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INTRODUCTION

GENESIS AND COMPOSITION

On 24 January 1829, 'Touchandgo', Peacock's boisterous satirical poem on rogue bankers, appeared in the *Globe and Traveller*.[1] At around the same time, he was asked 'to look into the whole question' of steam navigation;[2] that request yielded a 'Memorandum respecting the Application of Steam Navigation to the internal and external Communications of India', dated September 1829.[3] By the end of 1830, these divergent strains of topical commentary had united to produce *Crotchet Castle*. Navigation, steam, bureaucracy, paper money and 'all the recognised modes of accumulation on the windy side of the law' (Chapter 1) shaped Peacock's sixth novel. They began, perhaps, to combine after dinner, as various ideas are said to mingle in the Reverend Doctor Folliott's mind at the beginning of Chapter 8: 'fish and wine, Greek and political economy, the Sleeping Venus he had left behind, and poor dear Mrs. Folliott . . . passed, as in a *camera obscura*, over the tablets of his imagination'.

1 *Globe and Traveller*, no. 8194 (24 Jan. 1829), p. [3], col. [2]. The verses were first reprinted in Halliford, 7.242–4.

2 See Chronology, p. xl, and *Letters*, 1.lxxv–lxxvi, cxxviii; 2.226 n. 8; *Report from the Select Committee on Steam Navigation to India; with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index* (House of Commons, 1834), p. 5. Cf. TLP's holograph essay and notes on steam navigation, dating from the 1830s and 1840s, in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection, New York Public Library (TLP 134, 135, 136). See also John Tyree Fain, 'Peacock's Essay on Steam Navigation', *South Atlantic Bulletin*, vol. 35 (1970), 11–15.

3 *Report from the Select Committee on Steam Navigation*, Appendix, No. 1, pp. 2–10.

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'Touchandgo' was sparked by the flight on 27 December 1828 of Rowland Stephenson (1782–1856) – politician, art collector and defaulting Lombard Street banker – and his assistant, John Henry Lloyd. Thanks to a number of unsecured advances, authorized by Lloyd, the bank of Remington, Stephenson and Coleman, and Stephenson himself, were ruined.[4] A reward was offered, in vain, for his capture. With Lloyd, he fled to Savannah, Georgia, reportedly cashing the securities he had stolen and acquiring a brace of loaded pistols from a pawnbroker. The episode was so scandalous (the escape of 'the nefarious banker' and his clerk, via the Devonshire fishing village of Clovelly, was included in a book of illustrations published four years later)[5] that one contemporary reviewer, glossing *Crotchet Castle*, felt it wholly unnecessary to elaborate: 'We need not tell the reader what period or event of the last seven years is pointed to in the following extract.'[6] James Fenimore Cooper recalled people asking him in Italy and Switzerland why Stephenson had been permitted to remain in America, after landing in Georgia and being removed by bounty hunters to New York: 'I understood pretty distinctly', wrote Cooper, 'that there were reports current that the Americans were so desirous of obtaining rich emigrants, that they had rescued a criminal in order to reap the benefit of his gold!'[7] Stephenson was formally bankrupted under the twelve-month rule on 19 January 1830, thereby forfeiting his parliamentary seat. He never returned to England to stand trial. In a curious later twist, of the kind savoured by Folliott, his eldest son – another banker called Rowland (1808–95) – became, like Peacock, an eminent figure in

4 See *ODNB* entry on Rowland Stephenson.

5 John Britton and Edward Wedlake Brayley, *Devonshire and Cornwall Illustrated, from Original Drawings* (H. Fisher, R. Fisher and P. Jackson, 1832), pp. 58–9.

6 Anon., *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* (2 Apr. 1831), p. 234.

7 James Fenimore Cooper, *A Residence in France, with an Excursion up the Rhine, and a Second Visit to Switzerland*, 2 vols. (Richard Bentley, 1836), vol. 2, pp. 147–8.

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the history of steam communication with India. He was knighted in 1856 (the year of his father's death) for services as a civil engineer and as managing director of the East India Railway Company.[8] It is not only in the protean realm of Peacock's fiction that the target and the vehicle of satire can suddenly appear to change places.

Of Peacock's sixth novel it may be said, as he wrote of Cratinus' *Flask*, that 'The fragments of this comedy are few and brief; but they throw some light on its scope and progress' – 'progress' being an especially charged term in Peacock's fiction.[9] No complete manuscript of *Crotchet Castle* exists, but the Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle (New York Public Library) contains some illuminating draft materials. Peacock began writing the novel soon after he completed *The Misfortunes of Elphin* (published in March 1829). According to H. F. B. Brett-Smith, the new tale was already well advanced by the beginning of 1829, but there is no real cause to doubt Peacock's statement, in his Preface to the Standard Novels edition (1837) of *Headlong Hall*, *Nightmare Abbey*, *Maid Marian* and *Crotchet Castle*, that the last novel had been written in its entirety in 1830.[10] The Halliford editors were led to think otherwise by their recovery of Peacock's unsigned verses of 1829, 'Touchandgo', from the *Globe and Traveller* newspaper, and by two newly discovered holograph manuscripts of the poem. One of those 'Touchandgo' manuscripts is a revised draft whose final readings correspond to those of the *Globe* text; the other is a shorter, untitled piece that is included in two surviving leaves of an early draft of *Crotchet Castle* (see Appendix D and Appendix E).

The comparatively brief version of 'Touchandgo', heavily corrected, is introduced by a snippet of Susannah Touchandgo's letter

[8] See *ODNB* entry on Rowland Stephenson (senior); there is no entry for his son.
[9] *Horæ Dramaticæ*, 'The "Flask" of Cratinus' (1857), Halliford, 10.72.
[10] See Halliford, 1.cxlv, 1–2; Nicholas A. Joukovsky, 'The Revision of Peacock's "Touchandgo" and the Composition of *Crotchet Castle*', *Notes and Queries*, 257/New Series, 59, no. 3 (2012), 386–7.

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to her fugitive parent, in which she says 'My feelings have been very much hurt by reading some wicked verses about you in a newspaper', but that she 'could not help copying them, because they were about you'. We seem to be in contact with the genesis of the novel when we encounter Susannah's gentle, vulnerable perspective on crime and public gossip, matched (at this point somewhat awkwardly) by the knowing, robustly critical perspective of satire. Both these attitudes are evident in Peacock's journalism and reviews; the vulnerability typically surfaces in his responses to biography.[11] If we accept his claim to have written *Crotchet Castle* in 1830, and bearing in mind the recent discovery that his natural daughter Susan Mary Abbott was born on 12 October that year, it is tempting to read into the nascent character of Susannah (or Susan) a wish on the author's part to protect his illegitimate offspring, as yet perhaps unborn – as well as a need, at some level, to swipe at absconding fathers and to imagine the effects of such absence on their children.[12] After all, the name 'Touchandgo' need not refer solely to illicit financial activities.

The possible connection between Susannah Touchandgo and Susan Abbott is only one reason to query the Halliford editors' account of the likely dates of the novel's composition. Brett-Smith concluded from the manuscript incorporating the shorter version of 'Touchandgo' that Peacock must have started writing *Crotchet Castle* more than two years before it was published in February 1831. In other words, he thought that the newspaper text, printed in 1829, must postdate the manuscript, ascribing to Peacock the original intention of attacking Stephenson and Lloyd within the context of the novel, rather than in a freestanding satirical poem. This conclusion may have been reached partly because of the dates in watermark on the blue-grey Whatman paper on which both drafts of the 'Touchandgo' are written: 1828 (for the shorter poem and

11 See e.g. *Memoirs of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1858–60), Halliford, 8.39–40.
12 See Nicholas A. Joukovsky and Jim Powell, 'A Peacock in the Attic', *Times Literary Supplement* (22 July 2011), 13–15.

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extract from Susannah's letter) and 1827. But there was nothing to stop Peacock writing on that paper two or three years later, and the fact that Susannah refers to 'copying' the verses that follow out of a 'newspaper' and into her letter is a mischievous hint (entirely out of character for this loving, innocent daughter, and therefore absent from the published novel) that the *Globe and Traveller* text most likely predates the version of the poem that was included in the first edition of *Crotchet Castle*. Such is the view of Nicholas A. Joukovsky: 'The shorter, untitled version of "Touchandgo" in the draft of *Crotchet Castle* was not an early draft of the poem that would appear in the *Globe and Traveller*, but a later draft revision of the published poem, compressed for inclusion in the novel.'[13] Joukovsky's simpler explanation of how the 1831 text came into being gains in plausibility from the knowledge that, although most of the verse in Peacock's novels was original, *Crotchet Castle* also included 'The Pool of the Diving Friar' – a poem which had already been printed anonymously in the *New Monthly Magazine* for June 1826.[14] Peacock, it seems, was quarrying his back catalogue. This may or may not offer a hint as to why, following *Crotchet Castle*, it took him nearly thirty years to publish another, final novel. Given the demands of his official duties and the complexities of his private life, he may have found the process of composing sufficient new material, and of writing at length, more arduous than he had in the previous fifteen years.

The Pforzheimer Collection also includes one page torn from a notebook, containing (in pencil) ten lines of an early draft of Chapter 4 and concerning an 'expectant company' awaiting its dinner (Appendix B). The last, very brief section of this short manuscript, set off from the draft portion of Chapter 4, shows Peacock apparently beginning to sketch out the matter of an ensuing dialogue, planning his chief targets and allocating topics to speakers, perhaps with

13 Joukovsky, 'The Revision of Peacock's "Touchandgo"', p. 387.
14 See Nicholas A. Joukovsky, 'The First Printing of Peacock's "The Pool of the Diving Friar"', *Notes and Queries*, 219/New Series, 21 (1974), 334–5.

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reference to a different chapter. Another page of an early draft of Chapter 5 survives in the Pierpont Morgan Library (Appendix C). Here, Sir Simon Steeltrap appears as Steeltrap FitzTreadmill Esquire. This draft, as far as it is possible to tell, serves only indirectly as a basis for the dialogue between Lady Clarinda and Captain Fitzchrome that appears in the published 1831 chapter, although some of its phrasing comes close to parts of that text, and it must represent a fairly early version of the relevant portion of the novel. It seems that Chapter 5, which in 1831 is entirely in the form of a conversation between two speakers, was at some earlier stage drafted as a third-person roundtable survey of all the main characters, given from the perspective of the narrator. In the 1831 text, each description originates with Lady Clarinda as she privately introduces and summarizes the company to Captain Fitzchrome; this lends the chapter a romantic and flirtatious as well as an ironic charge.

In the 1831 version of Chapter 5, Fitzchrome and Lady Clarinda refer to themselves occasionally in the third person; she addresses her suitor as 'the creature' (a word she uses more than anyone else in the novel) and as 'one Captain Fitzchrome, who is very much in love with a certain person that does not mean to have any thing to say to him, because she can better her fortune by taking somebody else'; he responds by calling her 'the beautiful, the accomplished, the witty, the fascinating, the tormenting, Lady Clarinda, who traduces herself to the said Captain by assertions which it would drive him crazy to believe'. The detached, self-descriptive tic implies that the couple are somehow aware that they are characters in a novel (in Chapter 13 of *Gryll Grange*, Lord Curryfin remarks to Miss Gryll, 'I flatter myself, I am a character', to which she replies: 'Indeed you are, or rather many characters in one'). That intimation contributes a flickering irony to their speech, a form of free indirect style which may reflect the origins of this entirely dialogic chapter in a third-person original. Another suggestion of such origins arises when Lady Clarinda says to Captain Fitzchrome 'You must know I had been reading several fashionable novels'; in 1837, 'had' becomes the less awkward 'have'.

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However, if the point were being made by a narrator and in the third person, rather than in the form of a dialogue, it would be natural to say 'She had been reading several fashionable novels'. The characters' language appears to carry with it a residue of their author's earlier conceptions of how they might be handled and of what they might become. This can make the sparkle of Lady Clarinda's conversation – she is repeatedly described as a wit – come across as uncanny. There is a pathos and tragi-farcical charm in her combination of beauty, poise, intelligence and fatedness, a combination not unusual in heroines of nineteenth-century fiction, but one that is not usually played out through the primary medium of that heroine's dialogue.

The surviving manuscript fragments of *Crotchet Castle*, read alongside the text of the first edition, suggest that the novel's lovesick characters possess a sense of themselves as mechanisms or puppets, to be directed by their author and perhaps of necessity – sadly – conforming to certain fictional and social types. They exist in order to be bought and sold, as Lady Clarinda, a would-be novelist and a woman on the marriage market, repeatedly acknowledges. She is brilliantly self-aware, to the extent that she seems to know she is performing in a story of someone else's contrivance: not only because she features in a comic novel predestined to a particular conclusion, but also because she is a young woman whose character, accomplishments and inclinations are unlikely to count as much as will the rank and wealth of her future husband. The curious atmosphere resulting from her perfectly executed, often savage, conversational pirouettes, especially when they remind us of her own entrapment, is comparable not only to the 'rather too light & bright & sparkling' repartee of Elizabeth Bennet with Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).[15] It also conjures up E. T. A. Hoffmann's satirical horror story *Der Sandmann*

[15] Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 4 Feb. 1813, in *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye, 3rd edn (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 203.

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(1816), in which Nathanael falls in love with Olimpia, a peerlessly beautiful automaton (the tale went on to feature in Jacques Offenbach's *opéra fantastique*, *Les contes D'Hoffmann* (1881)) and Hans Christian Andersen's 'Den standhaftige tinsoldat' (1838), in which the titular hero falls in love with a paper ballerina. The two latter tales end in death and disaster – Nathanael throws himself to his death; Andersen's ballerina perishes in flames; the tin soldier melts into the shape of a heart – but it is far from clear how we are meant to respond to them. The crucial difference between the accomplished dolls and Lady Clarinda is that she is able to speak for herself, but at times it seems as if this distinction is unlikely to save her.

The evolution of Chapter 5 from manuscript to print supports the idea that its eventual form, that of the fictional dialogue, was the result of translating third-person narrative into speech. Peacock seems to have arrived at this characteristic feature of his novels of talk by moving away from third-person alternatives of framing a scene in order to refine them into dialogic and dramatic prose. One view of Peacock's career would encourage us to think that his fiction gradually departs from the schematic characterization and detached, satiric, philosophical manner of *Headlong Hall* in order to develop a more earnest, personal tone, as well as a commitment to psychological realism and to fuller, richer forms of characterization. But it is in the spirit of our contrarian author that we should counter that view with another, at least in relation to Chapter 5 of *Crotchet Castle*.

In 1972, Peter S. Hoff distinguished three voices at work in Peacock's sixth novel: that of an undramatized narrator, that of a clear-sighted character and that of a chorus of crotcheteers talking to (or at) one another. He described the clear-sighted character, Lady Clarinda, as exercising satirical methods quite different in kind from those of the undramatized narrator: 'Where the narrator's detached and gentlemanly tones depended upon the reader's own prejudices and ear for irony to carry the message, Clarinda's blunt and absolute

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language often forces a *reductio ad absurdum* upon its target.'[16] Hoff found the distinction between these two voices especially striking when each described the stock figure of the English country squire, arguing that, in the following passage from Chapter 5, 'Clarinda presents the squire just as she sees him, letting the picture speak for itself':

> 'By administering the laws which he assists in making, he disposes, at his pleasure, of the land and its live stock, including all the two-legged varieties, with and without feathers, in a circumference of several miles round Steeltrap Lodge. He has enclosed commons and woodlands; abolished cottage-gardens; taken the village cricket-ground into his own park, out of pure regard to the sanctity of Sunday; shut up footpaths and alehouses, (all but those which belong to his electioneering friend, Mr. Quassia, the brewer;) put down fairs and fiddlers; committed many poachers; shot a few; convicted one third of the peasantry; suspected the rest; and passed nearly the whole of them through a wholesome course of prison discipline, which has finished their education at the expense of the county.' (Chapter 5)

Hoff comments of this baldly phrased inventory that 'Clarinda employs irony only once, when paraphrasing the hypocritical self-justification of Mr. Steeltrap ("out of pure regard to the sanctity of Sunday"). Otherwise no trace of narrative approval, real or feigned, appears in the description.'[17] By contrast, the voice of the undramatized narrator in Chapter 1 – who offers what is, in effect, an equally damning portrait of the same character – is ostensibly addressing Crotchet's inability to adopt the habits of a typical squire:

> he could not become, like a true-born English squire, part and parcel of the barley-giving earth; he could not find in game-bagging, poacher-shooting, trespasser-pounding, footpath-stopping, common-enclosing, rack-renting, and all the other liberal pursuits and pastimes which make

[16] Peter S. Hoff, 'The Voices of *Crotchet Castle*', *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 2 (1972), 186–98 (p. 191).
[17] Hoff, 'The Voices of *Crotchet Castle*', p. 191.

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a country gentleman an ornament to the world, and a blessing to the poor; he could not find in these valuable and amiable occupations, and in a corresponding range of ideas, nearly commensurate with that of the great King Nebuchadnezzar, when he was turned out to grass; he could not find in this great variety of useful action, and vast field of comprehensive thought, modes of filling up his time that accorded with his Caledonian instinct. (Chapter 1)

Where Clarinda is harsh, plain and outspoken, Hoff argues, the undramatized narrator operates more subtly and indirectly. The effect on us of their distinctive approaches is to produce a composite, albeit wholly negative character of the true-born English squire. Clarinda, speaking harshly, exposes the absurd gap between what such a character is and what he ought to be; the undramatized narrator describes what he is as if it were indeed what he ought to be: 'an ornament to the world, and a blessing to the poor . . . valuable and amiable . . . great . . . useful', and so on.

As it happens, the manuscript fragment that survives of Chapter 5 also concerns the English squire; it therefore gives us some scope to pursue Hoff's distinction between the voices of *Crotchet Castle*:

The next neighbour of Mr Crotchet was ~~Squire Steeltrap~~ Steeltrap Fitz-Treadmill Esquire a great game-preserver and justice of peace. This worthy . . . contrived to be the terror of the peasantry whom he had stripped of their common rights & stopped out of their old ~~footpaths~~ paths, not even leaving them a strip of green for cricket: in return for which kindness they never lost an opportunity of pulling down his fences cutting off the heads of his young plantations & treading on the eggs of his birds . . . Somebody was always punished for these outrages: generally somebody who was not guilty: which added to the number of the aggrieved and emboldened the former perpetrators to a repetition of their exploits. (Appendix C)

Here, the third-person voice employs ironic terms of praise ('great', 'kindness'), but such irony combines with the overtly condemnatory language of Lady Clarinda: 'the terror of the peasantry whom he had stripped of their common rights & stopped out of their old ~~footpaths~~

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