of tranquillity" (v, 102).

But Gryll Grange is not the entirely genial, sunny book which critics have commonly called it. Epicureanism itself is a philosophy of resignation, and, ultimately, of pessimism.<sup>6</sup> Such a strain in Gryll Grange is amply evident even in the chapter mottoes, which tend usually towards the carpe diem theme. The verses heading Chapter II, for example, in which Mr. Gryll and his household are introduced, are from Horace's Epistles: "Fortune makes many promises to many,/ Keeps them to none. Live to the days and hours,/ For nothing is your own" (v, 13). True, it is a gently melancholy strain, that could be called elegiac, but it does introduce a dark side to the book, and if we look closely, the tranquillity of Mr. Gryll and his circle is

not perfect. Though he traces his ancestry from the Palace of Circe, Mr. Gryll has taken little care for the continuance of his ancient race. Squire Headlong, we recall, has found himself in a similar situation, and in order to perpetuate his line, and in the broader eighteenth-century historico-mythic dimensions of Headlong Hall to affirm man's ever progressive nature, has simply taken a wife. The squire's characteristically expedient solution has occurred to Mr. Gryll, but his own philosophy thwarts him, for "a wife presented to him the forethought of a perturbation, which he never could bring himself to encounter" (v, 15). His one hope for descendents, an orphan niece named Morgana, whom he has adopted as his heiress, has been steeped in the static tranquillity of Gryll Grange, and appears unlikely to ever make a match. And indeed for Mr. Gryll's part, "her departure from his house would be the severest blow that fate could inflict on him" (v, 16). Yet the imminent dissolution of the venerable race of Gryllus provides an ever-present anxiety:

'Oh, the ancient name of Gryll!' sighed the Squire to himself. 'What if it should pass away in the nineteenth century, after having lived from the time of Circe!'

Often indeed, when he looked at her at the head of his table, the star of his little circle, joyous herself and the source of joy in others, he thought the actual state of things admitted no change for the better, and the perpetuity of the old name became a secondary consideration; but though the purpose was dimmed in the evening it usually brightened in the morning. In the meantime the young lady had many suitors, who were permitted to plead their cause, though they

made little apparent progress (v, 16).

Progress in the extended sense appears no more likely in this world. There is something rather hopeless about Mr. Gryll's belief that "the actual state of things admitted no change for the better," for if it reflects contentment, there is an implicit avowal that the future can only bring trouble. A similar philosophy is evident at the Tower where Mr. Algernon Falconer and the seven maiden sisters who wait on him live out their tranquil but static existence. Falconer himself is a pessimist in the line of Messrs. Escot, Forester and Gowry Sr., seeing his good only in the past while hating all things present, and grimly resigning himself to a future which can only be worse. Cultivating one's own garden, then, seems to be the one solution to the unsatisfactory state of the world. It is a strain not unfamiliar in Peacock, particularly the elderly Peacock, whose last years, following Gryll Grange, were spent in complete retirement, from which he held himself aloof from all but his oldest friends and finally even from them (i, cciv). And yet there is much in Gryll Grange to suggest that up to 1860, at any rate, Peacock was not only troubled by what he saw around him, but took an active interest in it as a writer.

Even the Epicurean Garden of Pleasure is not proof against pressing outside concerns, as the following conversation between Mr. Falconer and Reverend Opimian shows:

THE REVEREND DOCTOR OPIMIAN.

Certainly, there is much in the material world to displease sensitive and imaginative minds; but I do not know any one who has less cause to complain of it than you have. You are surrounded with all possible comforts, and with all the elements of beauty, and of intellectual enjoyment.

MR. FALCONER.

It is not my world that I complain of. It is the world on which I look 'from the loop-holes of retreat.' 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' (v, 91-2).

Falconer's complaint has none of the querulousness which we might expect of a "cozy reactionary"--as A. E. Dyson and Mario Praz have generally characterized Peacock.<sup>7</sup> True, it is a stiffly declamatory speech, and presents a very generalized, sentimental picture of poverty, yet it reveals not only a consciousness of what exists outside of Mr. Falconer's "retreat," but a reason for the philosophy of pessimism informing both Falconer's and Gryll's households. If not presented with the comically melodramatic overstatement of Nightmare Abbey, the theme of disillusionment is nevertheless present in Gryll Grange.

As the last phrase in Falconer's speech indicates, Peacock was still thinking of his old friend Shelley in 1860. The third and final part of his "Memoirs" of Shelley, intended as a reply to some other accounts of the poet's life which had begun to appear, was published in Fraser's

Magazine during this year, as was the original serialized version of Gryll Grange. Butler has pointed out that Peacock's sketch of Shelley in the "Memoirs" is relevant to the character of Falconer, inasmuch as Falconer's problem, like Shelley's, is his inability to reconcile real and ideal.<sup>8</sup> To illustrate this point, Butler cites Peacock's remarks on the deficiencies of Shelley's poetry, in particular "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" (v, 131). While she regards this parallel as pertinent, however, Butler seems too inclined to view Falconer and that other tower-dwelling idealist, Scythrop Glowry, as merely generalized types of the young Shelley, and, indeed, finds an apter proto-type for Falconer in the Milton of the early poems, the pensive poet in the "high lonely tower" of "Il Penseroso."<sup>9</sup> What no one has yet suggested is the possibility that Falconer, as far as he represents Shelley--and Shelley and his ideas were of much interest to some Victorians<sup>10</sup>--represents not so much the young Shelley as Peacock knew him, but Shelley as he might have been if he had lived on into the century. Although, due to Peacock's deference to the demands of his fiction's customary love-interest, Falconer is a young man, he is old in the experience of his century's hindsight. His habitual pessimism and, as we will see, his



religious and aesthetic preoccupations reflect this particular form of experience. An aspect of it is surely present in Peacock's final musings about his late friend in the "Memoirs:"

The more clear development of what men were would have lowered his estimate of what they might be, and dimmed his enthusiastic prospect of the future destiny of the world. I can conceive him, if he had lived to the present time, passing his days like Volney, looking on the world from his windows without taking part in its turmoils; and perhaps like the same, or some other great apostle of liberty (for I cannot at this moment verify the quotation), desiring that nothing should be inscribed on his tomb, but his name, the dates of his birth and death, and the single word, 'DESILLUSIONNE' (viii, 131).

Falconer's explanation for his disillusionment as he sadly views the world from his "loop-holes of retreat" is exactly this: dissatisfaction with things as they are and a conviction that they cannot be much better. "We may be disappointed in our every-day realities," he says, "and if not, we may make an ideality of the unattainable, and quarrel with nature for not giving what she has not to give" (v, 32). This is, as commentators have remarked, similar to the absurd disenchantment of Scythrop Glowry, and, indeed, Falconer's observation to Reverend Opimian that "we are all born to disappointment" (v, 31) is a frequently uttered maxim around the Glowry household. Yet surely Falconer's situation elicits a more serious response than that of Scythrop, not only because the rough and ready burlesque of Nightmare Abbey is absent from Gryll Grange,

but because Falconer's condition is not a fashionable affectation. It is a genuine and, as far as Peacock's comic spirit allows, serious spiritual condition characteristic of the age. One of the remedies to which Falconer resorts is, we have seen, a half-hearted Epicureanism, the carpe diem doctrine which J. S. Mill partially endorsed the decade before as "a rational and legitimate corollary from the shortness of life."<sup>11</sup> For Mill, as for Falconer, however, the Epicurean creed is the answer only "within certain limits."<sup>12</sup> There were other avenues for the Victorians.

### III

In an essay entitled "The Utility of Religion," written some time during the 1850's,<sup>13</sup> John Stuart Mill observed that "we seem to have arrived at a time when, among the arguments for and against religion, those which relate to its usefulness assume an important place."<sup>14</sup> What Mill means by "usefulness" is religion's efficacy in developing in man certain idealistic sentiments and aspirations. "The essence of religion," he says, "is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object, recognized as of the highest excellence, and as rightly paramount over all selfish objects of desire."<sup>15</sup> While the rationally based "Religion of Humanity," of Comtean derivation, em-

braced by Mill, does not concern us here, some of Mill's general thoughts on religion do. Even in such "an age of weak beliefs,"<sup>16</sup> as Mill felt his own age to be, religion provides a valuable outlet for man's yearning for something beyond his temporal existence. "So long as human life is insufficient to satisfy human aspirations," says Mill, "so long there will be a craving for higher things, which finds its most obvious satisfaction in religion."<sup>17</sup> And, significantly, this satisfaction is not only to be found in religion, but in poetry as well, for "religion and poetry address themselves, at least in one of their aspects, to the same part of the human constitution: they both supply the same want, that of conceptions grander and more beautiful than we see realized in the prose of human life."<sup>18</sup>

Religion and poetry play an important role in Gryll Grange, both representing precisely what is lacking in the world of the present. When Reverend Opimian suggests the possibility of holding a disputation in the manner of the twelfth century tenson, Miss Gryll rejects the idea, saying, "I am afraid, Doctor, our age is too prosy for that sort of thing. We have neither wit enough, nor poetry enough, to furnish the disputants" (v, 9). A later speech by Falconer quite clearly echoes a specific passage found in both "The Four Ages of Poetry" and Rhododaphne, lamenting the virtual disappearance of fancy from the world:

There can be no intellectual power resident in a wood, where the only inscription is not 'Genio loci,' but Trespassers will be prosecuted; no Naiad in a stream that turns a cottonmill; no Oread in a mountain dell, where a railway train deposits a cargo of Vandals; no Nereids or Oceanitides along the sea-coast, where a coast-guard is watching for smugglers. No; the intellectual life of the material world is dead (v, 79).

But while "The Four Ages," we have seen, for all its wit and satire, is a broad cultural survey conducted in the fashion of the Enlightenment historians, the context of the above remarks, although equally historically conditioned, is more specific. Closer in its emphasis, perhaps, is Rhododaphne which is essentially an elegy to the departed spirit of the old religion. Gryll Grange, as the Saturday Review remarked, is "pervaded by a fine Pagan morality,"<sup>19</sup> and Algernon Falconer, who has piously modelled his household after certain aspects of Homeric domestic life, is certainly a worthy votary of the ancient faith celebrated in Rhododaphne. And as in that earlier work, the question of religion is not so much one of dogma as of sensibility.

There is also something in Falconer's chosen mode of life which reflects other religious preoccupations of a related though more topical and urgent nature. If the seven sisters who serve Falconer, his "domestic deities" (v, 209), provide dinner entertainment in the manner of the Homeric age, they also close every evening with a hymn to St. Catherine. Falconer's own bed-chamber, indeed, is a

virtual shrine to St. Catherine, containing an altar with an image of her, and panels painted with subjects from her life (v, 72). Moreover, towards that saint Falconer displays something akin to a religious devotion, seeing in her a "perfect emblem of purity" and a most appropriate image "to be presented to the minds of young women"--sentiments which, coming from so young a man and in such an age, puzzle Reverend Opimian (v, 44). Peacock himself appears to have carried on a kind of devotion to St. Catherine, which a few of his acquaintances apparently mistook for a leaning towards Catholicism.<sup>20</sup> In Falconer's case, there is a question of this too, although Falconer takes pains to assure Reverend Opimian that Catherine is a saint of the Reformed Church, and Reverend Opimian himself seems satisfied that his religion, if not quite orthodox, is within the pale of the Church of England (v, 65). Still, the shadows of Newman and Pusey, though faint, are nevertheless discernible in Gryll Grange.

Although Falconer's Catholic sympathies (and Peacock's) have often been noted, there has not, as far as I know, been any attempt at all to examine them in the light of the Tractarian controversy, which was most intense during the 1840's, though it continued to be a concern in the decades following. Indeed, during the 1850's, after Newman had gone over to Rome, it became necessary for Anglo-Catholics to emphasize the distinction between Anglican and Roman, which,

we have seen, is done in Gryll Grange on Falconer's behalf. While not by any means prominent in the novel, aspects of the controversy are evident enough to raise worthwhile questions. A letter written to Peacock by his cousin Harriet Love, late in 1861, refers to Gryll Grange's publication, and contains a curious remark as to the extent of the book's appeal:

Your last book is more than acceptable, from your so kindly writing my name in it. I hear it is 'most popular' and indeed I can well believe it. Whilst it appeared in Numbers our neighbour the Laureate sent us Frazer [sic] every month. He, and Sir John Simeon, the latter a strict Roman-Catholic, are amongst your most devoted admirers (viii, 485).

Perhaps, then, the novel is "acceptable," according to the letter, because it can be admired by even "a strict Roman Catholic." In fact, Peacock's treatment of Falconer and his half-hearted Romanism is anything but harsh, though it seems slightly patronizing at times. With paternal solicitude Reverend Opimian warns Falconer, "take care, my young Friend, that you do not finish by becoming the dupe of your own mystification" (v, 78). And shortly after this, Opimian hopes that he will not find his friend "far gone in hagiolatry." But the thrust of his remarks, finally, is to avoid extremes, to "acquiesce in Martin, keeping equally clear of Peter and Jack" (v, 79-80).

By referring in her letter to the Catholicism of one of Gryll Grange's admirers Harriet Love may only have meant to suggest the innocuousness of the novel's satire, or,

as I think more likely, she may have been referring to its "tolerant liberality," to quote Falconer's compliment to Reverend Opimian (v, 80), as regards questions of religion. Even such, relatively speaking, cursory allusions to Anglo-Catholicism as appear in Gryll Grange would probably have struck a contemporary reader after the influx of polemical fiction, speaking from both sides of the controversy, which occurred during the two previous decades. Appearing, for example, like Gryll Grange, in serial form in Fraser's Magazine, Charles Kingsley's Hypatia (1852-53) was a stinging repudiation of Catholic ritual and belief, and a reply to writers like Newman whose two novels, Loss and Gain (1848) and Callista (1856), put forward the Catholic view. It was around this period that Peacock began and left unfinished two tales which most certainly would have dealt with such questions.

One of the fragments, "A Story of a Mansion Among the Chiltern Hills" (1859), concerns a Protestant maid named Catherine, who as well as living in the vicinity of the chapel of St. Catherine, seems curiously, in her "youth, beauty, natural gifts and artificial acquirements," to be a modern embodiment of that Saint (viii, 392). Passages from the "Mansion" found their way into Gryll Grange, and the tolerant spirit evident even in that fragmentary tale is certainly retained in the finished novel. The earlier fragment, written in 1851, depicts three typical

Peacockian heroes, a Hellenist and two medievalists. A passage describing a clerical friend of the three could possibly allude, as Peacock's editors have suggested (viii, 537n.), to Lord John Russell's attacks on papal aggression in 1850-51:

He was a good, kind-hearted and tolerant man, notwithstanding the energy with which he declaimed in his sermons against Puseyism and Popery: but he had a horror of innovation, and thought the Church of England, as represented by his father, the quiet Rector of a country village where differences of doctrine and ceremony had never been heard of, the perfection of religious institution (viii, 387).

Another fragment, consisting of a single sentence headed by a quotation from Farquhar, is undated, but must certainly be of this general period also, for what appears to be its subject is very topical:

'Theives! Thieves! Murder! Popery!  
Scrub in the Beaux Strategem

The hair of all the old women of both sexes in a retired village of Oxfordshire, rose simultaneously on their heads at the intelligence that the foundations of a Catholic Chapel was to be laid in their, since the days of Elizabeth, exclusively Protestant neighbourhood (viii, 462n.).

There is an indulgent deprecation of religious bigotry in the above passages which manages to avoid the factiousness of the period's Tractarian and anti-Tractarian literature. In Gryll Grange, though as in the "Mansion" fragment clearly taken with the poetry of Catholicism, Peacock manages similarly to stay clear of sectarian controversy. There are perhaps traces of it in Reverend Opim-



ian's concerned speculations about Falconer's dubious orthodoxy and in certain of the exchanges between the two men. For example, the issue of celibacy, whether it is good or bad, which often figures as a point of contention between Falconer and Opimian, could refer to the similar, though much more rancorous, debate between Kingsley and Newman on the subject.<sup>21</sup> By and large, however, there is little controversy of this sort in Gryll Grange, and Peacock himself does not take sides, beyond betraying some slight temperamental propensity for the Catholic ambience. Religion as such is not a crucial concern in Gryll Grange, at least with respect to details of ritual and dogma. This is not, however, to say that Peacock stays clear of the religious controversy of his day altogether, for there is in the novel a consciousness of such questions which, though not figuring in the foreground, is absorbed in the novel's thematic concerns, and which exercises an important, if indirect, influence.

Falconer's religious preoccupations are essentially a reaction to some of the characteristics of the age, its materialism, its scepticism, its vulgarity. They reflect a consciousness of the insufficiency of human life and also a craving for something higher, more ideal. In his essay, Mill suggests that religion and poetry both address themselves to this craving, and are therefore equivalent in their "utility." A similar conclusion is reached by New-

man in his essay on the "Prospects of the Anglican Church" (1872), in which he finds that "Poetry...is our mysticism; and so far as any two characters of mind [poetic and mystical] tend to penetrate below the surface of things, and to draw men away from the material to the invisible world, so far they may certainly be said to answer the same end; and that too a religious one."<sup>22</sup> Mill and Newman, of course, argued from very different positions, and with, finally, very different aims in mind, and yet they were both responding in a remarkably like-minded way to a spirit of their age inimical to religion and poetry alike. It is commonplace to ascribe the surge of contemporary interest in cathedral renovation and more elaborate church ritual, which accompanied the Tractarian movement, to aesthetic rather than purely religious motives, but as Mill and Newman suggest, perhaps the distinction is not so clear-cut. Reverend Opimian states as much in a reply to a remark by one Dr. Anodyne on this very subject following a performance of the hymn to St. Catherine:

DOCTOR ANODYNE.

There is something in this hymn very solemn and impressive. In an age like ours, in which music and pictures are the predominant tastes, I do not wonder that the forms of the old Catholic worship are received with increasing favour. There is a sort of adhesion to the old religion, which results less from faith than from a certain feeling of poetry; it finds its disciples; but it is of modern growth; and has very essential differences from what it outwardly resembles.

THE REVEREND DOCTOR OPIMIAN.

It is, as far as I have frequently had occasion

to remark, and as my young friend here will readily admit, one of the many forms of the love of ideal beauty, which, without being in itself religion, exerts on vivid imaginations an influence that is very often like it (v, 93-94).

Two subsequent chapters (XIV and XV), with running-titles like "Music and Painting" and "Expression in Music," deal with an issue common to Peacock's fictional debates, whether feeling and execution may be reconciled in art, but something of the utilitarian colouring lent by Mill to the questions of art and religion is provided by the political economist Mr. MacBorrowdale, who observes that "if devotion is good, if cheerfulness is good, and if music promotes each of them in proper time and place, music is useful" (v, 130). So, we may infer, is "devotion," according to MacBorrowdale's criteria of utility.

Besides its aesthetic benefits, Falconer's poetic faith provides him with a belief in "some local spiritual influence; genius or nymph; linking us by a medium of something like human feeling, but more pure and exalted, to the all-pervading, creative, and preservative spirit of the universe" (v, 78-79). As Reverend Opimian has observed, it is not quite religious faith, but it is very like it. Although Falconer carefully distinguishes it from mere superstitious belief, this particular form of devotion is clearly more than an aesthetic creed, although of course an important aspect of it is its appreciation of beauty--"the most perfect ideality of

physical, moral, and intellectual beauty" (v, 79). Yet to realize such ideal beauty "from things as they are" (v, 79), requires an act of faith, even if it is a poetical faith. Indeed, truth, or rather the particular truth which art can convey, is a constant theme in Gryll Grange, and if it is not entirely opposed to the positivistic truths of science, it is something different, something beyond, though not finally inimical to, reason. Morgana Gryll, for example, as her name suggests, is a believer in magic of a sort. Comparing Berni and Bojardo, she favours Bojardo because he "seems to have more faith in his narrative" than Berni. "I go with him with ready credulity," she says, "where Berni's pleasantries interposes a doubt":

ALGERNON.

You think that in narratives, however wild and romantic, the poet should write as if he fully believed in the truth of his own story.

MORGANA.

I do; and I think so in reference to all narratives, not to poetry only. What a dry skeleton is the history of the early ages of Rome, told by one who believes nothing that the Romans believed. Religion pervades every step of the early Roman History; and in a great degree down at least to the Empire; but because their religion is not our religion, we pass over the supernatural part of the matter in silence, or advert to it in a spirit of contemptuous incredulity. We do not give it its proper place, nor present it in its proper colours as a cause in the production of great effects (v, 206).

Similarly, although the poem recited by Mr. Falconer in Chapter XI, "The Death of Philemon," contains elements of the supernatural, Falconer is himself inclined to believe it,

as he wishes to "connect the immaterial and material world" (v, 91).

It is such a disposition of mind--Reverend Opimian variously refers to it as a "form of aestheticism" (v, 32) and a "sort of spiritualism" (v, 55)--which is responsible for the air of quasi-religion which pervades Gryll Grange. The "enchanted garden," whether that of Epicurus or Circe, is a frequent image in the novel, and magic is often invoked, if not in actual fact, then at least as a possibility. Just as Falconer is caught under the spell of Morgana Gryll and lured away from his other-worldly existence at the Tower, so even the scientific Lord Curryfin is captivated by the mystery which surrounds Miss Niphet. In the Aristophanic Comedy, presented in Chapter XXVIII, even spirit-rapping can be supposed to be "dramatically" true (v, 10), while in Chapter XXXIV ("Christian Tales") every manner of ghost story, including "Classical tales of wonder" and ghostly appearances in Shakespeare and Beaumont, is told, and everyone present seems, for the time in any case, to accord a "ready faith" (v, 358).

The episode mentioned above is based on hints from an earlier fragment entitled "Julia Procula" (1848), which, set in ancient Rome, concerns an eminently worldly and sceptical Epicurean named Julius Procula and his unworldly and religious daughter Julia. A scene in the story presents a dinner-time conversation during which the sub-

ject of "supernatural appearances" is raised and followed by the narration of "a marvellous tale" (viii, 375), which is probably, as Peacock's editors point out (viii, 536n.), one of those told in Gryll Grange (v, 349n.). Written during a decade of intense religious controversy, this unfinished tale almost certainly refers to the Tractarian revival of supernaturalism which was poised against the prevalent rationalism of the age. Although it consists of a mere three fragmentary chapters, there are indications that it would finally have come down on the side of supernaturalism, for a disconcerting experience with the household Lar finds the father, Julius, with his habitual scepticism rather shaken during the dinner conversation in question (viii, 375).

While supernaturalism, religious or otherwise, is not quite as central to Gryll Grange as it apparently would have been to "Julia Procula," it nevertheless plays a role in Gryll Grange. In ways, its application to the Tractarian controversy is more explicit, if less prominent, than in "Julia Procula." Retaining much of the pagan religious sentiment found in the earlier fragment, Gryll Grange also directly addresses the Catholic question, and thus to the "marvellous tale" borrowed from "Julia Procula" adds a Saint's Legend, Mr. Falconer's contribution. Earlier too, Falconer has recommended to Reverend Opimian the Legend of St. Catherine (v, 72-5). Needless to say, both

this tale and the later one, "The Legend of St. Laura," invoke the miraculous. Like the ghost stories told in Chapter XXXIV, they are a clear endorsement of poetic, as opposed to scientific, truth. The opposition is all the more apt in that contemporary writers like Newman and Cardinal Wiseman were conducting a similar campaign against Protestant rationalism in their novels containing saints' legends and other accounts of the miraculous.

Curiously, Peacock's tolerance in matters supernatural does not seem to extend to the popular vogue of spiritualism. If spirit-rapping can be supposed, by a quite valid act of poetic faith, to be dramatically true, in itself it is a "monstrous" instance of "human credulity" according to Reverend Opimian:

'It is thought something wonderful that uneducated persons should believe in witchcraft in the nineteenth century: as if educated persons did not believe in grosser follies; such as this same spirit-rapping, unknown tongues, clairvoyance, table-turning, and all sorts of fanatical impositions, having for the present their climax in Mormonism' (v, 11).

Peacock here seems in agreement with other commentators of the time like Dickens and Faraday, who saw in such pre-occupations only "gross ignorance."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, it is tempting to speculate whether Peacock's mockery of spiritualism in the Aristophanic Comedy was in any way influenced by Dickens's satires on spiritualism during the 1850's in Household Words. Similarly, the idea for invoking the illustrious dead in this comedy may possibly have been

inspired by Bulwar Lytton who was said to have gotten advice at a seance from a spirit calling himself Shakespeare.<sup>24</sup> In any case, the fashion for spirit-rapping and clairvoyance was at its height in the 1850's and a frequent item of discussion in the periodical literature of the decade. But why, constitutionally irreligious and rational as he was, does Peacock seem to endorse, or at least tolerate, one type of faith in the supernatural when he roundly ridicules another?

While there may be no single source for Gryll Grange's satire of spiritualism, there are a few possibilities. One of these, put forward by Butler, is a review article in the Quarterly of 1853, which ridicules claims by certain English Clergymen that spirit-rapping, table-turning and so forth were of Satanic origin. The reviewer scornfully attributes spiritualism to "religious abberations," and the fears of Protestant clergy-men concerning such practices to "the tyranny of their abhorrence of Papal aggression and their dread of Satanic agency."<sup>25</sup> Both sides of the question, then, are finally subject to the same irrational delusions, and this clever insinuation would undoubtedly have appealed to Peacock's own highly associative sense of irony.

Far from being a satire of ultra-Protestantism, Gryll Grange's Aristophanic Comedy, in which the London Spirit-rapping Society appears, satirizes scientific pro-



gress, which it very curiously manages to associate with spiritualism. Mythical figures from the past, notably Homer's Circe and Gryllus, followed by various historical personages, are summoned up by three spirit-rappers who attempt to impress them with the "scientific wonders" of the nineteenth century (v, 281). Butler seems to put this down to perversity, "another, not unreasonable, charge against Peacock."<sup>26</sup> However, it is possible that Peacock may in fact have taken his hint for this ironic association of progressivism and spiritualism from a review article which appeared in his favourite Edinburgh Review in 1857.

The occasion for the article was the publication of a number of works dealing, significantly, with the subject of religious miracles, specifically the "pretended apparition of our Lady of La Salette."<sup>27</sup> While the article is concerned mainly with debunking Romish superstition, it begins with an interesting paean to progress in the nineteenth century:

The century in which this portion of human history belongs is remarkable above all others for the vociferous diffusion of knowledge, and for undoubted improvements in all the methods by which knowledge can be imparted to men. It is characterized by an unbounded development of material force and of that intelligence by which material force can be directed. It has established the domain of man more firmly over space, time, and the world; it has roused fresh powers of self-reliance; it has satisfied fresh dreams of enterprise.

And yet:

We have witnessed, and are still witnessing, even in the domains of science and positive experience, delusions as wild and senseless as ever beguiled the human imagination--clairvoyance, biology, and all the phan-

toms which hover on the confines of organic nature.<sup>28</sup> The review then goes on to observe that the superstitious credulity of the age extends to a belief in miraculous apparitions and Saints' Legends. The connection is to an extent valid, for such practices as spirit-rapping arose at a time when the Church of England was under heavy fire,<sup>29</sup> and both spiritualism and Tractarianism were widely diverging effects of a common cause.

It is likely that Peacock read this article. Reverend Opimian may even echo it at one point when he enumerates a catalogue similar to the one quoted above--"spirit-rapping, unknown tongues, clairvoyance, table-turning"--and his evident disgust that such follies should be believed in by educated people in a civilized age is shared by the reviewer. The connection made in Gryll Grange, however, between spiritualism and scientific progress is not explicit in the Edinburgh Review, but it can easily be seen how it might have occurred to Peacock when he read the article. The grandiose claims made for progress by the reviewer are not at all far off from those made by the Spirit-rapping Society in the Aristophanic Comedy. The "steam-driven myriads," invoked by the three spirit-rappers, "all in motion,/ On the land and on the ocean" (v, 281) and modern man's facility at "skimming/ The surface of the world" (v, 287) could possibly refer to the reviewer's claim that the present century "has established

the domain of man more firmly over space, time, and the world." It must have been only a short step in Peacock's mind from the heady "dreams of enterprise" celebrated by the Edinburgh article to the vain chimerae of psychics-- "'Shadows we are, and shadows we pursue'" is the choric conclusion of the Aristophanic Comedy.

Where the poetic faith of Falconer and other characters in the novel is imbued with an other-worldly idealism and a genuine sense of the beautiful, there is something unmistakably worldly about the machinery of spiritualism as Peacock presents it. As previously mentioned, Dickens and Faraday criticized spiritualists for wearing "the mask of scientific knowledge,"<sup>30</sup> and, not surprisingly, charges of fraud were common in this connection. One of the "grosser follies" of the age, in Reverend Opimian's view, spiritualism is finally only a mechanical trick like the rational explanations provided in certain supernatural tales, which Miss Gryll deplores as mere "sleights of hand" (v, 358). By way of a climax to the Aristophanic Comedy, the table of the spiritualists begins to spin around with ever-accelerating speed and then dances off the stage followed by the spirit-rappers who are pursued by their chairs--all a "piece of mechanical pantomime" and a "triumph of Lord Curryfin's art" (v, 290), but a contrived effect nevertheless, a sleight of hand as much attesting to the fallacy of trusting solely in scienti-

fic progress as to the trickery of bogus spiritualists. To Peacock, indeed, a blind and uncritical faith in progress is the most dangerous superstition of all. As Mr. MacBorrowdale says of the age:

Tables turn as usual, and the ghost trade appears to be thriving: for instead of being merely audible, the ghosts are becoming tangible, and shake hands under the tables with living wiseacres, who solemnly attest the fact civilized men ill-use their wives; the wives revenge themselves in their own way, and the Divorce court has business enough on its hands to employ it twenty years at its present rate of progression. Commercial bubbles burst, and high-pressure boilers blow up; and mountebanks of all descriptions flourish on public credulity. Everywhere there are wars and rumours of wars. The Peace Society has wound up its affairs in the Insolvent Court of Prophecy. A great tribulation is coming on the earth, and Apollyon in person is to be perpetual dictator of all nations (v, 319).

#### IV

The choice of a suitor, and with it the choice of a philosophy, is always an important decision in Peacock. Gryll Grange, it has often been pointed out, presents two very different suitors and philosophies in Mr. Falconer and Lord Curryfin. "Where Falconer is withdrawn," says Butler, "Curryfin is a busy man of the contemporary world."<sup>31</sup> And, we might add, where Falconer is the humanist, Curryfin is the scientist. In the end, each is wed to the woman who best complements, but, more important, mitigates the extremes of his particular temper, with Morgana Gryll as L'Allegro to Mr. Falconer's Penseroso and vice versa in the case of Miss Niphet and Lord Curryfin. And, as always in

the novelistic construction typical of Peacock, the individual love interest shares certain common concerns with the novel's more general cultural level, both levels, individual and general, being thematically connected. But while Peacock is capable of realizing an ideal outcome for his lovers, he is not so sanguine about the prospects of society at large, although as ever there are some few rays of hope.

"Wisdom," says Alfred North Whitehead, "is the fruit of a balanced development. It is this balanced growth of individuality which it should be the aim of education to serve."<sup>32</sup> By wisdom Whitehead means a philosophical over-view comprehensive enough to impose a moral order on what is a wide and disparate body of knowledge, an over-view which Whitehead finds to be absent in this specialized age: "We are left with no expansion of wisdom and with a greater need of it."<sup>33</sup> Whitehead is voicing a concern bequeathed us by the nineteenth century in the writings of men like Arnold, Mill, Ruskin, Pater, and Newman. It was the specialist, the "man of one idea," whom Newman found to be the representative nineteenth-century man:

Hence it is that we have the principles of utility, of combination, of progress, of philanthropy, or in material sciences, comparative anatomy, phrenology, electricity, exacted into leading ideas, and keys, if not of all knowledge, at least of many things than those which belong to them--principles, all of them true to a certain point, yet all degenerating into

error and quackery, because they are carried to excess, viz., at the point where they require interpretation and restraint from other quarters and because they are employed to do what is simply too much for them, inasmuch as a little science is not deep philosophy.<sup>34</sup>

Only philosophy can provide "interpretation and restraint"-- in Newman's terms, the needful "science of sciences"<sup>35</sup> or "universal knowledge":<sup>36</sup>

Possessed of this real illumination, the mind never views any part of the extended subject matter of knowledge without recollecting that it is but a part, or without the associations which spring from this recollection. It makes everything in some sort to lead to everything else; it would communicate the image of the whole to every separate portion, till that whole becomes in imagination like a spirit, everywhere pervading and penetrating its component parts, and giving them one definite meaning.<sup>37</sup>

That Peacock knew The Idea of a University, from which the above passages are taken, cannot be said with any certainty,<sup>38</sup> but he must surely have known of Newman and of his ideas. As we will see, Gryll Grange concurs at many points with Newman's writings on the matters of knowledge and culture, which circumstance, if not conclusive evidence that Peacock knew the specific work in question, might suggest at the very least some sort of indirect familiarity. Certainly, Falconer's Romanism and the date of Gryll Grange make it more likely to be Newman's influence which is evident here than Arnold's, as some critics have suggested.<sup>39</sup>

In any case, Gryll Grange, like Newman, makes the central point that what is lacking in the age is some sort of philosophical over-view, a wisdom capable of compre-

hending the present chaotic and fragmented field of intellect. Newman speaks of a "science of sciences," and a "universal knowledge," and Peacock's Mr. MacBorrowdale of "the true universal science," which in this particular instance is wine (v, 138), but the idea is the same, for what is at issue is the question of wisdom. And though it comprises a "universal knowledge," this wisdom is not to be confused with what Newman calls "mere acquisition" as opposed to "philosophy."<sup>40</sup> A great memory, says Newman, "does not make a philosopher, any more than a dictionary can be called a grammar. There are men who embrace a vast multitude of ideas, but with little sensibility about their real relations towards each other."<sup>41</sup> Thus Peacock's frequent criticisms throughout Gryll Grange of the practice of competitive examinations have wide application to the state of modern culture, for in this age "the test of intellectual capacity is in swallow, and not in digestion" (v, 2). And without "digestion" there can be no comprehension, nothing of the "interpretation and restraint" so needful, according to Newman, in the maintenance of a culture. Reverend Opimian ably describes the absence of philosophy in this age in his comments on Science and the Wisdom of Parliament:

Between them, they have poisoned the Thames, and killed the fish in the river. A little further development of the same wisdom and science will complete the poisoning of the air, and kill the dwellers on the banks. It is pleasant that the precious effluvium has

been brought so efficiently under the Wisdom's own wise nose. Thereat the nose, like Trinculo's, has been in great indignation. The Wisdom has ordered the Science to do something. The Wisdom does not know what, nor the Science either (v, 4).

Hence the modern crowd, envisioned in the Aristophanic Comedy, "flitting like shadows without mind or purpose" (v, 279).

One aspect of the rudderlessness of modern intelligence in Gryll Grange is to be found in popular education, the "vast diffusion" of which, as in Crotchet Castle, is credited largely to the misguided efforts of Lord Brougham (whom, incidently, Newman singles out in this connection also<sup>42</sup>). Under the presidency of Lord Facing-both-ways, as Brougham is known in Gryll Grange, an association called the Pantopragmatic Society has dedicated itself to the diffusion of every species of knowledge throughout the whole of society. However, from the comments of Reverend Opimian and Mr. MacBorrowdale, it is clear that far from representing philosophy and enlightenment, Pantopragmatics is only another source of undigested and useless knowledge, complementing perfectly the competitive examination mentality which forces itself "into a receptacle for a chaos of crudities" (v, 148). A passage from Newman's Idea of a University describes the essential characteristics of the age embodied generally in Pantopragmatics and specifically in Gryll Grange's Lord Curryfin, a lecturing nobleman and a close associate of



the Pantopragmatic Society:

I will tell you, Gentlemen, what has been the practical error of the last twenty years--not to load the memory of the student with a mass of undigested knowledge, but to force upon him so much that he has rejected all. It has been the error of distracting and enfeebling the mind by an unmeaning profusion of subjects; of implying that a smattering in a dozen branches of study is not shallowness, which it really is, but enlargement, which it is not; of considering an acquaintance with the learned names of things and persons, and the possession of clever duodecimos, and attendance on eloquent lecturers, and membership with scientific institutions, and the sight of the experiments of a platform and the specimens of a museum, that all this was not dissipation of mind, but progress.<sup>43</sup>

Lord Curryfin is personally a very sympathetic character, but, as Reverend Opimian reflects (v, 333), it is sometimes difficult to dissociate his pleasant social face from "the unpleasant social impertinence of these would-be meddlers with everything," namely the Pantopragmatic Society. Although his abilities are impressive, there is something about his use of them which suggests the "shallowness" which Newman speaks of above. He has "a strong memory, much power of application, and a facility of learning rapidly," and yet with all this he values his knowledge not for its own sake but for the effect which it produces on others: "He liked to shine in conversation, and there was scarcely a subject which could be mooted in any society, on which his multifarious attainments did not qualify him to say something" (v, 114). This sort of dilettantish intellectualism Peacock had perceived as

endemic to the age when over forty years earlier he observed in the unfinished "Essay on Fashionable Literature" (1818) that "there is more dictionary learning, more scientific smattering, more of that kind of knowledge which is calculated for show in general society, to produce a brilliant impression on the passing hour of literature" (viii, 266-67). Much more timely to Lord Curryfin and his generation, perhaps, is Newman's slyly deprecating allowance that "as to that superficial acquaintance with chemistry, and geology, and astronomy, and political economy, and modern history, and biography, and other branches of knowledge, which periodical literature and occasional lectures and scientific institutions diffuse through the community, I think it a graceful accomplishment."<sup>44</sup> With all his "multifarious attainments," Lord Curryfin represents the intellectual dissipation which Newman believes has enfeebled the modern mind by overwhelming it with "an unmeaning profusion of subjects"--unmeaning because there is no real philosophy behind it and hence no real understanding. "A smattering of a hundred things or a memory for detail is not a philosophical or comprehensive view," says Newman. "Recreations are not education; accomplishments are not education."<sup>45</sup>

Generically, Lord Curryfin is of the class of amiable enthusiasts common to Peacock's fiction, such as Mr. Asterias of Nightmare Abbey, for example. More than this,

he is one of the novel's two protagonists, although in his scientific preoccupations he is the diametric opposite of Mr. Falconer, who follows exclusively humane pursuits. Despite his "multifarious" accomplishments, Lord Curryfin has no genuine "philosophy" in Newman's sense, no comprehensive understanding of the disparate branches of knowledge over which he carelessly skims. His intellectual dissipation, moreover, is matched in the sphere of action by his reckless experiments with innovative stage-props and newly invented sail-boats, all of which are as potentially calamitous in their consequences as the high-pressure steam boilers which Reverend Opimian sees as symptomatic of the age's mania for progress and speed (v, 61).<sup>46</sup> Mr. Falconer's weaknesses, on the other hand, are something else altogether. If Lord Curryfin persists in thoughtlessly exposing himself to dangers of every kind, Falconer does not take enough risks. His courtship of Miss Gryll nearly fails through his indecision. A reclusive life of celibacy and introspection has convinced him that "marriage is at best a dangerous experiment" (v, 107).

Lord Curryfin and Mr. Falconer embody different aspects of the temper of the age: Curryfin unreflecting science and Falconer an excessively inward-looking humanism. Viewed together they suggest the possible consequences of the modern dissociation of sensibility which Whitehead has outlined: "Sensitiveness without impulse spells deca-

dence, and impulse without sensitiveness spells brutality."<sup>47</sup> The latter half of Whitehead's dictum is more appropriate, perhaps, to such captains of industry as Dickens's Mr. Bounderby than to Lord Curryfin who is sensitive enough in his own way. However, it is clear that Curryfin's problem is a predominance of "impulse," where Falconer's is an insufficiency of it, along with a too introspective, too sensitive nature. And if indeed Falconer himself could not be called "decadent," the singular way of life which he has chosen to follow points towards a kind of decadence. The peculiar mixture of aestheticism and spiritualism which Reverend Opimian detects in him may anticipate something of Pater's later adoption of aspects of Newman's thought,<sup>48</sup> and perhaps even the perverse excesses of the 1890's. Falconer's apocryphal Lord Noirmont, described in Chapter IV, while having antecedents in Beckford, also looks forward to characters like Huysman's des Esseintes who similarly seeks refuge from modern progress in a morbidly refined aestheticism.<sup>49</sup>

This is not to say, however, that Mr. Falconer or Lord Curryfin are mere personified cultural vices in a modern morality play. They are, after all, the heroes of the piece. Moreover, each complements the other in that each has what the other lacks. Lord Curryfin has the resolution, even the sometimes necessary impulsiveness, to carry his designs through, whether they concern untested

inventions or marriage. Most important, he is receptive to innovation. Indeed, he not only welcomes innovation but falls in with it perhaps too rashly, as with Pantopragmatics, for example, or the ill-fated sail-boat experiment in Chapter XVI. He wants, then, the ability to discriminate, the genuine philosophy described by Newman which will give him insight into the folly of things like the Pantopragmatic Society. This philosophical insight, this habit of careful deliberation, Mr. Falconer clearly possesses, but without Lord Curryfin's active decisiveness. His tower dwelling, with its solitude, its tranquil domestic routine, its library with "all the best books" (v, 24), and the seven sisters (the seven liberal arts?), is a veritable refuge of humane contemplation. But it is too static, too much of some other world. As Peacock observes, it is "too much above mortal frailty, too much above the contingencies of chance and change" (v, 374). A realization of this strikes Falconer at one point in Chapter XX as he pines for Morgana Gryll, and his resolution in this instance seems to point towards a proper balance of philosophy and action. He decides that whatever he does concerning Morgana should be done "calmly, deliberately, philosophically" rather than "suddenly, passionately, impulsively"--a dictum which Lord Curryfin would do well to observe. More crucially, he realizes that "it is now or never: this or none" (v, 212). Similarly, Lord Curryfin's cure is one Miss Niphet, who not

only makes a ban on all further dangerous experiments a condition of their courtship, but provides a focus for Lord Curryfin's wayward intellect. She is his "guiding star" (v, 374); "love, adoration, absorption of all feelings into one" (v, 314) replace his "multifarious" and "protean" pursuits.

"The March of Mechanics is one way, and the March of Mind is another," Peacock wrote to his friend John Hobhouse, Lord Broughton, in 1854,<sup>50</sup> but six years later Gryll Grange holds out at least the possibility of a marriage of science and humanism, if only on a limited scale.

V

In the decade preceding Gryll Grange, Peacock devoted much of his writing to dramatic criticism. It was during this decade that he wrote a series of essays on the classical drama for Fraser's Magazine entitled Horae Dramaticae, the first two, "Querolus" and "The Phaeton" appearing in 1852, and the last "The 'Flask' of Cratinus," in an 1857 issue. Another article, entitled "Chapelle and Bachaumont," ran in Fraser's in 1858. With the exception of the study of Euripides's "Phaeton," all of these essays deal with the comic drama--needless to say, a subject close to Peacock, and one which is perhaps more relevant to his final novel than to any of the other novels. Indeed, not only itself

a comedy, Gryll Grange contains a comedy within the comedy, and is thus perhaps Peacock's most emphatic celebration of those values of art and civilization which, according to the introductory paragraphs of Horae Dramaticae, are to be found in their purest form in the theatre:

GOETHE, we think--for we cannot cite chapter and verse--says somewhere something to this effect--that the realities of life present little that is either satisfactory or hopeful; and that the only refuge for a mind, which aspires to better views of society, is in the idealities of the theatre.

Without going to the full extent of this opinion, we may say, that the drama has been the favourite study of this portion of our plurality, and has furnished to us, on many and many occasions, a refuge of light and tranquillity from the storms and darkness of every-day life (x, 3).

Unlike that other amateur theatrical production in Mansfield Park, the Aristophanic Comedy presented in Gryll Grange is socially beneficial. As I have indicated above, the purpose of this comedy is to ridicule the pretensions of modern progress. Besides its satiric function, however, the comedy performs a useful role within the admittedly limited social circle who conceive it. The idea for the comedy has its genesis in Gryll Grange's opening chapter, and throughout the subsequent chapters theatre preparations go on steadily and unobtrusively behind the novel's foreaction. Indeed, while the latter is subject to frequent set-backs in the form of misunderstood intentions and indecision, and even to mild factiousness on the level of debate, "the theatre," says Pea-

cock, "made rapid progress" (v, 157). Thus, for example, though Mr. Falconer and Lord Curryfin both appear to be rivals for Miss Gryll's hand at one point, "their rivalry, such as it was, was entirely without animosity, and in no way disturbed the harmony of the Aristophanic party" (v, 172).

Most crucial is the spirit of cooperation necessarily encouraged by the production of this comedy, for every member of the "Aristophanic party" has some part in its undertaking. Several of the characters play leading roles or are in the chorus, while others--for example, Mr. Falconer and Reverend Opimian, who collaborate on its script--work behind the scenes. The most striking instance of this cooperative spirit quite emphatically underscores the cultural significance of the Aristophanic Comedy. Where in an early novel like Headlong Hall, painters, musicians and landscape architects are merely isolated cranks with no more connection with each other than their frequent and inconclusive disagreements, in Gryll Grange painting, music and architecture, in the persons of Messrs. Pallet, Minum and Curryfin (who designs the theatre), collaborate in the preparations for the Aristophanic Comedy (in much the same way, incident , that these same arts cooperate with each other in the ideal culture posited by Newman<sup>51</sup>):

Sufficient progress had been made in the comedy for the



painter and musician to begin work on their respective portions; and Lord Curryfin, whose heart was in his work, passed whole mornings in indefatigable attention to the progress of the building. It was near the house, and was to be approached by a covered way. It was a miniature of the Athenian theatre, from which it differed in having a roof, but it resembled it in the arrangements of the stage and orchestra, and in the graduated series of semicircular seats for the audience (v, 117).

If this miniature theatre departs from its Athenian original in having a roof--a further compromise is evinced by the absence of the êcheia or "sonorous vases," which Lord Curryfin has vainly attempted to reproduce (v, 174-6) --such minor differences reflect only a healthy regard for present utility. A theatre may lack a roof in the Mediterranean climate just as it must have one in the English. For the same reason, Reverend Opimian declines to add salt water or turpentine to his claret in the fashion of his beloved ancient Greeks, although he has no doubt that their wine was excellent in its kind (v, 124-6). More significantly, Opimian extends this attitude to the music and painting of the Greeks, for if they too were excellent in their kind, they are not suited to the modern taste. Hence, for the purposes of the modern Aristophanic Comedy, these arts must be adapted:

MR. GRYLL.

It is not exactly Greek music, Mr. Minum, that you are giving us for our Aristophanic choruses.

MR. MINUM.

No, sir: I have endeavoured to give you a good selection, as appropriate as I can make it.

MR. PALLET.

Neither am I giving you Greek painting for the

scenery. I have taken the liberty to introduce perspective.

THE REVEREND DOCTOR OPIMIAN.

Very rightly both, for Aristophanes in London (v, 138).

Such an attitude emerges finally in all of Peacock's novels, although perhaps not quite as painlessly as it does here. It is hard to imagine Reverend Folliot or Mr. Escot compromising to this extent without some very intrusive arm twisting by Peacock. In any case, as one character in Gryll Grange observes, "Chaque age a ses plaisirs, son esprit, et ses moeurs" (v, 235).

Thus the Aristophanic Comedy is not a reproduction but an adaptation. Its concern is with the spirit of the ancient Greek theatre rather than with antiquarian quibbles about form and arrangement. The essence of this spirit is aptly conveyed in terms used early in Gryll Grange by Reverend Opimian to describe Mr. Falconer's singular household: "effective" and "graceful" (v, 48). Or, in other words, "utility" and "beauty," each necessary and interdependent, each an indispensable element in a civilized society, each admirably served by the modern Aristophanic Comedy presented in Gryll Grange, with its corrective satire and its lovely chorus. And that this last novel of Peacock's should affirm civilized society, in however limited a sense, through its application of the comic spirit is entirely fitting. "Sensitiveness to the comic laugh is a step in civilization," says Meredith in his

famous essay, "We know the degree of refinement in men by the matter they will laugh at, and the ring of the laugh."<sup>52</sup> Certainly the laughter provoked in Gryll Grange has an unmistakably civilized ring to it.

## CONCLUSION

In a discussion of Manicheanism in the "Utility of Religion," John Stuart Mill says:

A creed like this, which I have known to be devoutly held by at least one cultivated and conscientious person of our own day, allows it to be believed that all the mass of evil which exists was undesigned by, and exists not only by the appointment of, but in spite of the Being whom we are called upon to worship. A virtuous human being assumes in this theory the exalted character of a fellow-labourer with the Highest, a fellow-combatant in the great strife; contributing his little, which by the aggregation of many like himself becomes much, towards that progressive ascendancy, and ultimately complete triumph of good over evil.<sup>1</sup>

It would be interesting to know whether the "cultivated and conscientious person" of Mill's acquaintance could be a colleague of Mill's father and of Mill himself at the India House, namely, Thomas Love Peacock. While it is often difficult to credit Peacock with a "devoutly held" creed of any kind, it seems to me that if he could be said to have had one it was that outlined by Mill above.

The fragmentary "Ahrimanes," of course, is an obvious example of Peacock's interests in this direction, with its opposing principles of light and darkness, good and evil, and its premise--unrealized in the poem as it stands--of an eventual victory for the forces of light. But even in the comic turn, which, as I show in Chapter I, is given this scheme in Headlong Hall, there is the same

conviction that "light" will ultimately prevail, if only in the conventionally comic affirmation of civil society provided in the multiple marriages with which the novel ends. Perhaps nowhere else is Peacock more obviously "a fellow-combatant in the great strife" than in Melincourt, and indeed here the creed described by Mill has a ready application. At one point in the novel, Mr. Forester defends "individual example" by adapting Homer's allegory of two urns, one of good and one of evil. Every individual has at birth a phial holding one drop of liquid which will be evil if poured into the urn of evil, and good if into the urn of good. Does the wise man follow the example of the generality of men and pour his phial into the urn of evil?

No: you would rather say, 'That neglected urn contains the hopes of the human species: little, indeed, is the addition I can make to it, but it will be good as far as it goes;' and if, on approaching the urn, you should find it not so empty as you had anticipated, if the genius appointed to guard it should say to you, 'There is enough in this urn already to allow a reasonable expectation that it will one day be full, and yet it has only accumulated drop by drop through the efforts of individuals, who broke through the pale and pressure of the multitude, and did not despair of human virtue,' would you not feel ten thousand times repaid for the difficulties you had overcome, and the scoffs of the fools and slaves you had abandoned, by the single reflection that would then rush upon your mind, I am one of these? (ii, 48).

This, essentially, is the creed which informs Peacock's other novels as well. It is behind not only their comedy, but also their heated, but rarely vituperative, debates, over which it presides as a sort of genius of

reconciliation. The forces of cheerfulness battle those of gloom in Nightmare Abbey and if the novel's comic hero remains a bachelor to the end, it is with the consolation of madeira. Crotchet Castle hints at an imminent alliance between rational reformers and Tory radicals, while Gryll Grange, written thirty years after the other novels, witnesses an unlikely marriage of science and humanism. It is always a worldly creed and often a sceptical one, and for that reason it is finally proof against facile optimism.

## APPENDIX

In Chapter IX of Melincourt, a certain Reverend Grovelgrub interrupts a heated debate, and urges its disputants to "define, gentlemen, define" (ii, 91). Grovelgrub seems hardly the one to insist on definition. His practice throughout the novel is aimed more towards dissimulation and fraud. In this rare instance, however, he probably speaks for Peacock himself, for Melincourt, on every level, is concerned with the importance of definition, of reducing generalities into concrete particulars, of transforming theory into practice. This section constitutes somewhat of a digression from the main thread of the argument of the chapter on Melincourt. However, in a sense the quest for verbal definition in Melincourt parallels the novel's more prominent quest for the values of the past.

Like Spenser's Archimago, the villains of Melincourt deal as much in "fraud" as in "force." "Falsehood," states Mr. Forester, "is the great vice of the age; falsehood of heart, falsehood of mind, falsehood of every form and mode of intellect and intercourse" (ii, 427). In the latter manifestation especially, Falsehood runs rampant through Melincourt. From the "usual cant of young ladies," the stock in trade of popular fiction (ii, 84), to the scurrility and speciousness of periodical literature,

from armchair philanthropists, who are "very liberal of words which cost them nothing" (ii, 42), to political apostates for whom words like "Truth" and "Liberty" were once "the only passports into the poetical market" (ii, 182), the exploitive abuse of language is everywhere evident. Melincourt's heroes, as much as the Red Cross Knight in Spenser's poem, must find their way through this wood of error. By coincidence, the one work of Peacock's which is most directly concerned with language, Sir Hornbook; or, Childe Launcelot's Expedition (1814), is like Melincourt cast in the form of chivalric romance.

Described on its title-page as a "grammatico-allegorical ballad," Sir Hornbook is a short children's grammar which surveys the main parts of speech by representing them as figures from chivalric romance. Its hero, for example, is Sir Hornbook, and his "merrymen" number "full six and twenty" (vi, 264). Despite its necessarily elementary nature, Sir Hornbook does nevertheless convey an interestingly dramatic view of language and its constituent parts. Moreover, it is indicative of just one more of Peacock's many interests. Although Sir Hornbook has no apparent resemblance to Melincourt, beyond a common use of the romance motif, it was probably in preparation for this work that Peacock read two grammar books which play an interesting, though hitherto unremarked, role in Melincourt.



The two works are James Harris's Hermes (1751) and Horne Tooke's Diversions of Purley (1787). It is with reference to Harris's book that in Chapter XXI of Melincourt, "The City of Novote," Peacock describes virtual representation as "a system somewhat analogous to that which the learned author of Hermes calls a method of supply by negation" (ii, 225). A second reference occurs in Chapter XXXIX, where the empty heads of the Mainchance conspirators are, "like Mr. Harris's indefinite article, supplied by negation" (ii, 399). In itself the allusion appears rather arbitrary, and seems hardly to warrant repeating, as Peacock has done here. Harris had used the phrase in question while discussing the absence of an indefinite article in the ancient Greek language: "'Tis perhaps owing to the imperfect manner, in which the Article (A) defines, that the Greeks have no Article corresponding to it, but supply its place, by the negation of their Article."<sup>1</sup> Peacock's allusion begins to have more significance, however, when we consider that it is this very statement of Harris's that Tooke singles out in the early pages of the Diversions. Stating that "Mr. Harris has not entirely secured my concurrence with his Doctrine of Definitions," Tooke mockingly parodies Harris's line of reasoning:

1. 'The Articles have no meaning, but when associated to some other word.'
2. 'Nothing can be more nearly related than the Greek article "O" to the English article THE.'
3. 'But the article A defines in an imperfect manner.'

4. 'Therefore the Greeks have no article correspondent to our article A.'
5. However, 'they supply its place.'
- And How, think you?
6. 'By a Negation'--(observe well their method of supply)--  
'by a negation of their article "O".'<sup>2</sup>

The strictly grammatical grounds of Tooke's disagreement with Harris do not concern us here. Other grounds, political and philosophical, do. Tooke's contemporaries surely could not have read even a grammar book by Tooke without a strong consciousness of his radical politics. One of Tooke's own interlocutors in the Diversions confronts him with this very point: "I am afraid, my good friend, you still carry with you your old humour in politics, though your subject is now different."<sup>3</sup> Tooke in fact makes no real attempt to dispel this suspicion, for the "meaning of words," he insists, is important, "not only (as has been too lightly supposed) to Metaphysicians and School-men, but to the rights and happiness of mankind in their dearest concerns."<sup>4</sup> An understanding of grammar is "necessary in the most important questions concerning religion and civil society."<sup>5</sup>

Grammatical minutiae aside, the idea behind Tooke's theory of language is that the present political and legal system is the result of a faulty metaphysic engendered in turn by a misapplication of language.<sup>6</sup> The chief culprit, in Tooke's view, is our habit of abstraction. In its primitive state, language is a series of individual signs

which denotes a series of individual sense impressions. As language is refined, it appears to express more general relations. Substantives, which once denoted concrete particular things, are abstracted from their original contexts and become "parts of speech," taking on new meanings or even several varied meanings. In this way, former substantives have become adjectives, prepositions, and conjunctions. Then there occurs a tendency in the opposite direction. Certain adjectives, originally used in association with substantives, begin to be set up as substantives in their own right, the substantives which ought to have accompanied them being by now understood. In Elie Halévy's summation of Tooke's thesis, "abstraction is an ellipse,"<sup>7</sup> that is, it is not truly a system of generalizations and signs designating genuinely abstract relations. It is a verbal illusion, a kind of stenography, which only appears to exist apart from concrete realities. "There are thought to be mental syntheses," says Halévy, "where there are only verbal syntheses; there is thought to be the unity of a spiritual act where there is only the unity of a word."<sup>8</sup>

Tooke was arguing for the radical nominalism of Hobbes which was rejected by thinkers like Harris (and his friend and fellow grammarian Lord Monboddo), who defended a more traditional Platonic Idealism. In Hermes, Harris insists on the "double Capacity" of language, a

phrase which in itself would have stirred Tooke's rigorous scepticism. Language, according to Harris, may be expressive of the "general Truths" of philosophers and also serve the practical, particular needs of every day use.<sup>9</sup> As if anticipating Tooke's refutation of his work, Harris speaks disparagingly of the scepticism towards "general or universal ideas" held among both the "vulgar" and "the Philosophers now a days."<sup>10</sup>

Peacock may possibly have been thinking of Tooke and Harris in section IV of Sir Hornbook. Here Sir Hornbook and his men climb a hill "where by one ample wall contained, / All earthly things they found" (vi, 267). A battle ensues and its resolution seems to favour Harris's case, if only because it is the more orthodox one, for the generalizing, abstractive attributes of language:

But earthly things and beings all,  
 Though mixed in boundless plenty,  
 Must one by one dissolving fall  
 To Hornbook's six-and-twenty (vi, 269).

Tooke's nominalism claims a victory, however, at one point in Headlong Hall. Mr. Escot (based in part on Lord Monboddo) speaks of "truth" in the Platonic sense as "an universal and immutable truth, deducible from the nature of things" (i, 80). One of his fellow disputants, Mr. Jenkison, rejects this abstraction with a Tookean etymology of "truth," tracing it to its original verb form denoting a particular action: "Truth is that which a

man troweth. Where there is no man there is no truth. Thus the truth of one is not the truth of another" (i, 80-1).

The controversy is continued in Melincourt, although at much greater length and on a more immediate political level. Mr. Sarcastic may be based partially on Tooke.<sup>11</sup> His curious habit of reducing practice into theory is essentially an ironic inversion of Tooke's method. Instead of stripping away the abstract illusion and revealing the original concrete "thing" behind it, as Tooke does, Sarcastic translates the real palpable abuses of practice into theory, thereby, in his view, creating perhaps the only possible reconciliation of general and particular truths. The method, then, is reversed but the results are essentially the same. For abstraction and generalization, hard, particular "things" are substituted; for the virtues of theory, the vices of practice, along with a new theory more compatible with the latter. When Mr. Sarcastic, in illustration of his method, announces, "I will have no rule of right, but my own pocket" (ii, 229), he employs Tooke's own concrete definition of "right" (originally "a rule of conduct"),<sup>12</sup> but in this case translates it into the very tangible shape of corruption. Indeed Peacock may have gotten his idea for Mr. Sarcastic from a passage in the Diversions in which Tooke undertakes a demonstration very similar to Sarcastic's practice, involving, significantly, Harris's theory of the indefinite article:

I will suppose Mr. Harris (when one of the Lords of Treasury) to have addressed the Minister in the same style of reasoning--'Salaries, Sir, produce no benefit, unless associated to some receiver: my salary at present is but an imperfect provision for myself and family: but your salary as Minister is much more complete. Oblige me therefore by withdrawing my present scanty pittance; and supply its place to me, by a negation of your salary.'--I think this request could not reasonably have been denied: and what satisfaction Mr. Harris would have felt by finding his theory thus reduced to practice, no person can better judge than myself.<sup>13</sup>

The first direct reference to the Harris-Tooke debate in Melincourt, we have seen, occurs in Chapter XXI, "The City of Novote." Harris's "method of supply by negation," curiously, Peacock applies to the system of "virtual representation." The fact that Tooke satirizes this phrase in the Diversions partially explains its presence in Melincourt. However, Peacock's particular use of the phrase in connection with virtual representation and rotten boroughs in this chapter becomes clearer when we consider that during the 1770's Tooke had championed the cause of equal representation in Parliament.<sup>14</sup> Virtual representation was the juristic fiction by which a borough which lacked a member in parliament was said to be "virtually" represented by a member for another borough--hence "virtual" as opposed to "actual" representation. In Melincourt, the "large and populous city of Novote" is virtually represented by no less than two members from the rotten borough of Onevote with its population of one (ii, 225). Peacock's allusion to Harris's indefinite article is

apt here because it describes both the electoral system which Tooke opposed, and, moreover, what Tooke would most certainly have recognized as the pernicious verbal illusion sustaining this system. Mr. Christopher Corporate, the single voter of Onevote, is, Mr. Sarcastic observes, "the abstract and quintessence of thirty-three thousand six hundred and sixty-six people" (ii, 242), but at this episode's end, Onevote is entirely destroyed by the angry populace of Novote, a crowd as "multitudinous," as "multiform and many-coloured" (ii, 248) as the vast army of all "earthly things and beings" subdued by Sir Hornbook's little band of grammatical retainers.

Horne Tooke, said Hazlitt in The Spirit of the Age, "saw language stripped of the clothing of habit, or the disguise of doting pedantry, naked in its cradle, and in its primitive state."<sup>15</sup> Something of Tooke's reductiveness can be found in Melincourt. Peacock, like Tooke, is concerned in his novel with tracing to their radical origins the assumptions--social, political and philosophical--of "things as they are," and this can only be accomplished, finally, by the rigorous interrogation of the words which support these assumptions. More generally, the opposition between Tooke's "radical" grammar and the more traditional ideas of Tory grammarians, whom Tooke repeatedly takes to task throughout the Diversions, informs a similar political and philosophical conflict in Peacock's novel. The poles

of liberal and conservative thought in Melincourt exist even on the level of grammar.



NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup>Carl Van Doren, The Life of Thomas Love Peacock (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966), p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>"Tales by the Author of Headlong Hall," Edinburgh Review, LXVIII (January, 1839), 438-9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 432ff.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 443.

<sup>5</sup>See Praz's chapter, "Thomas Love Peacock," in The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction, trans. Angus Davidson (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 87-101; Dyson's chapter "Peacock: The Wand of Enchantment," in The Crazy Fabric: Essays in Irony (London: Macmillan and Co., 1956), pp. 57-71; and Mill's full length study of Peacock's "Regency" novels in Peacock: his Circle and his Age (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

<sup>6</sup>The Crazy Fabric, p. 62.

<sup>7</sup>Listener, XLII (Dec., 1949), 998.

<sup>8</sup>Aldous Huxley: Novelist (London: The Athlone Press, 1980), p. 57.

<sup>9</sup>For Frye's discussion of Menippean satire in which he mentions Peacock's novels see Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 308-12.

<sup>10</sup>See J. Peter Williams, "Aesthetic Ambivalence in the Works of Thomas Love Peacock," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1966; Sarah Ann Robertson Nestor, "The Concord of Discord: Thomas Love Peacock's Novels of Talk," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1975; and Peter Sloat Hoff, "The Paradox of the Fortunate Foible: Thomas Love Peacock's Literary Vision," Texas Studies in Language and Literature, XVII (Summer, 1975), 481-88.

<sup>11</sup>Un Epicurien anglais: Thomas Love Peacock (Paris: Librairie Vizet and Bastard, 1933).

<sup>12</sup>Peacock Displayed, A Satirist in his Context

(Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. viii.

<sup>13</sup>Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background, 1760-1830 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 9-10.

<sup>14</sup>Alice Chandler discusses this aspect of Peacock's satire in very general terms in "The Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns: Peacock and the Medieval Revival," Bucknell Review, XIII (Dec., 1965), 39-50; and in A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth Century English Literature (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970). H. N. Fairchild, in The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), pp. 348-62, briefly discusses Peacock's ambivalent attitude towards primitivism and progress, as does Lois Whitney in her Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), pp. 322-25. In "The Serious Satire of Thomas Love Peacock: A Critical Study of his Moral, Intellectual and Aesthetic Opinions," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1973, Janet Ann Fay devotes a chapter to Peacock and the idea of progress in which she concludes that Peacock was a deteriorationalist.

<sup>15</sup>See foreword to Whitney's Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, p. xiii.

<sup>16</sup>The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into its Origin and Growth (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup>Bury's book is the standard study. Other useful studies include: Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity (New York: Octagon Books, 1965); Frederick J. Teggart, comp., The Idea of Progress: A Collection of Readings (revised edition; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1949); Ernest Lee Tuveson, Millenium and Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949); Robert Nisbet, History of the Idea of Progress (New York: Basic Books, 1980); Ludwig Edelstein, The Idea of Progress in Classical Antiquity (Baltimore: The Johns-Hopkins Press, 1967); Charles Van Doren provides an extensive bibliography on the subject in The Idea of Progress (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1967). For a study of the influence of the idea of progress on nineteenth century literature see Jerome Hamilton Buckley, The Triumph of Time (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966).

<sup>18</sup>The Works of John Ruskin, eds. E. T. Cook and

Notes to pp. 6-12

Alexander Wedderburn (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904), V, 327.

<sup>19</sup>See Chapter Two of Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>21</sup>An Essay on the History of Civil Society (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), p. 244.

<sup>22</sup>Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, pp.1-6.

<sup>23</sup>The Halliford Edition of the Works of Thomas Love Peacock, eds. H. F. B. Brett-Smith and C. E. Jones (New York: AMS Press, 1967), vi, 10. All further quotations from Peacock's works will be from this edition and will be cited in the text by volume and page number. Lower case Roman numerals will be used to indicate volume number in order to avoid confusion with chapter numbers which will be given in capital Roman numerals.

<sup>24</sup>The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), I, 325.

<sup>25</sup>Butler, for example, feels that Peacock puts a genuine utilitarian case in the essay, Peacock Displayed, pp. 287-90.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>27</sup>The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, II, 273.

<sup>28</sup>Although the process as Peacock describes it is similar to that described in The Wealth of Nations (which Peacock read during the summer of 1818, according to his diary, viii, 443) he may have been more specifically indebted to literary scholars of the eighteenth century such as John Brown and Thomas Blackwell. As the full title of his book indicates, A Dissertation on the Rise, Union, and Power, the Progressions, Separations and Corruptions, of Poetry and Music (New York: Garland Publishing, 1971), Brown is chiefly concerned with this phenomenon. He bases his inquiry on the premise that the first arts were music and poetry, and that in the very earliest ages they were inseparable. Throughout the subsequent ages, then, he traces the progress of poetry and music and the various transformations and separations they have undergone. While in the earliest ages the bard effectively united the

different roles of poet, historian, moralist, legislator and so on, "in the Course of Time, and the Progress of Polity and Arts, a Separation of the several Parts or Branches of Music (in its extended Sense) would naturally arise" (Dissertation, p. 40). As a result, we have the present arts and sciences, all specialized, separate disciplines, but reduceable, ultimately, to a single art before the division, at some point in the past, which produced them. Blackwell expresses a similar view, also tracing the arts and sciences back to a time when "there was yet no Separation of Wisdom: the Philosopher and the Divine, the legislator and the Poet, were all united in the same Person," An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer (New York: Garland Publishing, 1970), p. 84.

<sup>29</sup> "Peacock cannot be pinned down," says M. H. Abrams in The Mirror and the Lamp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 126, a view shared by Carl Dawson in His Fine Wit: A Study of Thomas Love Peacock (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 81-96, and Lorna Sage in Peacock: The Satirical Novels, ed. L. Sage (New York: The Macmillan Press, 1976), pp. 14-15.

<sup>30</sup> René Wellek uses the term "historical method" to describe the approach taken by eighteenth century literary scholars, The Rise of English Literary History (2nd ed.; Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1970), pp. 13-14. The general resemblance between Peacock's essay and the eighteenth century inquiries has been very briefly mentioned by Roy Harvey Pearce in "The Eighteenth-Century Scottish Primitivists: Some Reconsiderations," English Literary History, XII (1945), 20, and Ernest Lee Tuveson in Millenium and Utopia, p. 208. For general accounts of the eighteenth century historical school see Jane Rendell, The Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment (New York: The Macmillan Press, 1978); Gladys Bryson, Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945).

<sup>31</sup> He mentions the work in a letter to Edward Hookham, viii, 209.

<sup>32</sup> An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope (New York: Garland Publishing, 1970), I, 348.

<sup>33</sup> For an account of the four stage theory see Ronald L. Meek, "Smith, Turgot, and the 'Four Stages' Theory," History of Political Economy, III (1972), 9-27.

<sup>34</sup> The Progress of Civil Society: A Didactic Poem in Six Books (London: G. Nicol, 1796), Book IV, ll. 187-214;

Book I, ll. 163-68.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., Book I, ll. 261-62.

<sup>36</sup>Butler calls Knight a "primitivist and classicist," Peacock Displayed, p. 31. For this view of the Scottish historians see D. M. Foerster, Homer in English Criticism: The Historical Approach in the Eighteenth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), p. 43, and Lois Whitney, "English Primitivistic Theories of Epic Origins," Modern Philology, XXI (1924), 339.

<sup>37</sup>Progress of Civil Society, Book VI, l. 346.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Book II, l. 395.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., Book IV, ll. 451-52.

<sup>40</sup>For example, the following passage describing the growth of the social instinct in Rhododaphne,

Love first in social bonds combined  
The scattered tribes of humankind,  
And bade the wild race cease to roam,  
And learn the endearing name of home.  
From Love the sister arts began,  
That charm, adorn, and soften man (viii, 77),

may have as its source the following lines from Knight's poem:

Fraternal with parental ties connects,  
And, the still growing numbers, still collects;  
Farther and farther spreads its wide embrace,  
In bonds connubial, to each neighbouring race,  
Controls fall discord in its germs innate;  
And with centred interest, builds the state  
(Book I, ll. 163-8).

Further, Peacock's use of the metaphor of a snowball rolling down a mountain and continually growing larger, which appears in both "The Four Ages" (viii, 7-8) and Melincourt (1817) (ii, 299), is also found in Knight's poem, Book VI, ll. 407-12.

<sup>41</sup>There is ample evidence that Peacock was directly familiar with the Scottish Historians. Lists of books ordered in 1810 include Lord Kames's Elements of Criticism (1762) and David Hume's Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects (1777) ("Letters," viii, 180). The notes to Peacock's long poem, The Philosophy of Melancholy

(1812), contain a lengthy quotation from Adam Ferguson's History of the Roman Republic (1783) (vi, 233-5). Ferguson's work is also named in the posthumous Sotheby Catalogue of Peacock's library, (Catalogue of the library of the late Thos. Love Peacock...which will be sold at auction by messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson, and Hodge...the 11th of June, 1866, and the following day, Lot 310), which in addition indicates that Peacock owned William Robertson's complete Works (1797-1802) (Lot 533) and the above cited Essays and Treatises (Lot 256), and Lord Monboddo's Antient Metaphysics (1779-99) (Lot 650). Monboddo, whose Origin and Progress of Language (1773-92) is often cited in the notes to Melincourt, has been suggested by Butler as a partial prototype for Mr. Forster (Peacock Displayed, pp. 75-7), who, like Monboddo, is a student of "the nature and progress of man" (ii, 34). A short-lived diary for 1818--covering approximately a two month period from July 7 to August 26--records Peacock's daily progress reading Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations (1776), as I have already pointed out, interspersed at one point with Hume's Political Essays (1741-42) (viii, 443).

<sup>42</sup>Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, II, 273.

<sup>43</sup>The Mirror and the Lamp, p. 126.

<sup>44</sup>The History of English Poetry (London: J. Dodsley, 1775), III, 500.

<sup>45</sup>Joseph Warton, Genius and Writings of Pope, I, 211.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., II, 262.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., II, 408.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., II, 57.

<sup>49</sup>Lord Monboddo (James Burnett), Of the Origin and Progress of Language (Menston: The Scolar Press, 1967), II, 337.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup>Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of a Vision (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), p. 56ff.

<sup>2</sup>For an account of the poem's composition dates see Kenneth Neill Cameron, ed., Shelley and his Circle,

1773-1822 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), III, 211-44.

<sup>3</sup>The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, I, 499.

<sup>4</sup>See Peacock's notes appended to the shorter verse fragment of "Ahrimanes" in Appendix II of vii, Works.

<sup>5</sup>Peacock mentions the work in a letter to Edward Hookham, Sept. 19, 1809, viii, 176.

<sup>6</sup>London Pamphleteer, XIX (1812), 502.

<sup>7</sup>A New System of, or, an Analysis of Ancient Mythology; Wherein an Attempt is made to divest Tradition of Fable; and to reduce the Truth to its Original Purity, (London: T. Payne, 1776), II, 115.

<sup>8</sup>In his notes on Queen Mab, for example, Shelley states that "Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes...From this moment his vitals were devoured by the vulture of disease," The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, eds. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck (New York: Gordian Press, 1965), I, 158. Shelley undoubtedly derived this interpretation of the Promethean fable from Newton's similar account in The Return to Nature, 502-05, although it is interesting to note that Monboddo, who also saw the invention and use of fire for warmth and cooking as harmful to man, states that "the memory of the introduction of Fire among the inhabitants of Greece is preserved in the fable of Prometheus, who contrived, some way or other, to get it from the Sun," Antient Metaphysics (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), III, 38. In Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity, Boas and Lovejoy give an account of such anti-Prometheanism in antiquity, pp. 120, 132.

<sup>9</sup>For a detailed account of Burnet's influence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries see Marjorie Nicolson, Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963).

<sup>10</sup>Wordsworth and Coleridge, for example, seem to have been well acquainted with Burnet's theories, Nicolson, Mountain Gloom, p. 194.

<sup>11</sup>London Pamphleteer, 105.

<sup>12</sup>The Sacred Theory of the Earth, in which are set

forth, the Wisdom of God Displayed in the Works of the Creation, Salvation, and Consummation of all Things, until the Destruction of the World by Fire: including the Blessed Millennium, or, the Reign of Christ with his Saints upon Earth (London: T. Kinnersley, 1816), p. 228.

<sup>13</sup>The Return to Nature, 506.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 527.

<sup>15</sup>In a short note, Dawson suggests that the phrase uttered by Mr. Escot, "confracti mundi rudera" (i, 72), is an allusion to Burnet. Dawson, however, fails to note the many other allusions to Burnet in the novel, and seems unaware of Newton's use of Burnet, although he puts forward a very interesting source for Escot's phrase in Lord Lyttleton's Journey into Wales (1776), His Fine Wit, pp. 303-04nn.

<sup>16</sup>For a study of Burnet's "Christian Geology" see Ernest Tuveson, "Swift and the World-Makers," Journal of the History of Ideas, II (1950), 54-74; and also his Millenium and Utopia.

<sup>17</sup>The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, I, 499.

<sup>18</sup>Sacred Theory, p. 125.

<sup>19</sup>"There is no great extravagance in presuming that the progress of the perpendicularity of the poles may be as rapid as the progress of intellect; or that there should be a perfect identity between the moral and physical improvement of the human species," The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, I, 143n.

<sup>20</sup>"It is evident, that if there ever was a time when the axis of our globe was perpendicular to the plane of the ecliptic, not only the days and nights, but the seasons also must have been equal from one pole to another," The Return to Nature, 505.

<sup>21</sup>Sacred Theory, p. 190.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 217-19.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 369.

<sup>24</sup>The first edition appeared in 1681 as Telluris Theoria Sacra: Orbis Nostri Originem et Mutationes Generalis, olim subiturus est, complectens; Libri duo priores de diluvio et paradiso.



<sup>25</sup>Sacred Theory, p. 552. See Tuveson for a discussion of the theatre metaphor in Burnet, Millenium and Utopia, pp. 125-6.

<sup>26</sup>Sacred Theory, p. 111.

<sup>27</sup>Nicolson discusses this metaphor which runs throughout The Sacred Theory, Mountain Gloom, p. 78.

<sup>28</sup>Sacred Theory, p. 623.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 377.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 524.

<sup>31</sup>For accounts of eighteenth century mythography see Edward B. Hungerford, Shores of Darkness (New York: Meridian Books, 1963); Ruthven Todd, Tracks in the Snow: Studies in English Science and Art (London: The Grey Walls Press, 1946); and Frank E. Manuel, The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959).

<sup>32</sup>Kenneth Neill Cameron feels that "Shelley presents a much more directly political message than does Peacock, working his material mainly around the French Revolution and its aftermath. The struggle he depicts is not only--as it is with Peacock--one between good and evil principles, but between progressive and reactionary social and political forces," Shelley and his Circle, III, 24ln.

<sup>33</sup>Ancient Mythology, II, 209.

<sup>34</sup>The Mythology and Rites of the British Druids (London: J. Booth, 1809), p. vii.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Manuel, The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods, p. 104.

<sup>38</sup>Ancient Mythology, II, 200.

<sup>39</sup>Mythology and Rites, p. 106.

<sup>40</sup>Celtic Researches, on the Origin, Traditions and Language of the Ancient Britons; with some Introductory Sketches, on Primitive Society (London: J. Booth, 1804), p. 18. In the Cambro-Briton, an early nineteenth century

periodical which specialized in Welsh antiquarianism, we find translations of primitive Welsh triads such as this one of the "Triads of Wisdom," which states that the "three universalites of knowledge" are "peace, truth, and order; and these three produce equality; and thence sciences instead of impostures," (London: J. Limbird, 1820-22), II, 293. Comte's "positive" age was not far hence evidently, even in sixth century Wales. Davies puts forth a distinctly progressivist rationale for studying the manners and institutions of the ancient Britons:

A Retrospect into the early periods and state of Britain--the character, the arts and the customs of its primitive inhabitants, is not an exercise of idle and simple curiosity; but of critical importance, in the pursuit of historical and philosophical truth. It not only delights the imagination with a view of our hills, valleys and plains, as they presented themselves to the eye three thousand years ago, and shews to us the simple native in his first occupations, but also points out the origin, progress and improvement of such knowledge as, to this day, constitutes the ornament and the comfort of society (Celtic Researches, p. 117).

<sup>41</sup>For example, Van Doren finds that "the action of the piece is nearly independent of those who play in it," Life of Thomas Love Peacock, p. 84. No one, as far as I know, has suggested a connection between the novel's Welsh setting and its theme of progress.

<sup>42</sup>Peacock Displayed, pp. 43-6.

<sup>43</sup>The Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany, XVII (April, 1801), 301. Whitney gives an account of this debate in Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, pp. 236-7, but makes no connection between it and Peacock.

<sup>44</sup>Ed. Mag., XVII (May, 1801), 373.

<sup>45</sup>Ed. Mag., XVIII (Aug., 1801), 96.

<sup>46</sup>Ed. Mag., XVIII (Aug., 1801), 86.

<sup>47</sup>Ed. Mag., XVII (May, 1801), 374.

<sup>48</sup>Ed. Mag., XVII (June, 1801), 413.

<sup>49</sup>Ed. Mag., XX (Aug., 1802), 133.

<sup>50</sup>For example, Foster's description of progress as a "slow, but immense, succession of concatenated intelligence" (i, 33), is similar to phrases in J. E.'s article: "slow and gradual advances towards perfection...that regular concatenation of circumstances....," Ed. Mag., XX (Aug., 1802), 133. The correspondant D., like Escot, is prone to Rousseauistic diatribes on the pernicious multiplication of unnatural desires in modern society, Ed. Mag., XIX (Mar., 1802), 173. And just as Escot, on the subject of industrialization, calls factory-workers "component parts of the enormous machines" they operate (i, 79), so J. E. says they "may often be considered as little better than part of the machinery," Ed. Mag., XX (July, 1802), 44.

<sup>51</sup>Ed. Mag., XX (July, 1802), 42.

<sup>52</sup>Antient Metaphysics, V, 216.

<sup>53</sup>Origin and Progress of Language, I, 22.

<sup>54</sup>A. O. Lovejoy, "The Supposed Primitivism of Rousseau's Discourse on Inequality," Modern Philology, XXI (Nov., 1923), 175-6.

<sup>55</sup>Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, ed. K. Codell Carter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 306.

<sup>56</sup>"Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality," The Social Contract and Discourses, trans. G. D. H. Cole (London: Everyman's Library, 1963), p. 170.

<sup>57</sup>Antient Metaphysics, V, 323.

<sup>58</sup>Ed. Mag., XVIII (July, 1801), 36.

<sup>59</sup>Political Justice, p. 156.

<sup>60</sup>London Pamphleteer, XIX (1821), 527.

<sup>61</sup>Quotation taken from Christopher Hussey, The Picturesque: Studies in Point of View (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), p. 144.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>63</sup>Peacock Displayed, pp. 35-7.

<sup>64</sup>Origin and Progress of Language, I, 22.

- <sup>65</sup>English Gardens and Landscapes (London: Country Life, 1967), p. 14.
- <sup>66</sup>Quotation taken from Nicolson, Mountain Gloom, p. 226.
- <sup>67</sup>Sacred Theory, p. 527.
- <sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 623.
- <sup>69</sup>The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, I, 144n.
- <sup>70</sup>See Cameron, Shelley and his Circle, III, 241.
- <sup>71</sup>The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, p. 143n.
- <sup>72</sup>Peacock Displayed, pp. 56-7.
- <sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 55.
- <sup>74</sup>The Social Contract and Discourses, p. 167.
- <sup>75</sup>Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity, p. 263.
- <sup>76</sup>Origin and Progress of Language, I, 440.
- <sup>77</sup>See Introduction, pp. 16-17.
- <sup>78</sup>The Progress of Civil Society, Book I, 11. 163-8.
- <sup>79</sup>The History of English Poetry, III, 500. Dawson also notes the civilizing influence of women in Peacock's fiction, His Fine Wit, p. 187.
- <sup>80</sup>Celtic Researches, p. 357.
- <sup>81</sup>Quoted from Wellek, The Rise of English Literary History, p. 198.
- <sup>82</sup>The Ruins; or Meditation on the Revolutions of Empires (New York: Calvin Blanchard, n.d.), p. 65.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

- <sup>1</sup>The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, II, 244.

<sup>2</sup>Peacock: his Circle and his Age, p. 97.

<sup>3</sup>Peacock's editors argue that Peacock wrote "Calidore" prior to Melincourt (i, pp. lxvii-lxix). Nicolas Joukovsky argues that the fragment was in fact composed after Melincourt, "The Composition of Peacock's Melincourt and the Date of the 'Calidore' Fragment," English Language Notes, XIII (1975), 18-25. In any case, both works are clearly related.

<sup>4</sup>His Fine Wit, p. 192.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Forsyth was a liberal in his politics and discussed, among other things, the nature of revolution in his Principles of Moral Science (Edinburgh: Bell and Bradfute, 1805). Peacock, as Butler has shown, knew this book well, Peacock Displayed, pp. 128-31.

<sup>7</sup>Forester's orang-outang, a composite of the ideas of Monboddo and Buffon, has been discussed in detail by all of Peacock's critics. The latest study is Nicolas Joukovsky, "Peacock's Sir Oran Haut-ton: Byron's Bear or Shelley's Ape?" Keats-Shelley Journal, XXIX (1980), 173-90.

<sup>8</sup>Peacock Displayed, p. 100.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>10</sup>The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Barbara E. Rooke (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), II, 266.

<sup>11</sup>See Charles E. Robinson, "The Shelley Circle and Coleridge's The Friend," English Language Notes, VIII (1971), 269-74.

<sup>12</sup>Spenser: Poetical Works, eds. J. C. Smith and E. De Selincourt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), Book V, "Proem," l. 3.

<sup>13</sup>The allusions to Book V include that to the episode of Florimell's girdle (F.Q. V, iii) mentioned in Chapter IX, and a comparison of Sir Oran Haut-ton to Talus, "Artegall's Iron Man," in Chapter XXII. Like this character, Sir Oran dispenses a harsh brand of "natural justice"--with a stick, significantly, similar to the flail used by Talus--the severity of which Mr. Forester must often have to restrain much as Spenser's Artegall must do on

occasion with Talus. Sir Oran's scattering of the rabble in the Borough of Onevote (Chapter XXII) is similar to Talus's frequent routing of mobs in The Faerie Queene. Indeed, Sir Oran has a long renaissance genealogy, including Orlando Furioso, Fletcher's Satyre in The Faithful Shepherdess, as well as Sir Satyrane in Book I of The Faerie Queene and perhaps the Salvage Man of Book VI (see Butler, Peacock Displayed, p. 69). One other Spenser allusion in Melincourt concerns Anthelia's abduction and confinement in Chapter XLV, which I believe is based, with the sexes reversed, on Artegall's imprisonment by Radigund in F.Q. V.

<sup>14</sup>The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, II, 71.

<sup>15</sup>See Butler, Peacock Displayed, pp. 75-8, and "Monboddo," letter to TLS (May 27, 1977), 653.

<sup>16</sup>Dyson, for example, who claims that Peacock's satire falls short of synthesis, The Crazy Fabric, p. 62.

<sup>17</sup>St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century (New York: Arno Press, 1972), p. 26.

<sup>18</sup>Reflections on the Revolution in France, ed. Thomas H. D. Mahoney (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1955), p. 86.

<sup>19</sup>Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, I, 307.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 352.

<sup>21</sup>"Among the favourite authors of his [Falkland's] early years were the heroic poets of Italy. From them he imbibed the love of chivalry and romance," William Godwin, Caleb Williams, ed. David McCracken (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 10.

<sup>22</sup>A quote from Wordsworth's poem occurs in the novel, ii, 164.

<sup>23</sup>By far the best discussion is Butler's in her chapter on Melincourt, Peacock Displayed, pp. 58-101.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>25</sup>Wordsworth's sonnet, "Thoughts of a Briton on the Subjugation of SWITZERLAND," provides the subject for this debate.

<sup>26</sup>The Friend, II, 233.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Quotation taken from Elie Halévy The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 216.

<sup>29</sup>Antient Metaphysics, V, 103-4.

<sup>30</sup>Butler draws this connection, Peacock Displayed, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup>John W. Osborne, William Cobbett: His Thought and His Times (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1966), p. 80.

<sup>32</sup>The phrase is Osborne's, Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>The Novels of Thomas Love Peacock, ed. David Garnett (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), I, 144n.

<sup>34</sup>John Horne Tooke, Diversions of Purley, ed. Richard Taylor (London: Thomas Tegg, 1840), p. 62.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>The posthumous Sotheby catalogue of his library indicates that he owned the book (Lot 128).

<sup>37</sup>Paper Against Gold, OR, The History and Mystery of the Bank of England (New York: John Doyle, 1846), p. 39.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 370.

<sup>40</sup>The Friend, II, 71.

<sup>41</sup>Halévy, Philosophic Radicalism, p. 436.

<sup>42</sup>Alfred Cobban, Edmund Burke and the Revolt Against the Eighteenth Century (2nd ed.; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960), pp. 80-1.

<sup>43</sup>Diversions of Purley, p. 303.

<sup>44</sup>The Friend, II, 9.

<sup>45</sup>The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. R. J. White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), VI, 21.

- <sup>46</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>47</sup>Reflections, p. 38.
- <sup>48</sup>Peacock Displayed, p. 83.
- <sup>49</sup>The Friend, II, 55.
- <sup>50</sup>Reflections, p. 38.
- <sup>51</sup>Quotation taken from James T. Boulton, The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 116.
- <sup>52</sup>An Essay on the Principle of Population, ed. Antony Flew (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 154.
- <sup>53</sup>The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. R. J. White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), VI, 145.
- <sup>54</sup>Ibid., 140.
- <sup>55</sup>Statesman's Manual, 7-8.
- <sup>56</sup>Principle of Population, p. 157.
- <sup>57</sup>Halévy, Philosophic Radicalism, p. 237.
- <sup>58</sup>Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind, trans. June Barraclough (New York: Noonday Press, 1955), p. 190.
- <sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 173.
- <sup>60</sup>Halévy, Philosophic Radicalism, p. 237.
- <sup>61</sup>Principle of Population, p. 157.
- <sup>62</sup>Sketch, pp. 169, 173.
- <sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 179.
- <sup>64</sup>History of the Idea of Progress, p. 57.
- <sup>65</sup>The Friend, II, 197.
- <sup>66</sup>The Prophetic Moment: An Essay on Spenser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 4.
- <sup>67</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-5.



<sup>68</sup>The Friend, II, 111.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup>The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, II, 27.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 98. Shelley's comments on Nightmare Abbey were written shortly after the death of Shelley's son William in Rome:

Our melancholy journey finishes at this town [Livorno]; but we retrace our steps to Florence where, as I imagine, we shall remain some months--O that I could return to England! How heavy a weight when misfortune is added to exile, & solitude, as if the measure were not full, heaped high on both--O that I could return to England! I hear you say 'Desire never fails to generate capacity.' Ah, but that ever present Malthus Necessity has convinced Desire--that even though it generated capacity its offspring must starve--Enough of melancholy. Nightmare Abbey though no cure is a palliative. I have just received the parcel which contains it, & at the same time the Examiners by the way of [? Malta]. I am delighted with Nightmare Abbey. I think Scythrop a character admirably conceived & executed, & I know not how to praise sufficiently the lightness chastity & strength of the language of the whole. It perhaps exceeds all your works in this. The catastrophe is excellent,--I suppose the moral is contained in what Falstaff says 'For Gods sake talk like a man of this world' and yet looking deeper into it, is not the misdirected enthusiasm of Scythrop what J[esus] C[hrist] calls the salt of the earth? (Ibid.).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 244.

<sup>4</sup>His Fine Wit, p. 208.

<sup>5</sup>The Works of Lord Byron, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>7</sup>The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, I, 239.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>11</sup>For excellent general studies of millenarianism during this period see Garrett Clarke, Respectable Folly: Millenarians and the French Revolution in France and England (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975); and J. F. C. Harrison, The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism, 1780-1850 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979).

<sup>12</sup>Clarke, Respectable Folly, p. 173.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>14</sup>See Michael Barkun, Disaster and the Millennium (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

<sup>15</sup>Clarke, Respectable Folly, p. 125.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 212-13.

<sup>17</sup>Harris, The Second Coming, p. 76.

<sup>18</sup>W. H. Oliver, "Owen in 1817: The Millennialist Movement," in Sidney Pollard and John Salt, eds., Robert Owen: Prophet of the Poor (Lewisbury: Bucknell University Press, 1971), pp. 166-9.

<sup>19</sup>In this connection, Butler points out that Marionetta's name, "signifying puppet, alludes to Mary Wollstonecraft's description of fashionable women as mere dolls," Peacock Displayed, p. 126.

<sup>20</sup>The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, I, 241.

<sup>21</sup>William Godwin, Mandeville: A Tale of the Seventeenth Century (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1817), I, 138.

<sup>22</sup>Peacock Displayed, pp. 134-5.

<sup>23</sup>Marionetta, Butler suggests, represents the former and Stella the latter, Peacock Displayed, p. 126.

<sup>24</sup>Mandeville, III, 149.

<sup>25</sup>See Butler, Peacock Displayed, pp. 120-3, and John Colmer, "Godwin's Mandeville and Peacock's Nightmare Abbey," Review of English Studies, XXI (1970), 331-6.

<sup>26</sup>See note number 1, p.120.

<sup>27</sup>Mandeville, I, 151-2.

<sup>28</sup>Harrison, The Second Coming, p. 96.

<sup>29</sup>Mandeville, I, 134-5.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Harrison, The Second Coming, p. 90.

<sup>34</sup>Clarke, Respectable Folly, p. 119.

<sup>35</sup>In which Shelley speaks of "the treachery and barbarity of hired soldiers; vice not the object of punishment and hatred, but kindness and pity; the faithlessness of tyrants; the confederacy of the Rulers of the World and the Restoration of the expelled Dynasty by foreign arms; the massacre and extermination of the Patriots, and the victory of established power; the consequences of legitimate despotism, civil war, famine, plague, superstition, and an utter extinction of the domestic affections....," The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, I, 240.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Quotation taken from Harrison, The Second Coming, p. 58.

<sup>39</sup>J. M Roberts, The Mythology of the Secret Societies (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 210.

<sup>40</sup>Memoires, illustrating the History of Jacobinism, translation (London: T. Burton & Co., 1797), I, iv.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., III, 131.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 390.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>44</sup>The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, V,

263.

<sup>45</sup> Preface to "The Revolt of Islam," The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, I, 242.

<sup>46</sup> The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, I, 54. For discussions of Barruel's influence on Shelley see Walter E. Peck, "Shelley and the Abbé Barruel," PMLA, XXXVI (1921), 347-53; and Kenneth Neill Cameron, "A Major Source of The Revolt of Islam," PMLA, LVI (1941), 175-206.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Love Peacock: The Complete Novels, ed. David Garnett (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), I, 405n.

<sup>48</sup> Peacock Displayed, p. 124.

<sup>49</sup> Memoires, III, 2-3.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>51</sup> Preface to "The Revolt of Islam," The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, I, 244.

<sup>52</sup> Memoires, III, 1.

<sup>53</sup> René Wellek, Immanuel Kant in England, 1798-1838 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931), pp. 13-4.

<sup>54</sup> Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations (New York: Garland Publishing, 1971), II, 362-3.

<sup>55</sup> See Norma L. Rudinsky's three notes: "A Second Original of Peacock's Menippean Caricature Asterias in Nightmare Abbey: Sir John Sinclair Bart.," English Studies, LVI (1975), 491-7; "Satire on Sir John Sinclair before Peacock's Asterias in Nightmare Abbey," Notes and Queries, N.S. XXIII (Mar., 1976), 108-10; and "Contemporary Response to the Caricature of Asterias in Peacock's Nightmare Abbey," Notes and Queries, N.S. XXIV (July-Aug., 1977), 335-6.

<sup>56</sup> In this connection, it is interesting to note that according to Jacob Bryant in his previously mentioned Ancient Mythology, Zoroaster, the direct progeny of Oromazes, is said to have "laughed upon the day, on which he was born" (Ancient Mythology, II, 114). By way of one of his intricate and usually spurious etymologies, Bryant states that "we may be pretty sure, that by Zoro-Aster was meant Sol Asterius" (Ibid., 119). Thus the long reach of the speculative mythologists is again evident in Peacock, and quite literally includes Mr. Asterias among the Sons of Light

and Laughter.

<sup>57</sup> Butler, Peacock Displayed, p. 129.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>59</sup> The Principles of Moral Science, pp. 325-6.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

<sup>1</sup> Peacock Displayed, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> "The Spirit of the Age," The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. P. P. Howe (Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1932), XI, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1931), p. 288.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, his poem, "Levi Moses," vi, 87-9.

<sup>5</sup> In Melincourt, for example, where he describes the ancient fortifications of Melincourt Castle designed to impede "the progress of the hungry Scot, who might be disposed, in his neighbourly way, to drop in without invitation and carouse at the expense of the owner, rewarding him, as usual, for his extorted hospitality, by cutting his throat and setting fire to his house" (ii, 7).

<sup>6</sup> Butler, Peacock Displayed, p. 336n.

<sup>7</sup> Rural Rides, ed. E. W. Martin (London: MacDonald, 1958), p. 281.

<sup>8</sup> A History of the Protestant Reformation in England and Ireland (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1905), pp. 381-2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 374.

<sup>10</sup> "Peacock's Economists: Some Mistaken Identities," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XXI (Sept., 1966), 190.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>12</sup> The anecdote can be found in Richard Garnett, ed., "Recollections on Thomas Love Peacock," in Calidore and Miscellanea (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1891), p. 18.

' [Peacock] one day came into my father's room, and said, with mock indignation, "I will never dine with Mill again, for he asks me to meet only political economists. I dined with him last night, when he had Mushet and McCulloch, and after dinner, Mushet took a paper out of his pocket, and began to read: 'In the infancy of society, when Government was invented to save a percentage--say of 3½ per cent.'--on which he was stopped by McCulloch with, 'I will say no such thing,' meaning that this was not the proper percentage.'"

<sup>13</sup>The posthumous Sotheby catalogue of Peacock's library indicates that Peacock owned McCulloch's book (Lot 424). In any case, Peacock also read the Edinburgh Review regularly.

<sup>14</sup>Principles of Political Economy: With a Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Science (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1830), p. 81.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>17</sup>Quotation taken from Bryson, Man and Society, p. 69.

<sup>18</sup>Quotation taken from Rendall, The Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment, p. 219.

<sup>19</sup>Principles of Political Economy, pp. 12-3.

<sup>20</sup>John Henry Newman, The Idea of a University (Garden City: Image Books, 1959), p. 88.

<sup>21</sup>Science and the Modern World, p. 288.

<sup>22</sup>A History of the Protestant Reformation, p. 20.

<sup>23</sup>For a study of Peacock's women see John Kenyon Crabbe, "The Noblest Gift: Women in the Fiction of Thomas Love Peacock," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1973.

<sup>24</sup>Robert Southey, Sir Thomas More: or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society (London: John Murray, 1829), II, 250.

<sup>25</sup>Peacock Displayed, pp. 206-07.

<sup>26</sup>The Spirit of the Age (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 3.

<sup>27</sup>Colloquies, I, 79.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., II, 246-7.

<sup>29</sup>For a good discussion of the medieval revival see Alice Chandler, A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth Century English Literature (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970).

<sup>30</sup>"Scott, the Romantic Past and the Nineteenth Century," Review of English Studies, XXIII (1972), p. 147.

<sup>31</sup>Rural Rides, p. 109.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 373.

<sup>33</sup>Colloquies, II, 250.

<sup>34</sup>The Sotheby catalogue indicates that Peacock owned three such works: that of McCulloch, mentioned previously, James Mill's Elements of Political Economy, and S. Bailey's On Political Economy (Lot 424).

<sup>35</sup>Kennedy, "Peacock's Economists," 189.

<sup>36</sup>Colonel Torrens, "Mr. Owen's Plan for Relieving the National Distress," Edinburgh Review, XXXII (Oct., 1819), 454.

<sup>37</sup>Colloquies, I, 62.

<sup>38</sup>Rural Rides, p. 157.

<sup>39</sup>V. A. C. Gatrell quotes Cobbett's phrase in his critical introduction to A New View of Society and Report to the County of Lanark, ed. V. A. C. Gatrell (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 55.

<sup>40</sup>Colloquies, I, 132.

<sup>41</sup>"Mr. Owen's Plan," p. 454.

<sup>42</sup>See, for example, Butler, Peacock Displayed, p. 220.

<sup>43</sup>Colloquies, I, 114.

<sup>44</sup>Butler feels that in defending his castle, Mr. Chainmail partakes, finally, "in a resolute and self-interested defence of private property," and thus defeats his own collectivist ideals, Peacock Displayed, p. 223.

<sup>45</sup>Southey says, "How heartily should I have accorded with Owen of Lanark, if I could have agreed with that happiest and most beneficent and most practical of all enthusiasts as well concerning the remedy as the disease," Colloquies, I, 67.

<sup>46</sup>A New View, p. 220.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>48</sup>Spirit of the Age, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-2.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

<sup>1</sup>Saturday Review, XL (March 16, 1861), 222.

<sup>2</sup>Introduction to Gryll Grange (London: Macmillan & Co., 1896), p. vii.

<sup>3</sup>Quotation taken from Dawson, His Fine Wit, p. 275.

<sup>4</sup>Letters to Thomas L'Estrange indicate that Peacock was reading Cicero's work around the period he wrote Gryll Grange (viii, 253). Moreover, Falconer makes an allusion to De Natura Deorum in the novel (v, 91-2).

<sup>5</sup>De Natura Deorum (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1933), p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>Bury, The Idea of Progress, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup>The phrase is Dyson's, The Crazy Fabric, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup>Peacock Displayed, p. 259.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>10</sup>Browning and George Henry Lewes, for example. See Roland A. Duerkson, Shelleyan Ideas in Victorian Literature



(London: Mouton & Co., 1966).

<sup>11</sup>John Stuart Mill, "The Utility of Religion," Three Essays on Religion (London: Longman's, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1874), pp. 105-6.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>19</sup>Saturday Review, 222.

<sup>20</sup>Van Doren, The Life of Thomas Love Peacock, p. 245.

<sup>21</sup>For an account of this debate see Raymond Chapman, Studies in the Literary Influence of the Oxford Movement (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), p. 156.

<sup>22</sup>Quotation taken from David J. DeLaura, Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), p. 140.

<sup>23</sup>Katherine H. Porter, Through a Glass Darkly: Spiritualism in the Browning Circle (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), p. 136.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>25</sup>Peacock Displayed, p. 240.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>27</sup>Edinburgh Review, CVI (July, 1857), 4.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>29</sup>Chapman, Faith and Revolt, p. 15.

<sup>30</sup>Porter, Through a Glass Darkly, p. 136.

<sup>31</sup>Peacock Displayed, p. 255.

<sup>32</sup>Science and the Modern World, p. 284.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>John Henry Newman, The Idea of a University (Garden City: Image Books, 1959), pp. 108-09.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 158-9.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>The nine lectures which form the core of The Idea of a University were first published in 1853 in a volume entitled Discourses on University Education.

<sup>39</sup>Dawson, His Fine Wit, pp. 285-6; Butler, Peacock Displayed, pp. 26-71.

<sup>40</sup>The Idea of a University, p. 158.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>See also Peacock's 1856 preface to Melincourt in which Peacock complains:

The "reading public" has increased its capacity of swallow, in a proportion far exceeding that of its digestion. Thirty nine years ago, steam-boats were just coming into action and the railway locomotive was not even thought of. Now everybody goes everywhere: going for the sake of going, and rejoicing in the rapidity with which they accomplish nothing. On va, mais on ne voyage pas. Strenuous idleness drives us on the wings of steam in boats and trains, seeking the art of enjoying life, which after all, is in the regulation of the mind, and not in the whisking about of the body (The Novels of Thomas Love Peacock, I, 102).

- <sup>47</sup>Science and the Modern World, p. 287.
- <sup>48</sup>DeLaura speaks of Newman's influence on both Pater and Arnold, Hebrew and Hellene, p. xvi.
- <sup>49</sup>Interestingly, Huysmans himself turned to Catholicism in later life.
- <sup>50</sup>Quotation taken from Butler, Peacock Displayed, p. 246.
- <sup>51</sup>Idea of a University, pp. 110-11.
- <sup>52</sup>"On the Idea of Comedy and of the Uses of the Comic Spirit," The Works of George Meredith (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co., 1898), XXXII, 74.

## NOTES TO CONCLUSION

- <sup>1</sup>Three Essays on Religion, pp. 116-7.

## NOTES TO APPENDIX

- <sup>1</sup>Hermes; or, a Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar (Menston: The Scolar Press, 1968), p. 217.
- <sup>2</sup>Diversions, p. 36.
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 62.
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 40.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 3.
- <sup>6</sup>For a discussion of Tooke's theories and their philosophical application, see Halévy, Philosophic Radicalism, pp. 445-7.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 446.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup>Hermes, pp. 266, 342-3.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 350.
- <sup>11</sup>Hazlitt's rather deprecating picture of Tooke

as an M.P. suggests the same energetic radicalism weakened by a clever perversity which Forester chides in Mr. Sarcastic (ii, 233): "He stood aloof, he played antics, he exhibited his peculiar bent," says Hazlitt; he "teazed, instead of overpowering his antagonists," Spirit of the Age, 50-1. Tooke is almost surely alluded to in Chapter XXXII, "The Deserted Mansion." The failure of the present economy is lamented by an old farmer, who points out that "there was them as vorzeed it long ago, and voretold it too, up in the great house in Lunnon;" however, "nobody minded 'em then: they begins to mind 'em now" (ii, 348-9). In 1810, criticizing the National Debt and its consequences, Cobbett recalled Tooke's criticism of this circumstance in a speech delivered in 1801 to the House of Commons. It is likely that Peacock's farmer echoes, in suitably rustic language, Cobbett's words:

Mr. Tooke told them to reduce the National Debt. They rejected his advice. They despised his warning. They kept him, for the future, out of parliament! Let them, then, not blame him for what has since happened, and what is coming to pass (Paper Against Gold, p. 348).

<sup>12</sup>Diversions, p. 306.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>14</sup>Halévy, Philosophic Radicalism, p. 123.

<sup>15</sup>The Spirit of the Age, 54.

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