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Romantic Classicism in Peacock's Verse Satire

HOWARD O. BROGAN

Douglas Bush has convincingly demonstrated in his *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition* how the great English Romantic poets developed a new kind of classicism in striking contrast to the eighteenth-century variety. In their poetry the classical may be said to be absorbed into the romantic to produce a kind of Classical Romanticism. Other writers of their period maintained an unabated admiration for their eighteenth-century forbears but managed to absorb into their continuance of the style of the preceding era a considerable sympathy for the new era, even when writing verse satire, a favorite genre of the earlier time. The resulting compound may be appropriately described in contrast as Romantic Classicism.

Among these writers are such poets as George Crabbe, who absorbs the Romantic interest in precise description of natural phenomena and in penetrating analysis of social and psychological aberrations into the eighteenth century's favorite form of satire or satiric narrative in closed couplets. Landor also sought to restrain his much more passionate nature within classical bounds, most successfully in other genres than satire. Even Thomas Moore displayed strong classical proclivities—in temperament more often than in form—not only in his early translation of Anacreon, but in the large body of verse satire—much of it occasional—which for the most part he contributed to the newspapers. Few of the readers who know of him as the author of *Lalla Rookh* and the *Irish Melodies* are aware that he was a satirist at all.¹

Another, in this case acknowledged to possess Romantic sympathies as well as a classical outlook, is Peacock; but he tends to be classified as a novelist rather than as a poet and as a humorous or comic writer rather than a satirist.² While his achievement certainly is

¹See my "Thomas Moore, Irish Satirist and Keeper of the English Conscience," *PQ* 34 (1945), 255-276.

²For example, Carl Dawson's *His Fine Wit: A Study of Thomas Love Peacock* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970) necessarily has to slight the verse satire in a discussion of the whole of Peacock's achievement, and his interest is in Peacock's comedy rather than his satire.

primarily in prose fiction, and while that fiction certainly is humorous and comic, it is also highly satiric—often straight satire. Moreover, verse satire is richly interspersed within the prose fiction in a manner reminiscent of that mixed form called Menippean satire. He also wrote an amount and quality of verse satire, quite apart from his fiction and very distinct from such of his more specifically Romantic poetry as his relatively well-known *Rododaphne*.

All of these authors (as well as such others as Scott, Campbell, and even Jane Austen) may not inaccurately be described as Romantic Classicists to distinguish them from those who used classical materials but for Romantic purposes. In Peacock the two tendencies are particularly powerful and evenly balanced. It is interesting to discover that his kind of Romantic Classicism seems to have had a direct impact on Byron, in whom these contrasting, if not contradictory, impulses are in a still more strenuous state of tension.

Peacock's earliest satires were written in the eighteenth-century tradition. The first of these are two Whiggish epigrams on the war with France. Both deal with the resulting economic disturbances. In one John Bull is losing both interest and "principal," with an obvious pun on "principle." In the other an Englishman reflects that his country is truly dear to him, "too dear to live in." An early verse "Letter to His Grandfather" (a retired sea captain) is "John Bull" ridicule of French prowess at sea.

"The Alarmists" reveals an early tendency toward extravagant Aristophanic comedy. Tradesmen lament the consequences of making peace, each in the language of his occupation. An auctioneer feels "the Nation will soon be *knock'd down*," a cobbler thinks "we cannot last long poor unfortunate soles," a tailor is sure "the threads of our fortune are clipped off by fate," a cook bawls that "John Bull was once fat" and once "lived upon clover," but now "he's overdone and completely done over." This humorous experiment in dialogue shows the incipient novelist.

When, after a surprising gap of two decades, Peacock resumes political satire in verse, he has behind him the riotous prose satire of *Melincourt*, in which a trained orangoutang is elected to Parliament from a rotten borough. To Peacock the whole political system now appears a hypocritical imposition of the haves upon the have-nots. For example, "A Bill for the Better Promotion of Oppression on the Sabbath Day" ridicules Wilberforce's Association for the Better Observance of Sunday. Since the "laws heretofore/ Have not suf-

ficiently squeezed the poor," Peacock's "Bill" forbids all those vulgar pleasures in which the respectable rich are not interested.³

The economic panic of 1825-1826 provided Peacock with an opportunity to hit the absurdities of the new system of debt finance. In "Touchandgo" a financier absconding early in the crisis is ludicrously pursued by the fleet with the battle cry: "Huzza! St. George and Paper-money!" "Paper-money Lyrics," written during the crisis, were long passed around clandestinely in manuscript among the poet's friends and then circulated privately in print because of the part played by James Mill (Peacock's superior in India House) in developing paper money. These begin, after an appropriate quotation from Falstaff, with a chorus of citizens in a kind of Aristophanic comedy calling for their balances, since

Experience seems to settle,
That paper is not metal,
And promises of payment
Are neither food nor raiment,

and that the financier's seems to be "the art of robbing/ By huckstering and jobbing." While various companies are posting notices suspending payment, an old-fashioned banker named Sir Roger Red-nose wraps up the balances of his customers in hard money: "All ticketed and docketed,/ And ready to be pocketed." A comic summary of the flimsy paper securities of the failing banks, and a comic appeal by a cockney to his god Pluto, is followed by a comic prophecy by a bystander that "the dupe and the imposter,/ May now both go to dinner/ With Humphrey, Duke of Glo'ster." Sir Roger concludes that the disaster is entirely owing to not leaving well enough alone.⁴

Of the lyrics that follow, the most amusing are parodies of first generation Romantics turned conservative, in a linking of literary and political satire.⁵ "Procoemium of an Epic . . . by R_____ S_____, Esq., Poet Laureate," is headed by a cruel quotation from Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* that applies equally well to the laureate and to Fly-by-Night, the hero of his projected epic: "His promises

³See also "Rich and Poor." All references to Peacock's writings are to *The Works of Thomas Love Peacock*, ed. by H. F. B. Brett-Smith and C. E. Jones (London, 1924). The various poems mentioned are easily found in the tables of contents for volumes VI and VII and are too brief to require reference by lines.

⁴Kenneth Neill Cameron, "Shelley and the Reformers," *ELH*, 12 (1945), 84 n., finds Peacock to be an admirer of Cobbett's economic theories.

⁵Perhaps it was this satiric complexity which gave Peacock, according to family tradition, a particular fondness for these satires ("Biographical Introduction" to *Works*, I, cxxxiii). It is not often that a man can ridicule at the same time his literary rivals, his business associates, and his own boss.

were, as he once was, mighty;/ And his performance, as he is now, nothing." In the process of imitating the irregular measures and prosaic thought of Southey's epics, this poem promises that the wonderful tale of Fly-by-Night will surpass the most fantastic Romantic imaginings.

"W. W., Esq., Distributor of Stamps," referring to a supposed sinecure Wordsworth held under the Tories, contributes "A Mood of My Own Mind," with a typical subtitle specifying the place and circumstances of composition. As he drinks his home brew ("Oh! doubly sweet is double X from mistress double U"), this poet laments the troubles of his friends, the paper money men, in backing their paper money with bullion. Surely these men "say truly, when they say/ They ought to pay their promises, with promises to pay" (i.e., meet their paper obligations with more paper obligations); for otherwise how is "W.W." going to be able to make his percentage selling paper stamps? One is reminded of Byron's attack on bankers in *Don Juan*, Canto XII, V and VI.

"Love and the Flimsies," by "T. M., Esq.," with an appropriate quotation from Anacreon, imitates the flimsy erotic imagery of Moore—whom, though a liberal Whig, Peacock despised—while blasting the flimsy paper finances of Moore's wealthy friends.⁶ And "The Wise Men of Gotham," by "S. T. C., Esq., Professor of Mysticism," uses the pretentious simplicity of Coleridge's worst ballad manner to discredit debt financing by means of the old story of fishermen casting for the reflection of the moon.

Two other parodies are part of a general assault in the *Lyrics* upon the Scots as originators and chief disseminators of the pseudo-science of political economy. "A Border Ballad" by "an Enchanter Unknown" parodies Scott's celebration of border raids while arguing that paper money is just a modern substitute. The Scots have converted the border fortress into a bank, laid aside the obsolete "cross-bow and matchlock," and "shot the stout Southron with promise to pay." "Ye Kite-flyers of Scotland," attributed to Campbell, points out that Caledonia has again triumphed over her poverty, this time by coining her rags "And the brass upon her face." Other parodies in Scots ballad measures play with the same idea. "The Campbells Are

⁶Peacock's dislike of paper money was for the poetic reasons that its value was remote and its physical substance unsubstantial. See also "The Three Little Men" and "Margery Daw." Peacock mercilessly satirized Moore's *Epicurean* in the prose of a *Westminster Review*, 8 (Oct., 1827).

Coming," armed with bank notes instead of claymores, but the panic will send them back again: "Mac Banquo's occupation's gone."⁷

Later political squibs seem to reflect the information and even something of the independent liberal political approach of *The Examiner*.⁸ In connection with Tory opposition to Catholic toleration, Newcastle's forensic incapacity is exposed in "A Speech in Embryo" and Winchelsea's strident Protestant petitioneering in "When John of Zisca went to Kingdom come."⁹ On the other hand Lord John Russell's attempt at moderate toleration is ridiculed in a parody of the medieval ballad called "A Goodlye Ballade of Little John"¹⁰ and radical Brougham's wavering principles in the Coleridgean allegorical satire, "The Fate of a Broom."¹¹

Peacock was not to be confined within party pales, and indeed resists classification with any political group in a way that may be admirably independent but that necessarily isolates his satire from political struggle. His best political poetry is, unlike Landor's, successful as satire, but the more remote it is from practical politics the better. The reader is amused by the skillful parody of "Paper-money Lyrics," but he can hardly ignore the fact that Peacock was wrong in thinking paper money nothing but a cheat.¹² *Melincourt* strikes at real political evils, but these evils were superficial, and the reforms that eliminated them also destroyed much of the relevance of Peacock's satire.

⁷The Scots are repeatedly assailed in such poems as "St. Peter of Scotland," "Caledonian War Whoop," "Chorus of Scotch Economists," and "Chorus . . . on the Prohibition of Scotch . . . Notes. . . ."

⁸Peacock's politics are an impractical mixture of radical, liberal, and conservative, but his political satire is more successful than the intensely concerned Landor's because he can stand aloof and ridicule all positions. "Political life in general, particularly the incongruity of theory and practice, affords him material for satire, and so he becomes a satirist of politics, which is not quite the same as being a political satirist" (J. B. Priestley, *Thomas Love Peacock* [New York, 1927], p. 196).

⁹John of Zisca, leader of the radical Hussites, who requested that after his death his skin be made into a drum in order that he might still lead his troops, is repeatedly used by satirists of this period to ridicule extremist politicians.

¹⁰Lord John Russell was so small a man that the Prussian king thought it diplomatic to have him met on one occasion by four of his ablest subjects, all smaller than he, of whom one was the famous historian Leopold von Ranke (Lord Acton, "German Schools of History," *English Historical Review*, 1 [1886], 17).

¹¹Brougham is unforgettably caricatured as Mr. Facing-both-ways in *Crotchet Castle*. Byron satirized him repeatedly, most violently in seven stanzas dropped from Canto I of *Don Juan* because Byron would not be in England to answer a challenge. See *Works of Lord Byron* (London, 1922), "Poetry," VI, 67-70.

¹²However, the paper money of that time was inadequately supported and did result eventually in the failure of many banks (Howard Mills, *Peacock: His Circle and his Age* [Cambridge, 1969], p. 120).

His satire has a more enduring basis when it deals with political hypocrisy, as in "A New Order of Chivalry" in Chapter XVIII of *Gryll Grange*, which pokes fun at the typical Victorian compromise of admitting to knighthood "Two stock-jobbing Jews, and a shroffing Parsee," who "instead of the Red Cross, have hoisted Balls Three." The Queen is imagined instructing them that their bath and white garments symbolize Christian renouncing of "sordid passions and seekings for gain," and they are imagined candidly replying:

"We have small taste for championing maids in distress;
For State we care little: for Church we care less:
To Premium and Bonus our homage we plight:
'Percentage!' we cry: and 'A fig for the right!'"

Giving this sort of honor to commercial merit must always be ridiculous, and such inappropriate rewards will probably always be with us to give us a relish for Peacock's disdain.

His perception of the basic hypocrisy of all political dealings is even more fundamental in "The War Song of Dinas Vawr" in Chapter XI of *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, in which politics is reduced to the brutal robbery of much warfare:

The mountain sheep are sweeter,
But the valley sheep are fatter,
We therefore deemed it meet
To carry off the latter.

The lighthearted expression throughout this admirably ironic poem contrasts, after the manner of *Candide*, with the grim violence of the deeds recounted—an effect very different from the savage satire of war in Byron's *Don Juan*, Cantos VII and VIII.

A second strain—social satire—is more persistent than the political. Besides being an important element in his two prose farces, the *Dilettante* and *The Three Doctors*, it lends substance to his charge against the boorish Welsh in "Farewell to Meirion," to the conception of the social importance of Hint (rumor) in the "Epilogue" to the comedy of *The Guardians*, and to the humorous self-depreciation of "From ten to eleven."

Peacock's mature social criticism is directed at the love of fashion or the love of money. These two evils are perhaps linked in his mind as different aspects of the unnatural love for the appearances rather than for the realities of life. The love of fashion easily becomes absurd. The love of money easily becomes wicked, especially in commercial

England, corrupted by greed "from the center to the extremities."¹³ This criticism carries the more weight as coming from a classicist and from a successful administrator who had some respect for social decorum and much more for the material basis of life.

Peacock's charming pictures of young love never ignore the material foundations which in his view support the good appetites, good health, and good spirits that accompany such young love. Social absurdity, whether the posturings of literary romance in young Scythrop or of social "uplift" in Lord Curryfin, can embarrass young love. Greed is the mortal foe of such love in every one of the novels and in all of the poems which touch upon the subject.¹⁴ Byron's satire of love in *Don Juan* is more profound. The selfishness and self-centeredness of young love is the target in *Don Juan*'s affairs with Donna Julia and Haidée, as lust and love of fame are in his affair with Catherine the Great.

Technological progress vitiates social life in the masque called "Aristophanes in London," with which *Gryll Grange* culminates. Homer's Gryllus is recalled from the other world by "spirit-rappers," who attempt to convince him that he would no longer prefer the life of a swine to that of the modern "steam-nursed, steam-borne, steam-killed, / And gas-enlightened race."¹⁵ Gryllus is not impressed by these improved facilities for living faster and farther. He sees reformers meddling with the mechanics of the social order, engineers with the mechanics of transportation, civil service examiners with the mechanics of human relations (these examiners reject as unfit for military duty the spirits of Hannibal, Cromwell, and Richard the Lion-hearted), but their absorption in the means of living to the exclusion of interest in the ends of living repels Gryllus. Since he has a classical preference for tranquility over excitement, he concludes that human life is even more inferior to that of beasts than in ancient times, and approves of nothing but the dinner served at the end of the masque.

This same protest against fashion and money pervades Peacock's literary satire, which is as predominant in his satiric writing as in Landor's, though in Peacock's work literary satire begins later in life, after he has considerable literary reputation of his own. He began in an "Epilogue" by lamenting the difficulties of pleasing the myriad-

¹³From a letter in 1808 to E. T. Hookham (*Works*, VIII, 162).

¹⁴See the "Ballad Terzetto" in Chapter XVII of Peacock's *Melincourt*.

¹⁵Peacock had no objection to the intelligent use of new inventions, and he was personally responsible for the early use of steam by the East India Company in what he called his "iron chickens."

formed Proteus of popular dramatic taste, to which he added in "The Art of the Modern Drama" some jibes (similar to those of Byron in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*) at the substitution of buffoonery and mechanical contrivances for genuine comedy. From this subject Peacock proceeded—in response to Southey's *Carmen Triumphale* of 1814—to a Byronic assault upon a number of contemporary poets in *Sir Proteus*, his name for the spirit of rapid transmutations of literary taste.¹⁶ Southey—caricatured as Johnny Raw—becomes disgruntled by lack of interest in his epics. He calls up Proteus, who assumes successively the forms of various contemporary poets. These include, among others less notable, Jeffrey of "fragrant Edinbroo"; Wordsworth, chattering like Harry Gill; Coleridge ("self-elected laureate of asinine kind") singing doggerel about three graves; Professor Wilson chanting his *Isle of Palms*; Tom Thumb (Moore), shifting from Irish jig, to amorous song, to satirical pulling of wigs; and finally Walter Scott, whose bizarre minstrel's garb and barbaric fiddle so startle Johnny Raw's Pegasus (which is only the Poulter's mare) that the poet is flung into the sea. Here he desperately tries to keep up his spirits by a series of poems so discordant that they frighten away all the sea divinities, but he cannot drown out the Scots fiddle. Scott now becomes Proteus himself and turns out an endless stream of roughhewn lines. These first illustrate the morality of his ancestors,

Who, by their good King James desired
To keep up rule and order,
Like trusty guardians, robb'd, and fired,
And ravaged, all the border.

They then embody the like feudal virtues of an English baron (Marmion) and Roderick the Goth, until from his perpetual singing Scott at last "grew completely hoarse/ And croaked like any raven," a reference to the deteriorating quality of his later verse. Johnny Raw flees from his successful rival to a cavern on the beach. Here he is held captive with other worsted romantic contenders.

The verse of this skit is in crude ballad measure, but the notes are in prose notably clear, forceful, and witty.

To his poem as an afterthought Peacock added an ironic dedication to Byron for "the profound judgment with which his opinions are conceived, the calm deliberation with which they are promulgated,

¹⁶*Sir Proteus* succeeds *Sir Hornbook*; or, *Childe Launcelot's Expedition*, which went through several editions, presumably because it was as effective as well as an amusing verse primer. Peacock also wrote for children an humorous didactic poem on the English monarchs, called *The Round Table*.

the protean consistency with which they are maintained, and the total absence of all undue bias on their formation from private partiality or personal resentment." Byron nevertheless read the work with interest, and returned it to Rogers, repeating Samuel Johnson's remark on a similar occasion: "Are we alive after all this censure?" Byron could recognize in it a rude successor to his *English Bards*, even to such details as the reference to the frustrated duel of Moore and Jeffrey. In return he could have borrowed for *The Vision of Judgment* such telling details from *Sir Proteus* as the flight of the spirits from Southey's song and his cork-like plunge into the water, as well as the fine conception of Junius as an indistinguishable Proteus of men. Other details of *Don Juan* Peacock might think suggested by his own *Sir Proteus*, such as Byron's writing that Southey had "turned his coat, and would have turned his skin," probably an outgrowth of Peacock's alteration of one of Southey's mottos into a play upon turn-coat.

Byron was himself something of a Romantic Classicist, especially in his later years. He resembled Peacock in assuming as a writer the attitude of gentlemanly amateur, in admiring Pope, Johnson, and the eighteenth century, and in despising Southey, Keats, and much of the literature produced in their own time, which they both agreed was an age of cant. He had a high opinion of Peacock's talents; and, while Peacock disliked Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, no doubt because it was too Romantic for his taste, he had a better opinion of the later work: "*Cain* is very fine; *Sardanapalus* I think still finer; *Don Juan* is best of all. I have read nothing else in recent literature that I think good for anything."¹⁷

Literary fashion is ridiculed far more brilliantly in *Nightmare Abbey* than in *Sir Proteus*. This ridicule is basically of the Romantic poet attempting to live the Romantic literary conventions as in the unforgettable caricature of Shelley as Scythrop. Other Romantic posturings are exposed in exquisite parodies, as of Byron's *Childe Harold*, and in what is not so much a parody as a perfect pastiche of Byron's lyric verse in the lines beginning "There is a fever of the spirit."¹⁸

Peacock's disagreement with Byron and Shelley was not as fundamental, however, as with Wordsworth and Coleridge. In *Melin-*

¹⁷Dawson compares the two poets in their apprenticeship (p. 23), and in their shared prejudice against Keats (p. 79); and he gives Byron's amused response to *Nightmare Abbey*, p. 218. See other references on pp. 16, 43, 93, and 97.

¹⁸Byron also relished the satire of himself as Mr. Cypress in *Nightmare Abbey*, and had Shelley send Peacock a rosebud as a sign that he bore his satirist no ill will ("Biographical Introduction," *Works of Thomas Love Peacock*, I, lxxxvii).

court the caricature in Chapter XXXI of Coleridge as Mr. Mystic of Cimmerian Lodge (introduced by an invocation to "sovereign Sleep! in whose papaverous glen/ Dwell the dark Muses of Cimmerian men!") links Coleridge's sympathy for feudal tyranny and blind superstition with the sealing of tuneful Proteus' eyes with gold. "The Quintetto" of Chapter XXXIX of the same book has Southey as Feathernest and Wordsworth as Paperstamp celebrating in Mainchance Villa their turncoat prosperity with fellow renegades Gifford and Canning.¹⁹

Each of these older Romantics was to young Peacock what Wordsworth was to Browning, a Lost Leader. As Peacock charges in "The Indignation of Taliesen" in Chapter IX of *The Misfortunes of Elphin*:

False bards the sacred fire pervert,
Whose songs are won without desert;
Who falsehood weave in specious lays,
To gild the base with virtue's praise.

Certainly Peacock was wrong to suppose his elders had cynically "sold out"; but, among the complex reasons for their defection from revolutionary ideals, association with rich conservatives admirable for private generosity and public spirit ought not to be ignored. No man's opinions are uninfluenced by his circumstances. How could Wordsworth avoid thinking better of aristocrats when the second earl of Lonsdale far more than repaid what the first earl had unjustly withheld from the Poet's family? And however Coleridge might protest that he was without pocket in which to put the poor penny of his literary profit, he could not always forget that he subsisted largely on the bounty of wealthy friends.

If even such conservatives as De Quincey noticed this correlation between changed circumstances and changed opinions,²⁰ those who could not bring themselves to become conservative could hardly be expected to overlook the matter, especially when they continued to suffer what Wordsworth and Coleridge once suffered for holding unpopular beliefs. Whatever the admitted merits of poets become newly orthodox, such suffering liberals would naturally wonder whether the increased rewards showered upon their changeable brothers were not more owing to their new orthodoxy than to their old merits.

¹⁹Peacock also tried his hand with some success at parodying Wordsworth, as in the parody of *Resolution and Independence* in Chapter V of *Maid Marian*.

²⁰*Recollections of the Lake Poets*, ed. E. Sackville-West (London, 1948), pp. 170 ff.

It is sadly significant that Peacock satirized his elders on this score only when he was a young man with his way to make in the world. As he grew older and richer, he also grew more polite. Fortunately his increasing good nature extended to all his literary rivals instead of just to the more successful of them, and his criticism never lost, as the more passionate Landor's frequently did, that power of discrimination which is necessary to make a man's praise worth having.²¹

Peacock is thus seen to be a man of his time, who, though sympathetic to the new literary currents of that time which we now label Romantic, embodied a criticism of the excesses of that literature, and of the broader aspects of life experience to which it was responding, not only through his better-known prose, but by means of verse satire. This satire is written from a classical viewpoint that is of course derivative from the classical culture in which he immersed himself, but is also a development from the classical emphasis of the eighteenth century which he admired.

Peacock's satire is successful, perhaps in part because of his refusal to commit himself to any party line and in part because of a temperament—which his classical studies helped to develop—that put a sufficient distance between his personal convictions and the subjects of his satire to permit him to give effective expression to his ridicule.

His satire, in verse even more than in prose, certainly had an effect on the more powerful work of Byron. The later Byron resembled Peacock in combining Romantic sympathy with respect for the classical, including the eighteenth-century variant of the classical, while seeing much that was absurd in the new literature and in the stimulating, but confusing and tumultuous time which that literature reflected. He may be described as having been enabled by certain classical convictions which grew stronger in his later years to feel an even keener sense of the ridiculous follies of mankind, and his more passionate indignation at human sins, crimes, and hypocrisy is expressed with a deadlier artistic precision than Peacock ever achieved.

Peacock's verse satire has its own merit, and it ought also to help us understand the blending in Byron's later work of apparently con-

²¹Peacock's judgment was less distorted than Landor's by personal feeling because one who knew him intimately could say that "his was a nature capable of warm affections rather than strong passions . . ." ("Biog. Introd.," *Works*, I, xxxvi-vii). Consequently Shelley ascribed to Peacock the passive character described in stanza V of Wordsworth's "Stanzas written in My Pocket-copy of Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*," whereas Peacock thought the passionate character described in the first four stanzas to be very like Shelley (*Works*, VIII, 79).

tradictory tendencies: sympathy with Romantic ideals, combined with satire of Romantic illusions and emotional excesses, surely not unrelated to his admiration for eighteenth-century standards. His *ottava rima* poetic form is like Peacock's in being a curiously mixed kind, in which picaresque narrative becomes in the latter cantos of *Don Juan* a country-house comedy much like Peacock's fiction. The tone is usually conversational—even prosaic, but sometimes dramatic, sometimes lyric, usually satiric in implication. Often it is straight satire, either ridiculing the follies or condemning the vices of mankind. Of course Byron developed this curious kind of literature himself from multiple sources, of which Peacock's work is of minor direct influence. The interesting thing to observe is how two authors of such different temperament, background, and preoccupations could have produced works in such contrast and yet so similar as theirs are. Among the pressures which brought about such a likeness it is reasonable to suppose that not the least important was the attempt each made to combine his Romantic inclinations with his classical convictions. Romantic Classicism was an unstable combination. Nevertheless it enabled certain authors, including Peacock and especially Byron, to produce works of enduring literary value.

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