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## The Development of Macaulay's Essays

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**THE DEVELOPMENT OF MACAULAY'S ESSAYS**

**By**

**Margaret L. Cruikshank**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfilment of  
the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Macaulay's essays were once more widely read than the novels of Dickens, but today they are usually read, if at all, in truncated versions. Readers who can easily identify Mr. Micawber have only a vague notion of another famous Victorian character, Macaulay's schoolboy, made famous by the phrase "every schoolboy knows," which Macaulay used to emphasize certain facts. Lack of critical interest, as well as declining popularity, reveals that Macaulay, who became famous at an early age and lived to see his fame grow even greater, is now relatively neglected. Countless studies of Dickens have appeared recently; but in 1959, Macaulay's centenary year, a speaker at the school he attended declared, "The books or essays which really contribute to our knowledge of him can be counted on the fingers of one hand."<sup>1</sup>

Critics have offered little commentary on Macaulay's essays as a whole or on individual works. The distinctive marks of his style have often been catalogued, but they have not been related to specific works. As early as 1900, however, in a

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<sup>1</sup>David Knowles, Lord Macaulay 1800-1859 (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1960), p. 4.

lecture which marked the 100th anniversary of Macaulay's birth, the great classical scholar R. C. Jebb argued that Macaulay's "style" could not be distinguished from "incidental use of rhetoric" if his essays were read in abridged forms.<sup>2</sup> Later critics have agreed with Jebb that Macaulay's great excellence is his style, but by quoting excerpts to show hyperbole or antithesis, for example, they have failed to illuminate particular works or to distinguish some of the essays from others. One nineteenth-century study<sup>3</sup> points out differences among the essays, but the author divides individual works into "historical" and "critical" parts, which are discussed separately. More recently, David Fong has argued that Macaulay's essays reflect growth and change, but his purpose is to study the essays within the context of Macaulay's life: his historical work, his oratory, and his political career.<sup>4</sup> Thus Fong does not explicate individual works to discuss, in any detail, Macaulay's style.

The purpose of this study is to trace the development of Macaulay's essays by concentrating upon a few representative works. Differences among essays written from 1825 to 1844, the

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<sup>2</sup>Macaulay (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1900), p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Oursel, Les Essais de Lord Macaulay (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1882).

<sup>4</sup>"The Development of Macaulay as a Critic and Essayist" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1967).

period covered by Macaulay's Edinburgh Review articles, will be described, as will contrasts between these reviews and such later works as the biographical essays written for the Encyclopedia Britannica during the years 1853 to 1859. When essays are considered as whole works, the reader can observe their structural development, identify central themes and characteristic devices of style, and distinguish sound critical pronouncements on Macaulay from those which his essays belie. In chapter two, the structure of the early essays "Southey's Colloquies" and "Civil Disabilities of the Jews" is analyzed to illustrate the characteristics of Macaulay's early style. Chapter three considers a later work, "Gladstone on Church and State." Macaulay's theory of the historical essay is related to his practice in "Lord Clive" in the fourth chapter. The two essays on Samuel Johnson are contrasted in chapter five to illustrate the development of the essays, which is summarized in chapter six. Each of the forty-one essays is described in the appendix.

Macaulay's nephew and biographer, G. O. Trevelyan, indicated that a study of Macaulay's development would be useful when he wrote:

Macaulay's belief about himself as a writer was that he improved to the last; and the question of the superiority of his later over his earlier manner may securely be staked upon a comparison between the article on Johnson in the Edinburgh

Review and the article on Johnson in the  
Encyclopedia Britannica.<sup>5</sup>

Twenty-five years separate the shallow Edinburgh essay from Macaulay's later and more thoughtful work on Johnson. In general, the late essays are more tightly organized, more perceptive in their judgments of men and events, and less superficially rhetorical than the early essays. Differences between early Edinburgh contributions (1825-1832) and articles which appeared a few years later begin to illustrate this change. But Macaulay's development is most apparent when one contrasts, as Trevelyan suggests, a periodical work to an Encyclopedia Britannica essay. Through comparisons and contrasts of representative works, Macaulay's characteristic ideas and his style can be described.

Critics often assert that Macaulay's merits as a prose stylist compensate for his paucity of ideas; the statement that ideas in the essays are "few in number, but driven home with brilliant emphasis" makes such a distinction.<sup>6</sup> Macaulay alluded to the style of his periodical works when he wrote to the Edinburgh editor that, for reviews, which will probably be read only once, "a bold, dashing, scene-painting manner is that which always succeeds best" (Trevelyan, II, 11). This study will

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<sup>5</sup>The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay (2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, 1876), II, 447.

<sup>6</sup>R. C. Beatty, Lord Macaulay. Victorian Liberal (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1938), p. 270. Beatty's biography includes a chapter on the essays, pp. 241-272.

describe the broad features of Macaulay's "bold, dashing manner." A Victorian critic who predicted that Macaulay would be read for his style rather than for his ideas urged readers to consider style in a wide sense, "in its relation to ideas and feelings, its commerce with thought, and its reaction on what one may call the temper or conscience of the intellect."<sup>7</sup> Since Macaulay's writing has been neglected, and since his individual works are usually reprinted in abridged form, an examination of his general development which considers whole works seems justified. In this study, primary emphasis will be on the essays themselves, but biographical and historical information will not be excluded.

Although sanctioned by modern criticism, concentration on the text is not an approach Macaulay himself would have followed, for he liked to expatiate upon the social milieu of a writer and his biography and to make broad generalizations about the merits and faults of his work. Before considering, in the next chapter, the distinctive features of Macaulay's early essays, it may be well to characterize in a general way the writings which were so popular one hundred years ago that travellers to Australia reported seeing a copy of Macaulay's essays in every squatter's hut, along with Shakespeare and the

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<sup>7</sup>John Morley, "Macaulay," Fortnightly Review, XXV (1876), 497. Morley's article, pp. 494-513, is often cited by later critics.



Bible.<sup>8</sup> First, however, Macaulay's life and literary reputation will be described briefly.

One may easily compare Macaulay's hypothetical schoolboy, whose command of facts helped to discredit such eminent men as Robert Southey and James Mill, to Macaulay himself. If the schoolboy knew that Cortez imprisoned Montezuma and that Pizarro strangled Atahualpa, Macaulay, as a child, knew a great deal more.<sup>9</sup> Born October 25, 1800, at Rothley Temple, an uncle's home in Leicestershire, Thomas Babington Macaulay was the son of Zachary Macaulay, a member of the "Clapham Sect" and an ardent abolitionist who edited the evangelical Christian Observer. The family lived in London, where Macaulay was to spend most of his life. By the time he was eight, Zachary's eldest son had planned an outline of world history beginning with the Creation, had attempted imitations of Scott and Virgil, and had written an essay designed to convert heathens to Christianity. The last effort strongly suggests the elder Macaulay's influence, but this influence was less pronounced in Thomas Macaulay's later writings: perhaps the decline of Victorian earnestness was foretold as early as 1816, when Zachary Macaulay, who likened novel reading to "drinking drams

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 494-95.

<sup>9</sup>"Lord Clive," The Works of Lord Macaulay. Edited by his sister Lady Trevelyan (8 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, 1879), VI, 381. This edition will be cited hereafter as Works. Macaulay's essays are contained in volumes V, VI, and VII.

in the morning" (Trevelyan, I, 30), printed in the Christian Observer an anonymous defense of fiction which not only offended readers by its praise of Fielding and Smollett, but turned out to be the work of his own son.

Few precocious childhoods have been followed by careers as brilliant as those Macaulay pursued, from a Cambridge fellowship to political and literary success which culminated in a peerage. As a young man, he was famous both for his Edinburgh Review articles and for his speeches supporting the Reform Bill.<sup>10</sup>

A voracious reader who remembered literally everything he read, Macaulay was also known for his vivacious conversation. By 1842, when his popular Lays of Ancient Rome appeared, he had laid the foundation for India's penal code, and he had also risen to a place in Melbourne's cabinet. In the following year, his collected Edinburgh essays became best-sellers and continued to be so widely read that, by 1876, Trevelyan could boast:

The market for them in their native country is so steady, and apparently so inexhaustible, that it perceptibly falls and rises with the general prosperity of the nation; and it is hardly too much to assert that the demand for Macaulay varies with the demand for coal (II, 125).

Macaulay would have approved of the analogy.

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<sup>10</sup>Frederick Arnold's book, The Public Life of Lord Macaulay (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1882), reprints many political speeches and letters not included by Trevelyan.

His great success, however, and the work for which he hoped posterity would remember him is The History of England from the Accession of James II. The first two volumes, published in 1848, show how well Macaulay achieved his aim, to make history as interesting as fiction, and how closely his practice followed the theories he had outlined twenty years earlier in an essay titled "History" in the Edinburgh Review (Works, V, 155-160). Although the popularity of the 1825 essay "Milton" was so extraordinary that Trevelyan compared his uncle's sudden fame to Byron's, the History of England established even more firmly, Macaulay's place as one of the great figures of his time. In the first ten days after it appeared, the History sold 3,000 copies. Honors from foreign academies flattered the author, but he was more gratified by his popularity among ordinary readers. After the entire work was read to a group of laborers, they voted to thank the author for "having written a history which workingmen can understand" (Trevelyan, II, 235).

After suffering a heart attack in 1852, Macaulay could not work as tirelessly as he had worked before, but he continued historical research and wrote, in the last years of his life, five biographies for the Encyclopedia Britannica. Shorter and more compact than his periodical works, these seldom-read essays, especially those on Pitt and Johnson, confute the judgment that Macaulay's style never changed. He became Baron

Macaulay of Rothley in 1857. Macaulay died December 28, 1859, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

A common theme in Macaulay's historical essays and in the History of England is the fall of great men. Well suited by temperament and experience to portraying the action of public life, he often emphasized a man's fame so that his subsequent downfall would make a striking contrast. Macaulay traces, for example, the rise and fall of Clive and Hastings and also the rise and fall of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham. Few stories Macaulay told of false fortune, however, are as dramatic as the story of his own fall from a high rank among nineteenth-century writers to relative obscurity today. At his death, the London Times characterized Macaulay as "the most powerful, popular, and versatile writer of our time."<sup>11</sup> One hundred years later, a critic noted that today he seems "as passé as overstuffed furniture--fun perhaps to bounce on and see the dust rise, but not for prolonged sitting."<sup>12</sup>

The warm critical reception given to Trevelyan's biography, The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay, showed that Macaulay's reputation was still high in 1876, but signs of its coming decline appeared in a few of the reviewers' statements. Leslie Stephen implied, for example, that Macaulay would be

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<sup>11</sup>January 10, 1860, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup>Edwin Yoder, "Macaulay Revisited," South Atlantic Quarterly, LXIII (1964), 550.

remembered, less for the intrinsic merit of his work, than for being an archetypal Whig.<sup>13</sup> James Anthony Froude suggested that "the same causes which have occasioned Macaulay's unbounded popularity in his own time may condemn him to oblivion hereafter."<sup>14</sup> Gladstone, whose book on Church-State relations Macaulay had attacked in 1839, also reviewed Trevelyan's Life. His review concluded with the verdict that Macaulay would always be read, but "whether he will remain as a standard and supreme authority, is another question."<sup>15</sup> Alluding to what he called the "questioning scrutiny" of posterity, Gladstone predicted that Macaulay's contemporary fame could not last. It was natural, James Cotter Morison thought, that an interval should occur between Macaulay's "past overwrought popularity and his future assured distinction."<sup>16</sup> Of the strictures against Macaulay in these reviews, Morison's were the harshest; the decline of his reputation was understandably not reversed, therefore, when, a few years later, Morison was chosen to write his life for the English Men of Letters series. The chapter on

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<sup>13</sup>Hours in a Library (4 vols.; London: Smith, Elder, 1907), III, 269-71.

<sup>14</sup>"Lord Macaulay," Fraser's Magazine, XCIII (1876), 694.

<sup>15</sup>"The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay," Quarterly Review, CXLII (1876), 49.

<sup>16</sup>"Lord Macaulay," Macmillan's Magazine, XXXIV (1876), 88.

Macaulay's essays in this biography is appreciative, in part, but Morison stresses his subject's weaknesses and repeatedly disparages his ideas.

The many reasons for the continuing decline of Macaulay's reputation can be reduced to three: the reaction against the Victorian period, which Froude predicted, and which has been especially damaging to a writer justly called the "pre-eminent Victorian";<sup>17</sup> the limitations of Macaulay; and, finally, the choice of his poorest work for texts and anthologies.

Hostility to the Victorian period has given way in recent years to more tolerant attitudes, but it is still fashionable to regard Macaulay as the epitome of all that is distasteful about the period, especially the smugness associated with the whole-hearted approval of the middle class. John Clive writes that critics dismiss him as "a sort of human counterpart to the Great Exhibition."<sup>18</sup> Unlike the other major Victorian authors, Macaulay celebrated his age. Among his best known passages are exuberant descriptions of material progress. As a result of Macaulay's faithful reflection of his age,<sup>19</sup> changing

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<sup>17</sup>The title of the English Association's pamphlet no. 67 by S. C. Roberts (Oxford: at the University Press, 1927).

<sup>18</sup>"Macaulay, History and the Historians," History Today, IX (1959), 830.

<sup>19</sup>Henry Sedgwick wrote that "Macaulay was essentially, and in his strongest characteristics, an Englishman. His mind and heart were cast in English moulds. His great love and unbounded admiration of England sprung from his inner being. His

tastes have seriously undermined his reputation. Indicative of the contrast between past and present is the assertion by some of Macaulay's contemporaries that he lacked moral earnestness,<sup>20</sup> a complaint unlikely to be made by readers today. Macaulay's optimism was based on his trust in reason, his belief that the past furnished a model for the present, and his confidence in the middle class. The contrasting attitudes and uncertainties of later generations of readers have made both Macaulay's sanguine views and his authoritative tone seem old-fashioned.

Specific trends, as well as the questioning of traditional values, have contributed to the neglect of his work. In historical writing, the increasing emphasis on history as a science rather than an art diminished Macaulay's stature as a historian. The wish to write history scientifically sprang, in part, from the great prestige enjoyed by natural science in the nineteenth century. As historians concentrated on facts, their work appealed more to scholars than to a mass audience, and history increasingly became the province of specialists.

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morality, his honesty, his hate of sham, his carelessness of metaphysics, his frank speech, his insular understanding, his positiveness, are profoundly English." (Essays on Great Writers [Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1903], p. 191.)

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Morison's Macaulay ("English Men of Letters"; London: Macmillan, 1882), p. 27; and Peter Bayne, Essays in Biography and Criticism (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1858), pp. 58-66. Another writer feared that Macaulay's progressive ideas would "culminate in anarchy and free love," and continued, "When not disparaging virtue, he is busy in extenuating vice." F. G. Fitzhugh, "Milton and Macaulay," Debow's Review, XXVIII (1860), 670.

A comparable trend toward specialization in literary studies has weakened Macaulay's reputation. In an age when critics emphasize the text rather than historical background, and when an influential book like Wellek and Warren's Theory of Literature denigrates biographical and historical approaches to literature, Macaulay's cursory treatment of works is suspect. His simplified descriptions of literary periods seem to preclude respect for his criticism. With these drawbacks, his writing has seemed to offer few compensating merits such as insights relevant to the present. Thus, while George Eliot and Matthew Arnold have gained favor in the modern dress of psychology and existentialism, Macaulay, in his Hebrew old clothes, remains ignored.

But changing taste is only the most obvious reason for the neglect Macaulay has suffered; his weaknesses as a writer are partly responsible for the decline of his fame. "Beyond the apparent rhetorical truth of things he could never penetrate, wrote Arnold, "...and therefore his reputation, brilliant as it is, is not secure."<sup>21</sup> The prediction was accurate. And if Arnold's judgment of Macaulay's rhetoric was too harsh, its partial truth cannot be denied. Lack of depth is Macaulay's most serious limitation: both his characteristic strengths and weaknesses as a writer show the unreflective quality of his

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<sup>21</sup>"Joubert," Essays in Criticism, First Series (London: Macmillan, 1896), pp. 304-05.



mind. From this generalization, critics have proceeded to more questionable judgments, declaring for example that Macaulay's essays are all the same, that "his mind shows no trace of change,"<sup>22</sup> and that, "...if a paragraph were taken at random it would be almost impossible to guess whether the speaker was in his thirty-second or his fifty-second year."<sup>23</sup> Such evaluations may be tested by comparing Macaulay's early reviews to later reviews and also to his last essays, the Encyclopedia Britannica articles.

Macaulay thought that the clarity of his writings might detract from his fame, if readers mistook clarity for shallowness: "Many readers give credit for profundity to whatever is obscure, and call all that is perspicuous shallow (Trevelyan, II, 272). To a certain extent, readers have made this error when judging Macaulay, but it is also true that he frequently achieved clarity by skirting difficulties rather than by overcoming them. Thus, while his writing is often

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<sup>22</sup>Walter Bagehot, "Thomas Babington Macaulay," Literary Studies (2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, 1891), II, 225.

<sup>23</sup>G. M. Young, Daylight and Champaign (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), p. 16. These emphatic statements resemble Macaulay's own literary judgments. The proposition that his work shows no growth or change is also defended by H. H. Lancaster, "Lord Macaulay's Place in English Literature," North British Review, XXXIII (1860), 457; Leslie Stephen, Hours in a Library, III, 234-35; C. H. Jones, Lord Macaulay (New York: Appleton, 1884), p. 242; G. L. Strachey, "Macaulay," Portraits in Miniature (London: Chatto and Windus, 1931), p. 171; Bonamy Dobrée, "Macaulay," Criterion, XII (1933), 598; and D. C. Somervell, English Thought in the Nineteenth Century (London: Longmans, Green, 1940), p. 93.

deceptively simple, with his clear presentation hiding problems of selection and arrangement effectively resolved, at other times it is merely superficial.

A third reason for the decline of Macaulay's reputation, besides changing tastes and his limitations, is that selections which represent him in anthologies give a much better idea of his shallowness than of his perspicuity. The merits of the essays, skillful narration for example, would be more apparent if his last essays were reprinted as often as his first. Unfortunately for his reputation, everyone who has read some Victorian prose knows that in the essay on Samuel Johnson (1831), Macaulay dismisses Boswell as a fool who produced a great book, and subjects Johnson to much obtuse commentary. But few know that twenty-five years later, Macaulay wrote another essay on Johnson which reveals a high regard for him as well as a more restrained style.

A problem for editors, as Hugh Trevor-Roper points out, is that Macaulay's best and worst are often close together.<sup>24</sup> Macaulay seemed aware of the problem when he wrote,

My manner is, I think and the world thinks, on the whole a good one; but it is very near to a very bad manner indeed, and those characteristics of my style which are most easily copied are the most questionable (Trevelyan, II, 452).

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<sup>24</sup>Critical and Historical Essays. Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 22.

Nevertheless, there is a great difference between the worst argumentative passages of "Bacon" and the best narrative passages of "William Pitt," and failure to notice differences has weakened Macaulay criticism, much of which is very general and relies for evidence not only on a few essays but on meager extracts from them. Critics who would hesitate to deduce Arnold's theory of poetry from a single essay, or George Eliot's opinion of scholars from her portrait of Casaubon, base summaries of Macaulay's ideas on a few phrases from an eighty-page essay. A recent example is provided by J. R. Reed, who ridicules Macaulay for allegedly denying that biography is an art, but offers no evidence besides the well-known "inspired idiot" paradox which Macaulay defended to account for Boswell's Life of Johnson.<sup>25</sup> Later statements on biographical writing, as well as his own practice, confute the allegation that Macaulay recognized no art of biography. The notorious disparagement of Plato in "Bacon," which seems so foolish out of context, is merely one of the rhetorical devices used to magnify Bacon's achievement, and is not primarily an evaluation of Greek philosophy. But, as W. P. Ker states, the philosophical section of the Bacon essay "remains the most dangerous of all

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<sup>25</sup>English Biography in the Early Nineteenth Century 1801-1838 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 72.

the pieces of evidence in the hands of the advocatus diaboli to disprove the greatness of Macaulay."<sup>26</sup>

The pamphlets and articles published for his centenary<sup>27</sup> indicate some revival of interest in Macaulay, but it is clear that his literary reputation will not be firmly re-established unless his later works become more widely read, and until close readings of all the essays provide a better understanding of their range and characteristics. "I will not found my pretensions to the rank of a classic on my reviews," Macaulay wrote (Trevelyan, II, 112). Yet, since the great length of the History of England discourages all but a few modern readers from studying the work Macaulay hoped would assure his lasting fame, and since modern texts usually represent the essays more fully than the History of England, the reputation of his shorter works will probably continue to determine his literary rank. Most of these essays have not been

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<sup>26</sup>"Macaulay," English Prose, V, ed. Henry Craik (London: Macmillan, 1907), 415.

<sup>27</sup>The Review of English Literature for October, 1960, devoted to Macaulay, includes an article by John Clive, "Macaulay's Historical Imagination," pp. 20-28; and a study by G. S. Fraser titled "Macaulay's Style as an Essayist," pp. 9-19. Other periodical articles are those by Maurice Cranston, "Lord Macaulay after 100 Years," Listener, LXIII (January 7, 1960), 32-33; and by R. W. K. Hinton, "History Yesterday: Five Points about Whig History," History Today, IX (November, 1959), 720-28. Three centenary pamphlets were published: G. P. Potter, Macaulay ("Writers and Their Work no. 116"; London: Longmans, Green, 1959); Mark Almeras Thomson, Macaulay (The Historical Association pamphlet no. 42"; London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1959); and David Knowles' Macaulay, cited earlier.

closely examined for their literary value but have been read mainly for the light they shed upon Victorian attitudes. The present study attempts to describe Macaulay's essays more fully by emphasizing their style rather than their ideas. Before the specific characteristics of the essays are outlined, in the following chapters, some generalizations should be made about 1) the distinctive features of Macaulay's periodical writing; 2) his ideas; 3) the clarity of his style; and 4) ways of classifying and dividing the essays.

Like other nineteenth-century reviewers, Macaulay made the book at hand only a starting point for his own opinions on the subject; and, although some of his reviews are lengthy debates with the author, many have little or nothing to say about the work which occasioned the review. Aided by the wealth of facts which his prodigious memory could readily supply, he attacked literary and historical subjects and occasionally pronounced on a contemporary issue such as exclusion of Jews from Parliament. Macaulay's ability to give a comprehensive view of his subject reveals the broad scope of his reading and interests; at the same time, his skillful exposition shows his desire to communicate enthusiasm for his topic as well as to give a full account of it. Even the Roman Catholic church, which Macaulay, like most Englishmen of his time, distrusted, is portrayed in a lively and sympathetic way in the review of Ranke's History of the Popes.

Macaulay's talent for finding the interesting aspects of a language and for expressing his ideas in clear and emphatic language made his reviews extremely popular. Another cause of their popularity is that he never assumes a scornful or patronizing attitude toward readers and never makes them feel uncomfortable. Matthew Arnold referred slightly to Macaulay's popularity when he called him "the great apostle of the Philistines."<sup>28</sup> But, like so many of Macaulay's own disparaging tags, "apostle of the Philistines" reveals only a part of the truth. The negative side to this broad appeal is obvious: a writer must often sacrifice complexity to be popular, especially if his works are short-lived periodical articles. By extolling the middle class, Macaulay allowed readers to think well of themselves. On the other hand, the wide popularity of his reviews enabled him to instruct the reading public at a time when it was greatly increasing, and therefore to give some idea of a subject to readers who otherwise would have had no ideas at all about it. Macaulay's dramatic sketches created interest in the past; those who knew nothing of Voltaire, for example, could gain some impression of him from Macaulay's account of his quarrels with Frederic the Great. Thus Saintsbury described Macaulay as a "leader to reading."<sup>29</sup> And a very different attitude from Arnold's is

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<sup>28</sup>Arnold, p. 304.

<sup>29</sup>Collected Essays and Papers (4 vols.; London: J. M. Dent, 1923), II, 241.

evinced by Thackeray's remark, "No small thanks do we owe Mr. Macaulay for laying open his learning to all, and bidding the humble and the great alike welcome to it."<sup>30</sup>

"Learning" is a suggestive word here, for it is learning rather than experience that one finds in Macaulay's essays. Hardly any personal feelings are revealed in them, a fact which makes Trevelyan's biography especially valuable: it tells what would otherwise not be known, that Macaulay was a generous and loving man. His gentle playfulness--shown by his letters, by the verses he wrote to amuse his sisters, and by the elaborate games he invented for nieces and nephews--is not a characteristic one would associate with the slashing reviews in which humor is one of many weapons used against opponents.<sup>31</sup>

The tentative quality of whimsical statements excludes them from most of the Edinburgh Review articles, notably from early reviews, in which the writer's assertions are more strident than in later essays.

Macaulay's antithetical style does not lend itself to expressing private feelings. Despite the formality conveyed by

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<sup>30</sup>"Mr. Macaulay's Essays," The Oxford Thackeray, ed. George Saintsbury (17 vols.; London, n.d.), VI, 316.

<sup>31</sup>Macaulay was challenged to a duel by William Wallace, editor of Mackintosh's History of the Revolution in England, whom he attacked in an 1835 review of Mackintosh's work. The challenge, the reviewer coolly noted, was "very properly worded" (Trevelyan, II, 6). The duel was called off after apologies were exchanged through seconds. This settlement was most fortunate for Macaulay, who had never fired a gun. See Beatty, pp. 207-08.

his sometimes elaborate sentences, however, Macaulay's tone is not really formal. He takes the reader into his confidence, making him feel equal to the reviewer in discernment if not in learning. By vivid descriptions, aphorisms, and lively illustration of commonplaces, Macaulay shows that he wishes to entertain as well as to inform readers. But very little of his personality is actually revealed through this concern for the audience, or through his calm pronouncements, and that is perhaps one reason why his essays seem more dated than the works of other Victorian writers. When Ruskin, for example, angrily denounces the preponderant influence which nations give to military spending, he has special relevance to the present.<sup>32</sup>

Another characteristic of the essays is that all deal with the past, either directly, through summaries and interpretations of events, or indirectly, through the discussion of a contemporary issue in the light of historical parallels. In a sense, the present interests Macaulay only as it reflects history; and, consequently, his view of the present is often abstract. The factory system, for example, which caused great suffering to individuals, symbolized for him the progress of the nation as a whole, and thus the system's theoretical benefits impressed him more than its practical evils.

Macaulay's essays are closer in spirit to the eighteenth century than to the nineteenth; they reflect the classical ideal

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<sup>32</sup>Sesame and Lilies (2nd ed.; London: Smith, Elder, 1865), pp. 114-116.



of moderation in all things. Macaulay greatly preferred the literature of earlier periods, especially the eighteenth century, to that of his own time, and some of his best essays-- "Clive," "William Pitt," "Addison"--are on eighteenth-century figures. "Macaulay's youth was nourished upon Pope, and Bolingbroke, and Atterbury, and Defoe," wrote his nephew, "...he knew every pamphlet which had been put forth by Swift, or Steele, or Addison." (Trevelyan, II, 445) It is not surprising, therefore, that he avoided the self-revelatory prose of the Romantics. He did not share their view of writing as a means of self-expression, but considered it rather "a social form expressing a collective, impersonal view."<sup>33</sup> A writer for the Edinburgh considered himself "we," not "I". Macaulay disliked the artificial diction of much eighteenth-century writing, an attitude which his own vocabulary reflects, but his first reviews exhibit an ornate style, marked by extended comparisons and contrasts, hyperbole, climax, and other rhetorical flourishes which become less common in later essays.

Even when he uses highly emotional language, Macaulay seems to be appealing not to the man of feeling but to the man of common sense, or the "plain man," as he is called in one essay. In one way or another, Macaulay's essays recommend a common sense attitude toward the problems of life. Their

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<sup>33</sup>Eric Stokes, "Macaulay: the Indian Years, 1834-38," Review of English Literature, I (October, 1960), 45.

unspeculative quality is well known, but critics have been content to label Macaulay "pragmatic," "utilitarian," or "materialistic," without asking what forms, in specific essays, his pragmatism takes. A common form is appeal to precedent: the static events of the past, more readily classified than experiences of the moment, furnish a storehouse of practical wisdom.

Another form is the elaboration of commonplaces. The talent for saying what is ordinary and familiar in impressive language has often been identified as one source of Macaulay's appeal; it is the basis, for example, of his eloquent praise of liberty. Many passages throughout his work, from the ringing defense of Milton in 1825 to the enthusiastic praise of Johnson's letter to Chesterfield in 1856, demonstrate that liberty is one of his main themes. It is clear that "the commonplaces of patriotism and freedom would never have been so powerful in Macaulay's hands if they had not been inspired by a sincere and hearty faith in them in the soul of the writer."<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately for his reputation at present, this characteristic of his writing is seldom mentioned; but, when the essays are considered as a whole, it seems a more prominent theme than his celebration of progress. The most frequently anthologized essays, "Bacon" and "Southey" for example, give a clearer idea

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<sup>34</sup>Morley, p. 502.

of Macaulay's sanguine view of the future than of his hatred for oppression. His commonplaces on freedom reveal his worst as well as his best, however; their glorification of British institutions appears provincial, especially in the early reviews. Macaulay is more candid when, in "Lord Clive" (1840) and "Warren Hastings" (1841), he describes British cruelties in India.

Some of Macaulay's contemporaries thought him a skeptic because they found few references to spiritual values in his essays. But rather than skepticism, this lack indicates an unwillingness to deal with problems which common sense cannot resolve. Outward actions interested Macaulay more than their intangible causes or the spiritual forces manifested by them. Carlyle attacked pre-occupation with the material world in "Signs of the Times"; and, while characteristic of Macaulay's writing, this pre-occupation does not involve for him a denial of spiritual values and thus is not the "faith in Mechanism" which Carlyle denounced. Macaulay placed practical, concrete good over speculative good and in this sense he is a utilitarian, but Utilitarianism repelled him. His attacks upon Utilitarianism demonstrate that he considered it immoderate, theoretically unsound, and useless, because the greatest happiness principle is inherent in Christianity (Works, V, 297-98).

Macaulay occasionally praised men who kept out of theological controversy by likening them to Allworthy seated between Thwackum and Square, a significant comparison, since of the three only Allworthy acts virtuously. "The business of a Member of Parliament," Macaulay wrote to Leeds voters in 1832, "is the pursuit not of speculative truth, but of practical good."<sup>35</sup> Neither was the pursuit of speculative truth Macaulay's business as an essayist.

His mind "was really very simple," wrote John Morley,<sup>36</sup> in the confident manner of Macaulay's own literary pronouncements. A more useful way of summarizing his ideas is to say that he was fundamentally a moderate. A characteristic method in his reviews is to describe extremes so that the superiority of the middle course can be emphasized.<sup>37</sup> Both the Tories' dread of innovation and the Utilitarians' contempt for traditional values struck him as dangerous extremes. Macaulay's moderate position impressed Crabb Robinson, who wrote in his diary after meeting him in 1826, "His opinions are quite liberal and yet he is by no means a vulgar radical."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Frederick Arnold, p. 118.

<sup>36</sup>Morley, p. 503.

<sup>37</sup>This point is elaborated in William Madden's essay "Macaulay's Style," in The Art of Victorian Prose, ed. George Levine and William Madden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 132-34.

<sup>38</sup>The Diary of Crabb Robinson, an Abridgment, ed. Derek Hudson (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 93.

At Cambridge, Macaulay gave up his father's Tory politics, became a Whig, and did not change again, although Whig biases are less pronounced in his late essays than in such reviews as "Milton" (1825) and the first essay on William Pitt, Earl of Chatham (1834). His ideal of limited government became more flexible as he grew older: by 1846 he could defend state power in the form of the Ten Hours Bill; and a year later, he argued that civil and religious liberty would be strengthened rather than undermined by state-supported education. "For every pound that you have saved in education," Macaulay declared to the House of Commons, "you will spend five in prosecution, in prisons, in penal settlements" (Works, VIII, 399-400).

Reform in order to preserve, one of his great principles, upheld a political goal consistent with past experience. The Whig liberalism Macaulay espoused was basically more conservative than radical, a fact James Mill stressed when he called the Whigs "the opposition section of the aristocracy."<sup>39</sup> The Whigs' reluctance to share power with a large segment of the middle class is clear from Macaulay's opposition to universal suffrage. The Edinburgh Review's support for moderate reform did not seem truly progressive to Mill, who dismissed it as "perpetual trimming"; but for Macaulay, the advantages of moderation were obviously proved by

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<sup>39</sup>"Periodical Literature," Westminster Review, I (January, 1824), 219.

English history. His parliamentary speeches, like his essays, show a preoccupation with this history.

Such a preoccupation leads naturally to great respect for the historian's art. "The perfect historian," Macaulay wrote in 1828, "is he in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature" (Works, V, 157). A closely related theory, that historians must combine reason and imagination, underlies his comment that Mackintosh united Hallam's judgment "to the vivacity and coloring of Southey" (Works, VI, 83). Although the historian's imagination ranks below the poet's, the historian does not produce a

mere mechanical imitation. The triumph of his skill is to select such parts as may produce the effect of the whole, to bring out strongly all the characteristic features, and to throw the light and shade in such a manner as may heighten the effect (Works, VI, 83).

This passage indicates Macaulay's own practice. One sign of his development is that heightened effects in "Addison" (1843) are less ostentatious than those in "Milton" (1825).

For Macaulay, the historian's real work begins after research has been completed: he must select and arrange his material so that it describes broad social developments as well as political changes. Carlyle, too, wanted the scope of history enlarged; by distinguishing the "Artist" historian from the "Artisan," he implicitly agreed with Macaulay's conclusion that the writing of history is not a mechanical process.<sup>40</sup> But

<sup>40</sup>"Thoughts on History," Fraser's Magazine, II (1830), 416.

he did not share Macaulay's view of history as a cycle of action and reaction whose direction individual men influence only slightly. Carlyle's theory, that history is the biographies of great men, is well illustrated by some of Macaulay's essays, however: Clive, Hastings, and Frederic the Great all seem larger than life, and accounts of their heroics are as memorable as passages which exhibit "the spirit of the age in miniature." Nevertheless, Macaulay's chief interest is the outward actions of the past, rather than their hidden meanings, and thus his portraits are very different from Carlyle's.

The idea of progress, an important aspect of Macaulay's historical theory, is sometimes misunderstood, especially when it is mistaken for belief in human perfectibility. Macaulay believed that, although circumstances vary greatly, man remains the same. His faith in progressive institutions, therefore, was not as strong as the radicals' faith in them, nor did he share the Utilitarians' confidence that men had only to be told what would promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number before they acted accordingly. Macaulay liked to stress that, in the nineteenth century, Englishmen were more comfortable than they had been in earlier times, but he pointedly declared, "I do not say that they are better or happier than they were" (Works, VIII, 75). Thus, even a progressive event like the French Revolution brought concomitant evils: "...the new unbelief was as intolerant as the old superstition" (Works, VI, 486). At the

beginning of the History of England, Macaulay states that his purpose is to describe the country's rise to greatness, but he goes on to say that he must record "great national crimes and follies" (Works, I, 2). This echo of Gibbon suggests that the later historian's theory of progress is not based upon a sentimental misreading of the past. By "progress," Macaulay usually means material progress. The exuberant tone of his statements on progress, rather than the statements themselves, have made him appear insensitive to spiritual values, but he clearly takes these for granted.

It is true, on the other hand, that Macaulay occasionally wrote as though progress extended beyond technological advance; by including government and criticism among the "experimental sciences," he claimed for them a progressive tendency. But critics have tended to overlook his qualifications and exceptions to the idea of progress.<sup>41</sup> In 1856, for example, Macaulay found Johnson's criticism superior to that of nineteenth century writers, and he praised the Lives of the English Poets at a time when it was fashionable to say that Johnson would live, not through his own writing, but through Boswell's biography. Macaulay disrupted the view that theology is progressive in "von Ranke." And he did not believe

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<sup>41</sup>A fair description may be found in "Macaulay and the Idea of Progress," chapter four of John R. Griffin's study The Intellectual Milieu of Lord Macaulay (Ottawa: Ottawa University Press, 1965), pp. 49-67.



political progress to be inevitable: he feared that American democracy would lead eventually to violence.<sup>42</sup> As G. M.

Trevelyan has pointed out, the Victorians had

no thought-out philosophic belief in progress as a universal law, true to all times and in all countries. Even Macaulay, in his essay on von Ranke's Popes foresaw the New Zealander sketching the ruins of St. Paul's from a broken arch of London Bridge, and he never forgot that the great civilisation of ancient Greece and Rome had first stagnated and then fallen...<sup>43</sup>

Macaulay seems to have believed that, since progress was a great historical movement especially prominent in his own day, it ought to be celebrated.

Since primitivism and the theory of progress, two seemingly contradictory ideas, were often intertwined in the eighteenth century,<sup>44</sup> it is not surprising that Macaulay defends, in his early reviews, the primitivistic notion that poetry declines with the advance of civilization. Partly because of this constricting doctrine, he wrote more authoritatively about the characteristics of the age which produced a work than about the work itself. He read voluminosly, and loved both great and obscure works, but he

<sup>42</sup>See "Macaulay on Democracy, Letters to H. S. Randall," Saturday Review, CLIV (July 16, 1932), 64.

<sup>43</sup>"Macaulay and the Sense of Optimism," Listener, XXXIX (February 12, 1948), 258-59. This essay is reprinted in the Dutton paperback Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians (1966).

<sup>44</sup>See Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1934).

had little talent for critical analysis, as he admitted with characteristic emphasis in a letter to the Edinburgh editor:

...I am not successful in analysing the effect of works of genius...I have never written a page of criticism on poetry, or the fine arts, which I would not burn if I had the power. Hazlitt used to say of himself, 'I am nothing if not critical.' The case with me is directly the reverse. I have a strong and acute enjoyment of works of the imagination; but I have never habituated myself to dissect them (Trevelyan, II, 7-8).

Unfortunately for Macaulay's reputation, his better passages of criticism appear in essays not often reprinted, for example, the article on Fanny Burney. His late works show more clearly than earlier writings that Macaulay's critical standards and tastes are Augustan, although the 1831 review, "Moore's Life of Byron," also illustrates this point. Using norms of correctness and just imitation of nature, the reviewer argues that Byron is a better poet than Pope. Macaulay, like Johnson, assumes a judicial attitude toward writers: he tells why their work deserves praise or blame.

In his critical passages, Macaulay often expounds the idea that obscurity and affectation are the great faults of style. This opinion could easily be inferred from his own style, which has always been praised for its clarity. The various ways in which Macaulay achieved clarity will be described in later chapters, but since it is so distinctive a feature of his essays, a few preliminary comments should be made. The clarity of Macaulay's writing results from emphatic

phrases and antithetical sentences; and, on a larger scale, from the use of contrast and hyperbole.

Macaulay's emphatic quality has often been noted. It results partly from his leaving nothing unsaid: the reader knows exactly what to think because he is told directly, not through hints or suggestions. Emphasis is conveyed by individual words and phrases as well as through explicit sentences. The early reviews show little variety of emphasis, and patterns exemplified by a few phrases from "Machiavelli" (1827), listed below, are less common in later essays. Macaulay uses first of all many superlatives:

this most important branch of war  
 their wisest course  
 the strongest internal evidence  
 the highest renown.

Superlatives are paired in various ways:

the widest and the most mischievous operation  
 the strongest interests and the strongest feelings  
 the most forcible reasoning and the most brilliant wit

and juxtaposed:

the highest admiration...and the greatest contempt.

Occasionally a triple superlative amplifies a thought. Here is one which, in context, elaborates the idea that different cultures have different attitudes toward courage: "With him [the Italian] the most honorable means are those which are the surest, the speediest, and the darkest" (Works, V, 62). Besides these superlatives, other varieties of emphatic phrasing

recur in "Machiavelli." There are many exclusive expressions of this kind:

the whole people  
all the causes  
every man  
every man who has seen the world  
every age and every nation  
nothing was ever written

as well as descriptive phrases which have the effect of superlatives:

incomparable dexterity  
utterly worthless and abandoned  
a mind altogether depraved.

Macaulay's purpose in this review, to defend Machiavelli, is also reflected by the emphatic phrases which climax sentences. The following example describes the fate of Machiavelli's books. "His works were misrepresented by the learned, misconstrued by the ignorant, censured by the church, abused, with all the rancour of simulated virtue, by the tools of a base government and the priests of a baser superstition" (V, 82). The increasing emphasis is clear when paralleled words are listed separately:

misrepresented  
misconstrued  
censured  
abused  
base government  
baser superstition.

Taken by themselves, these words and phrases are rather insignificant components of style, but their sharpness helps to explain why Macaulay's meaning is never doubtful.

A fondness for antithetical sentences clearly reflects his tendency to reduce complex ideas, or the various aspects of a problem, to fairly simple dichotomies. "The difference between the soaring angel and the creeping snake," Macaulay wrote in one of his best-known essays, "was but a type of the difference between Bacon the philosopher and Bacon the Attorney-general, Bacon seeking for truth and Bacon seeking for the Seals" (Works, VI, 175-76). There is nothing tentative about such a view. The habit of juxtaposing ideas often gives Macaulay's sentences a rigid quality; they lack, in Arnold's phrase, "the soft play of life."<sup>45</sup> To demonstrate that his essays are not all the same, it will be necessary to show that rigidity is less characteristic of some essays than of others.

Antithetical sentence patterns are well suited, on the other hand, to expressing Macaulay's favorite themes: the action/reaction movement of history, the transformation from barbarism to civilization, and the struggle between freedom and oppression. Moreover, antithesis imparts a special force to the aphorisms which explain Macaulay's ideas. "An acre in Middlesex is better than a principality in Utopia" (Works, VI, 220) emphatically expresses his preference of the concrete and practical to the theoretical. Since Macaulay's imagery is simple and is drawn from natural processes, it lends itself to

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<sup>45</sup>Friendship's Garland (2nd ed.; London: Smith, Elder, 1897), p. 71.

antithetical patterns: sowing and reaping, the ebb and flow of the tide, and the swing of a pendulum.

Macaulay's paragraphs often expand a single thought through many antithetical phrases and sentences. An example is a two-page paragraph in "Mackintosh" which begins, "The history of England is emphatically the history of progress," moves from the bad twelfth century to the good nineteenth, and identifies in its climax the struggle for Reform as a higher stage of the old clash between tyranny and freedom (Works, VI, 95-96). Contrasting the "wretched and degraded race" which the English once were, to the "highly civilized people" they have become, Macaulay demonstrates that dramatic progress attends history's cyclic changes. The back-and-forth movement of the paragraph itself, and its rise to a climax, suggest the same meaning. One reason Macaulay's late essays seem more compact than earlier works is that sweeping paragraphs of the kind described here are less common in them.

On a larger scale, Macaulay clarifies his thought by contrast and exaggeration. He uses contrast as an organizing principle both in the periodical reviews and in the Encyclopedia Britannica essays, but the latter do not display such bold juxtapositions as the creeping snake/soaring angel contrast, which divides "Bacon" into sections on his life and on his work. An 1828 essay on history is structured upon two large contrasts: ancient history versus modern, and history as it

should be written versus history as it has been written. "Southey's Colloquies" and "Mill on Government" distinguish between the right way to view government and wrong ways: Southey's approach is too imaginative; Mill's is not imaginative enough. Besides these large structural contrasts are others which shape parts of an essay. The idea that poetry declines with the advance of civilization is elaborated in "Milton" and again in "Dryden." A section of the essay on Johnson defends the thesis that Johnson united great powers with low prejudices. In "Byron," Macaulay differentiates the historian's character-drawing from the poet's: stark contrasts used by the former are inappropriate for drama because they are unnatural; a dramatist who uses them produces "not a man but a personified epigram" (Works, V, 412). Macaulay's own stark contrasts are less jarring in this essay than in "Samuel Johnson," perhaps because contrasts seem natural to Byron's character.

Macaulay's exaggerations have prompted critics to judge him brilliant but untrustworthy, a dichotomy Virginia Woolf suggests when she comments that "Addison" (1843) does not strike the reader as "true."<sup>46</sup> Woolf points out that Macaulay's exaggerations, taken singly, appear "grotesque"; but she goes on to say that, in their contexts, "such is the persuasive power of design--they are part of the decoration;

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<sup>46</sup>"Addison," The Common Reader. First and Second Series (Harcourt, Brace, 1948), p. 137.

they complete the monument."<sup>47</sup> In view of the neglect Macaulay's essays have suffered, Woolf's distinction seems especially important. His exaggerated statements can be dismissed as violations of truth and nothing more when they are quoted in literary surveys, but set in their contexts, exaggerations can be interpreted as parts of a whole.

To describe the character of a past era in a few pages, or to give an idea of a man's life and work in forty pages, Macaulay had to avoid distinctions and qualifications. Perhaps he felt that readers would accept exaggerated statements as "part of the decoration" and not be misled by them. At any rate, he used exaggeration deliberately:

. . . the best portraits are perhaps those in which there is a slight mixture of caricature, and we are not certain, that the best histories are not those in which a little of the exaggeration of fictitious narrative is judiciously employed. Something is lost in accuracy; but much is gained in effect. The fainter lines are neglected; but the great characteristic features are imprinted on the mind forever (Works, VI, 81).

Macaulay follows this theory closely in his historical essays. Although critics have praised his narrative skill, they have

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid. Not all critics have shared Virginia Woolf's detached view of inaccuracy. Macaulay emphasized his opinion that Bunyan's allegory is more interesting than Spenser's by claiming, "Very few and very weary are those who are in at the death of the Blatant Beast" (Works, V, 447), a statement which prompted Henry B. Wheatley to charge Macaulay with inaccuracy: "Macaulay knew well enough that the Blatant Beast did not die in the poem, as Spenser left it." (Literary Blunders /London: Elliot Stock, 1893/, pp. 38-39.)



not shown, in any detail or through individual works, what precisely Macaulay "gained in effect" by exaggeration or by other devices. The last sentence quoted above succinctly describes Macaulay's early writing: the fainter lines are indeed neglected, but the "great characteristic features" are imprinted with remarkable clarity. In Macaulay's late Edinburgh Review articles and in his Encyclopedia essays, however, more attention is paid to the "fainter lines"; characters in late works are more subtly delineated, for example, than characters who appear in early reviews.

Several of Macaulay's essays are well known, but accounts of their range and characteristics are sketchy. Investigation of such topics as the symbolism of Dickens or Eliot's imagery forms a sharp contrast to the generalized treatment of Macaulay's individual works. Before a more specific description is attempted, in the following chapters of this study, several ways of classifying the essays will be discussed.

Aside from his college essays, which were published in Knight's Quarterly,<sup>48</sup> Macaulay wrote forty-one essays: thirty-six for the Edinburgh Review, between the years 1825 and 1844; and five for the Encyclopedia Britannica, between 1853 and 1859. A division can be made, therefore, between periodical reviews and works of a more permanent nature, written for a standard

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<sup>48</sup>Reprinted in Works, vol. VII. See Appendix II.

reference work. R. C. Beatty arranges the essays chronologically in the chapter of his biography devoted to them; each essay is treated in a separate paragraph. A three-part classification is devised by Hugh Trevor-Roper, whose recently-published selection includes essays Macaulay wrote before going to India in 1834; one from the "middle period, the period of his Indian administration";<sup>49</sup> and finally, several written after his return to England in 1838.

These divisions are helpful but arbitrary: Beatty's few comments about each essay give little idea of style; Trevor-Roper divides the essays unequally, since the middle period covers only three years and two reviews. Moreover, both Beatty and Trevor-Roper slight the Encyclopedia Britannica essays.

Macaulay's works have also been divided according to their subjects. Morison uses the following categories: 1) English history; 2) foreign history; 3) controversial; and 4) critical and miscellaneous.<sup>50</sup> In a similar way, Oursel divides the essays into: 1) literary; 2) philosophical and political; and 3) historical.<sup>51</sup> When Macaulay's essays were collected in

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<sup>49</sup>Trevor-Roper, p. 23.

<sup>50</sup>Morison, pp. 66-106.

<sup>51</sup>Les Essais de Lord Macaulay.

1843,<sup>52</sup> they were titled Critical and Historical Essays, and subsequent editions have made this same distinction in their titles. The weakness of such arrangements is that Macaulay's works are often critical and historical ("Milton") or controversial and historical ("Hallam"). To distinguish some essays from others, a different sort of classification seems necessary.<sup>53</sup>

After reading a number of these essays, one notices that, whatever their similarities, some are argumentative and others are narrative. Macaulay both persuades and describes, of course but the difference in emphasis is usually clear in each essay. Specific points are debated in the essays on Clive and Hastings, but the essays consist mainly of their biographies. The facts of Milton's life, on the other hand, are subordinated to an argumentative end: justifying Milton's

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<sup>52</sup>Critical and Historical Essays Contributed to the Edinburgh Review (3 vols.; London: Brown, Green, and Longman, 1843). Beatty is misleading when, after stating that Macaulay had finished thirty-three of his thirty-eight Edinburgh Review works by 1843, he adds, "But of that large number he decided to omit the three papers on the Utilitarians. . . . Otherwise, the essays were being offered as they first appeared." (Lord Macaulay, Victorian Liberal, p. 241.) The 1843 edition does not include the following works: three essays on the Utilitarians, two on Sadler, and the essays "History," "Dryden," "Mirabeau," "Frederic the Great," and "Madame D'Arblay."

<sup>53</sup>Madden classifies Macaulay's prose works by three styles which he terms "oratorical," "judicious," and "histrionic." See Madden, p. 134.

public conduct. Some narrative essays focus on a single man-- "Hampden," "Temple," "Chatham,"--while others, such as "Mirabeau" and "von Ranke," are sketches of a period. The titles do not always indicate the emphasis; for example, in "Mirabeau," an argument defending the French Revolution, Mirabeau himself appears only at the end.

This classification into arguments and narratives has the advantage of being drawn from the essays themselves, and the further advantage of being suggested, indirectly, by one of Macaulay's letters. In January, 1832, after finishing "Hampden," he wrote to the Edinburgh Review editor, "It is in part a narrative. This is a sort of composition which I have never yet attempted. You will tell me, I am sure with sincerity, how you think that I succeed in it" (Trevelyan, I, 249). 1832, therefore, seems an appropriate date to begin the "middle period," a period in which arguments are fewer and narrative essays more numerous. This period ends in 1844, with Macaulay's last Edinburgh contribution, an article on the Earl of Chatham, whose career he had begun to narrate ten years before. Since the best known as well as the longest of the essays come within this period, they will be described in three chapters. The Encyclopedia Britannica works, written after an interval of ten years, are all narratives; they will be treated in a separate chapter. The increasing number of narrative essays in the middle and later periods reflects Macaulay's

growing preoccupation with his History of England, the work on which he expected his fame to depend, and reflects as well his waning interest in politics.

The division into arguments and narratives will help to account for differences of style and structure in the essays. It can explain, for example, why two essays treating similar periods of English history, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, have very different endings. Macaulay concludes "Hallam" by advocating the Whig case for the Reform Bill, a case implicitly urged by his selection and interpretation of events in the essay; "Hallam" ends with a peroration suited to an argument. "Mackintosh," on the other hand, evokes the Revolutionary period for its intrinsic interest and ends abruptly with a suggestion that readers take up Mackintosh's work. The distinction between arguments and narratives should provide a better context for stylistic discussions than is offered by a division into critical and historical essays. Within this framework, the development of Macaulay's essays, from the florid language of "Milton" to the quieter prose of "William Pitt," can be traced. Techniques such as exaggeration need not be condemned outright if, in specific passages, their use can be justified; an exaggeration which weakens an argument may strengthen a narrative.

Since Macaulay's early essays are arguments and most of his later essays are narratives, this classification will not

upset the general chronological order which an account of development should follow. The attempt to demonstrate that the late essays are Macaulay's best will depend on finding his talent better suited to narration than to argumentative writing. Many critics have preferred the narrative essays, but none has shown, in any detail, why they are successful. Their great length has probably discouraged readers from looking closely at them or considering them as wholes. R. C. Jebb's plea that the characteristics of Macaulay's style not be inferred from excerpts has gone unheeded.

Trevelyan's biography portrays Macaulay as a singularly fortunate man, whose abilities were praised and rewarded by his contemporaries, and whose equanimity was untroubled by great difficulties. With his attention focused on the past, Macaulay remained undisturbed by swift, often violent changes taking place in his own day. He was occasionally at odds with his age, but ultimately he had no quarrel with it, and his prose reflects this satisfaction. One critic accounts for the calm quality of Macaulay's writing by observing that he did not have "strabismus, or dyspepsia, nor Weltschmerz, nor a wife. He did not go to Heidelberg or Gottingen, where he might conceivably have acquired some of all of these."<sup>54</sup> The essays Macaulay

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<sup>54</sup>W. C. Abbott, "Thomas Babington Macaulay: Historian," Adventures in Reputation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), p. 22.

wrote during his happy and successful life have not appealed to those who value literary works for revelations of struggle and failure. It is unfortunate that the most famous writer of his time should today be so neglected, and that his best work should be so little read. Although inferior as a prose writer to Newman or Arnold, Macaulay deserves a higher rank than is currently assigned to him. He may never again be as popular as Dickens, but one may hope that the "pre-eminent Victorian" enjoys the revival predicted for him by a few of his admirers.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 27. The prediction was also made by Wallace Notestein in a review of Beatty's Lord Macaulay, Victorian Liberal. (Saturday Review of Literature, XIX /January 21, 1939/, 7.) More recently, a revival of interest in Macaulay was predicted by Anthony Hartley in "Lord Macaulay, 1800-1859," Manchester Guardian Weekly, LXXXI (December 31, 1959), 11.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY ESSAYS: 1825-1832

Between the years 1825 and 1832, Macaulay contributed sixteen articles to the Edinburgh Review.<sup>1</sup> The first essay, on Milton, quickly established his fame: "Like Lord Byron, he awoke one morning and found himself famous" (Trevelyan, I, 117). His vigorous assault on the Utilitarians, in another essay, prompted Lord Lansdowne to offer him a Parliamentary seat in 1830. Written during the years of Reform Bill agitation, these reviews expound Macaulay's Whig views both directly, when he pleads for reform as in "Hallam" and "Mill"; and indirectly, when he attacks the Tory opinions of a contemporary like Southey, or a figure of the past like Samuel Johnson. Many characteristics of these reviews, therefore, are marks of

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- <sup>1</sup>1825: "Milton."  
1827: "Machiavelli."  
1828: "Dryden," "History," and "Hallam."  
1829: "Mill on Government," "Westminster Reviewer's Defense of Mill," and "Utilitarian Theory of Government."  
1830: "Southey's Colloquies," "Mr. Robert Montgomery," "Moore's Life of Byron," "John Bunyan," and "Sadler's Law of Population."  
1831: "Sadler's Refutation Refuted," "Civil Disabilities of the Jews," and "Samuel Johnson."



polemical writing in general. The arguments depend more on rhetorical proof than on logical proof to buttress their positions; thus, discovering underlying assumptions and figurative language patterns and tracing the general strategy of an essay are important steps in analysis. These early reviews show that Macaulay handled speculative questions poorly, but was more successful when he discussed practical matters. Two essays will be analyzed to establish this point and to illustrate typical methods of argument in Macaulay's early writings. These methods can be summarized by the following generalizations about his style.

The Edinburgh Review style shares many characteristics of Macaulay's early style, especially the authoritative tone which enemies of the Whig review denounced as arrogant and cocksure, and which is epitomized in the famous response of Lord Jeffrey, the Edinburgh's first editor, to Wordsworth's Excursion, "This will never do!" Macaulay's self-confident air reflects the Edinburgh's motto: "Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur." By occasionally calling a review a "tribunal," Macaulay announces his intention to pass judgment on books. Like Jeffrey, he considered his judicial role a serious public duty, deriving from the power of books to influence readers. Although the authoritative manner in which the verdicts were passed down often seems smug, and proves for some modern readers the truth of Johnson's saying, "Criticism is a study by

which men grow important and formidable at a very small expense," the Edinburgh Review helped transform criticism "into the earnest and vigorous discussion of literature as the expression of all that was significant and absorbing in the life of the time."<sup>2</sup>

Besides agreeing on the important social role of the reviewer, Jeffrey and Macaulay shared more specific attitudes. One is a great emphasis on common sense, which made them suspicious of anything resembling mysticism (Macaulay termed Wordsworth a "humbug"), and led them to speak for the ordinary man. Another reflection of this pragmatism is the "trimming" instinct of both men. They believed that the French Revolution had the unfortunate result in England of hardening resistance to any kind of change and consequently of forcing public opinion to radical and reactionary extremes.<sup>3</sup> "There are those who will be contented with nothing but demolition; and there are those who shrink from all repair," Macaulay wrote in an early review ("Hallam," Works, V, 237).<sup>4</sup> Both men detested hero worship; the

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<sup>2</sup>Lewis E. Gates, "Francis Jeffrey," Three Studies in Literature (New York: Macmillan, 1899), p. 41. See also James Greig, Francis Jeffrey of the Edinburgh Review (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1948).

<sup>3</sup>Macaulay did not think, for example, that unrest in England justified William Pitt's suspension of the Habeas Corpus act. See "William Pitt," Works, VII, 396-97.

<sup>4</sup>Four years later he wrote in "Mirabeau": "Demolition is undoubtedly a vulgar task; the highest glory of the statesman is to construct. But there is a time for everything,--a time to set up, and a time to pull down. The talents of the Revolutionary leaders and those of the legislator have equally their use and their season" (Works, V, 620).

word "authority" often bears unfavorable connotations in their writing. Macaulay, for example, states approvingly that Milton's mind was "emancipated from the influence of authority" (V, 2). Jeffrey and Macaulay were especially severe to writers whom they considered affected. Jeffrey berated the Lake poets for this fault, and like Macaulay, termed a writer's style "manly" when he wished to give it high praise.

There are also resemblances in style. Jeffrey favored strong adjectives and antithetical sentences. James Sutherland's analysis of a passage from Jeffrey shows other qualities which may be compared to those of Macaulay's writing. One is the use of climax to force assent from the reader, to stun him into a "state of dazed acquiescence."<sup>5</sup> "Facile fluency" makes what is biased seem impartial, and, as often with Macaulay, transforms a complex problem into a fairly simple one.<sup>6</sup> This technique weakens Macaulay's arguments, but it is put to better use in his narrative essays when he condenses in a few pages much detailed information about a man or a period. In general, amplitude is characteristic of Jeffrey's style and of Macaulay's.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>On English Prose (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 87.

<sup>6</sup>In the essay on Bunyan, for example, Macaulay judges Pilgrim's Progress the only allegory "which possesses a strong human interest" (Works, V, 446).

<sup>7</sup>Sutherland comments, "In a century in which amplitude was a guarantee of solid achievement, literature was large,

But Jeffrey must have found something distinctive about Macaulay's writing, for he wrote to the young man whose first appearance in the Edinburgh Review was an impassioned defense of Milton, "The more I think the less I can conceive where you picked up that style" (Trevelyan, I, 118). The chief difference between his own writing and that of Macaulay is that Macaulay's language is more heightened and emphatic. To illustrate this difference, here are two passages in which each author argues that historians must look beyond political events to society's condition as a whole. Jeffrey writes that important events in a nation's history result from a change in the "general character" of its people; to trace such a change and its variations is therefore

to describe the true source of events; and, merely to narrate the occurrences to which it gave rise, is to recite a history of actions without intelligible motives, and of effects without assignable causes. . . . The historian must consider manners, education, prevailing occupations, religion, taste,--and, above all, the distribution of wealth and the state of prejudice and opinions.<sup>8</sup>

Macaulay expresses the same thought more vividly when he states that great changes often come from "noiseless revolutions."

These changes

too. It was an age of long poems and three-volume novels . . . and interminable book reviews" (p. 92).

<sup>8</sup>Contributions to the Edinburgh Review (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1846), I, 527. The passage is from an 1810 review of Charles James Fox's History of the Early Part of the Reign of James the Second (1808).

are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives. They are carried on in every school, in every church, behind ten thousand counters, at ten thousand firesides. The upper-current of society presents no certain criterion by which we can judge of the direction in which the under-current flows. The ideal historian shows us the court, the camp, and the senate. . . . He considers no anecdotes, no peculiarity of manner, no familiar saying as too insignificant for his notice which is not too insignificant to illustrate the operation of laws, of religion, and of education, and to mark the progress of the human mind ("History," Works, V, 156, 158).

Aside from illustrating Macaulay's forceful language, this passage elucidates the theory behind his own historical writing. The river metaphor typifies his figurative language. The profusion of examples given here is uncharacteristic of his Encyclopedia articles, a fact which suggests that Macaulay was self-consciously flamboyant in his periodical essays. Supporting this view is a letter in which he gently chides the Edinburgh Review editor for striking out a few purple passages from an article. Macaulay observes, "It is not by his own taste, but by the taste of the fish, that the angler is determined in his choice of bait" (Trevelyan, I, 152). Persuading the reader is equivalent to catching fish. The piling up of examples and illustrations, as in the passage quoted, serves an argumentative purpose: Macaulay strives to be clear and vivid in order to persuade.

A Victorian critic who wrote an influential article on Macaulay suggested that argumentative style is revealed in the way a writer qualifies his statements. Burke groups

qualifications in a single paragraph, while Newman "dispersed them lightly over his page." Macaulay, on the other hand,

dispatches all qualifications into outer space before he begins to write, or if he magnanimously admits one or two here and there, it is only to bring them the more imposingly to the same murderous end.<sup>9</sup>

This harsh judgment does not fairly describe the essay on Gladstone, but it fits many of the early reviews. The fact that Macaulay wrote them hastily, and for a wide audience, partly explains this characteristic. More fundamentally, however, lack of qualification signifies a habit of his mind: the tendency to see a thing, not as it is in itself, but in relation to something else. One thought leads to others very rapidly in his work; he prefers building around an idea to limiting its meaning. Frequently in the early essays, an idea seems to be brought in for the sake of the illustrations and digressions which it prompts. Like many other writers, Macaulay thought clarity the first requisite of style, but clarity in his early articles results from abundant rather than from precise language. What he said of Pitt's speeches applies also to his own reviews: Pitt did not excel at close reasoning or logical exposition, but his speeches "abounded with lively illustrations, striking apophthegms, well-told anecdotes, happy allusions, passionate appeals" (VI, 50). With Macaulay, all of these devices more often paraphrase than qualify statements.

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<sup>9</sup>John Morley, "Macaulay," Fortnightly Review, XXV (1876), 506.

Ways of amplification are thus the most prominent stylistic techniques in the early essays. Macaulay often draws comparisons from history and literature to elaborate his meaning. Bacon's low opinion of scholastic philosophers is quoted to disparage Mill; the essay on Hallam implies that the Whigs, so often right in the past, are right at present to urge reform; and Machiavelli's writings remind the reviewer of Herodotus and Tacitus. Parallels are used ingeniously, but often superficially, either to praise or to condemn. When assailing the Utilitarians, for example, Macaulay cites Tristram Shandy:

The project of mending a bad world by teaching people to give new names to old things reminds us of Walter Shandy's scheme for compensating the loss of his son's nose by christening him Trismegistus (V, 296).

He paraphrases statements by comparisons of this kind, by series of parallels, by repetitions and digressions, and by restating an idea figuratively after all of these methods have explained its literal meaning. In the passage about history quoted earlier, a river's undercurrent illustrates the great social changes taking place beneath the surface of events.

Frequently in Macaulay's writing, as one idea amply illustrated follows another, little subordination develops within sentences and paragraphs. Especially characteristic of early reviews, this lack of subordination is alluded to by a writer who notes that Macaulay draws "his treasures out in single file and in successive sentences or clauses like beads on

a string."<sup>10</sup> Such an arrangement makes his prose at times seem mechanical and gives the impression that his writing is all surfaces. Infrequent use of subordination partly explains why Macaulay is sometimes labeled "journalistic," and why his pages read quickly and easily, even though individual sentences may be fairly elaborate. His style is a traditional one, in that his sentences are full of ornaments like elaborate parallelism and ingenious paradoxes which characterize seventeenth and eighteenth-century prose; but, at the same time, his rapid movement from one idea to another makes his writing seem closer to the one-sentence paragraphs of modern newspapers and one-page reviews of modern journals than to the convoluted writing of Milton and Johnson. Because of his "beads on a string" arrangement of ideas, Macaulay often appears shallow when compared to these writers. On the other hand, the single file pattern has an advantage: for essays which are chiefly argumentative, this way of marshalling evidence makes points under debate seem thoroughly discussed.

But occasionally in these essays, although Macaulay elaborately illustrates his points, the reader suspects that the main issues have not been clarified, or perhaps even mentioned. In "Mill on Government," he defends aristocracy because it fulfills the ends of government, protection of

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<sup>10</sup>J. B. Crozier, My Inner Life (London: Longmans, Green, 1898), p. 299.



property and maintenance of order, but ignores the question of means. What kinds of force will maintain order? Whose property will be protected? These questions are not asked. Nothing in the review "Sadler's Law of Population" suggests that the problem of overpopulation is relevant to England in 1829. (The population of England and Wales doubled in the first fifty years of the nineteenth century.) "Macaulay jeers Sadler out of court, but he never comes to grips with what lies behind him, the Malthusian theory which overshadowed and darkened all English life for seventy years."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the review of Southey's Colloquies ignores evils caused by the Industrial Revolution.

More noticeable than avoiding key issues, but a form of the same weakness, is Macaulay's reliance on argumentum ad hominem. "Jeers" is exactly the word to describe his attitude toward opponents. One would not guess from Macaulay's reviews that James Mill was a more important writer than Robert Montgomery.<sup>12</sup> The repeated use of "sect" to describe the Utilitarians implies that they need not be taken seriously. Macaulay was least fair to his political enemy John Wilson

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<sup>11</sup>Humphrey House, "The Mood of Doubt," Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1966), p. 74.

<sup>12</sup>Montgomery, now forgotten, enjoyed great popularity in the 1830's and 1840's for poems on religious subjects. Later regretting his abusive treatment of Mill, Macaulay decided not to include three essays on the Utilitarians in the 1843 collection of his Edinburgh Review works.

Croker, whose edition of Boswell is castigated in the 1831 review, "Samuel Johnson." Before beginning his attack on Croker, Macaulay wrote to his sister, "I detest him more than cold boiled veal" (Trevelyan, I, 239): and, in the opening paragraph of the review, he likened Croker's edition to a bad leg of mutton (Works, V, 498). Such thrusts are common in reviews of the time, of course.<sup>13</sup> A less blatant way of casting aspersion on an opponent is to equate political unorthodoxy with religious, a tactic Macaulay used against the Utilitarians. He sought to distinguish them from Whigs because he feared that Parliamentary reform would be thwarted "if once an association be formed in the public mind between Reform and Utilitarianism" (V, 299). Thus his purpose in reviewing Mill's Essays on Government, and in challenging the Westminster's defense of Mill, is more to discredit the Utilitarians than to evaluate their philosophy.

If this didactic purpose militates against subtleties of argument such as careful distinctions and qualifications, so, too, does Macaulay's use of sharp contrasts. Many of the early reviews are built on contrasts. When Macaulay offers a new interpretation of some facts, he implicitly contrasts the old, wrong way of considering them to his own. Thus "Machiavelli"

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<sup>13</sup>Gladstone suggested, however, that Macaulay's denunciations were especially vigorous by referring to his "scarifying and tomahawking power." ("The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay," Quarterly Review, CXLII [1876], 19.)

attacks the stereotyped view of the Italian as "the Tempter, the Evil Principle, the discoverer of ambition and revenge . . ." (V, 46). More important structurally are contrasts set up between author and reviewer: Mill wrongly applies a priori reasoning to government, while Macaulay reasons inductively; Sadler distorts figures to refute Malthus, but Macaulay uses them correctly; Southey foolishly treats political science as an art, whereas Macaulay views it as a science. Other juxtapositions recommend a middle-of-the-road course. By contrasting his impartial attitude toward Byron's life to the fickleness of a public which has alternately idolized and condemned the poet, Macaulay makes his own view seem moderate and sensible.

These dichotomies make clear the development of his thought, but sharp distinctions between them give many of the essays a rigid quality. The basic contrast in the essay on Dryden opposes writers whose ability is mainly creative to writers of a lower rank who are critical. After placing Dryden in the second category, Macaulay cannot rate his poems highly; reiteration of the contrast largely replaces analysis in this essay. In "Moore's Life of Byron," there is perceptive comment on the poet's characteristic merits and faults, but Macaulay first attacks Pope to elevate Romantic poetry and makes Byron the link between eighteenth-century poetry and Romantic by judging him an Augustan in intellect, but a "creature of his age" in feeling. Other simple contrasts are better known, for

example, the statement that Johnson's mind united great powers to low prejudices, and the opinion that "Bunyan is almost the only writer who ever gave to the abstract the interest of the concrete" (V, 449). These antitheses are less common in Macaulay's late work. The 1854 article on Bunyan contains no facile summary comparable to this one from the earlier and better-known essay.

A fondness for antithetical patterns is also evident in Macaulay's love of paradox. Boswell was a fool who wrote a great book. Confidently he defends such paradoxes as if to say that the vigor of the defense compensates for the shallowness of the thought itself. Often in Macaulay it does, or at least it diverts attention from the thought to the profusion of language and from one idea to another. In his first essay, Macaulay argues that Milton's classical education was a great handicap because, as civilization advances, poetry declines:

Poetry produces an illusion on the eye of the mind, as a magic lantern produces an illusion on the eye of the body. And, as the magic lantern acts best in a dark room, poetry effects its purpose most completely in a dark age. As the light of knowledge breaks in upon its exhibitions, as the outlines of certainty become more and more definite and the shades of probability more and more distinct, the hues and lineaments of the phantoms which the poet calls up grow fainter and fainter (V, 7).

The simple poetry-as-illusion theory expounded here suggests that the literary criticism in Macaulay's early reviews is not impressive. One sign of his development is the greater

perception shown in later essays, in which critical generalizations are supported by evidence from specific works, for example, in "Addison" and "Madame D'Arblay," both written in 1843. As the passage quoted above demonstrates, Macaulay oversimplifies complex notions by making a figurative paraphrase seem to encompass an idea which it merely approximates. Ingenious but vague comparisons of this kind are common in the early essays. Here, the magic lantern analogy emphasizes, without making more specific, the idea that poetry flourishes in a dark age.

Because of his fondness for antithesis and for balanced sentences such as those quoted from "Milton," Macaulay has been compared to Samuel Johnson. His authoritative tone resembles Johnson's, but differences can be seen from two passages on the same topic, Dryden's attitude toward his writing. Johnson wrote:<sup>14</sup>

Dryden was no rigid judge of his own pages; he seldom struggled after supreme excellence, but snatched in haste what was within his reach; and when he could content others, was himself contented. He did not keep present to his mind an idea of pure perfection; nor compare his works, such as they were, with what they might be made....

He was no lover of labor. What he thought sufficient he did not stop to make better, and allowed himself to leave many parts unfinished, in confidence that the good lines would overbalance the bad. What he had once written he dismissed from his thoughts....

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<sup>14</sup>Lives of the English Poets, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (3 vols.; Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1905), I, 464-465.

Macaulay wrote of Dryden:

He trusted that what was bad would be pardoned for the sake of what was good. What was good, he took no pains to make better. He was not, like most persons who rise to eminence, dissatisfied even with his best productions. He had set up no unattainable standard of perfection, the contemplation of which might at once improve and mortify him. His path was not attended by an unapproachable mirage of excellence, forever receding, and forever pursued. He was not disgusted by the negligence of others; and he extended the same toleration to himself. His mind was of a slovenly character,—fond of splendor, but indifferent to neatness. Hence most of his writings exhibit the sluttish magnificence of a Russian noble, all vermin and diamonds, dirty linen and inestimable sables (Works, V, 118).

The similarity between these passages may indicate unconscious borrowing by Macaulay, whose remarkable memory is well known. At any rate, both excerpts comprise a series of negative statements summarized by a positive statement. The second passage displays sharper antitheses and a pronounced climax and is less concise than Johnson's, but the signal difference is that Johnson's language makes his verdict more fair. The analogy which epitomizes Macaulay's judgment is typical of the early essays: it manifests his exaggerated descriptions, his use of hypothetical characters to praise or discredit, and above all, his emphatic tone. "Vermin and diamonds" is a clever antithesis because the "m-n" sounds of both words make them seem naturally joined, even though the meaning is paradoxical. Johnson gives the impression that, while his view

is considered, more could be said on the subject, but in the second passage, Macaulay's slovenly Russian ends discussion abruptly.

A short passage offers only a rough idea of style, however, and for a writer like Macaulay, who has often been made to seem foolish by quotations out of context, and who is usually represented by a few pages excerpted from a very long essay, it seems especially necessary to take works as wholes in order to treat them fairly. Two early reviews, "Southey's Colloquies" and "Civil Disabilities of the Jews," will serve to illustrate the chief characteristics of Macaulay's argumentative method, in particular, his way of structuring an essay.

### Southey's Colloquies

In 1829, Robert Southey published a book titled Sir Thomas More; or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society, in which the author's Tory sentiments and his nostalgia for the past are equally prominent. It was only natural for the Edinburgh Review to attack the book, a series of conversations between the author and the ghost of Thomas More. Southey's Colloquies discussed, in the reviewer's words, "trade, currency, Catholic emancipation, periodical literature, female nunneries, butchers, snuff, book-stalls, and a hundred other subjects" (Works, V, 338). This work need not be taken seriously, Macaulay hints by his description, and continues:

Why a spirit was to be evoked for the purpose of talking over such matters...we are unable to conceive....What cost in machinery, yet what poverty of effect! A ghost brought in to say what any man might have said! The glorified spirit of a great statesman and philosopher dawdling, like a bilious old nabob at a watering-place, over quarterly reviews and novels ...making excursions in search of the picturesque! (338-39).

Macaulay did not believe in puffery, even on behalf of the Poet Laureate.<sup>15</sup>

The term "picturesque" gives a clue to Macaulay's strategy in the debate with Southey: he will pit common sense against his opponent's speculative ideas by contrasting the right way to discuss government (as a science) to a false way (as an art). Macaulay does not pair the words "science" and "art" to express the contrast, but he clearly makes this general distinction by terms such as "picturesque," used to characterize Southey's method, and "natural," applied to the evidence which he uses to refute his opponent's arguments. He attacks Southey's ideas without offering an alternative theory, as he did several years later when disrupting Gladstone's position on church and state, but he implies that government should be considered scientifically when he claims, in the second paragraph of the review, "Government is to Mr. Southey one of the fine arts" (V, 330). This statement may be taken

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<sup>15</sup>In one of his most vituperative reviews, an article on Robert Montgomery, Macaulay states that he considers his attack a public duty, to offset the puffery which inflated Montgomery's reputation.



as Macaulay's thesis. He elaborates the idea by charging that Southey judges theories "by the effect produced on his imagination . . . [therefore] what he calls his opinions are in fact merely his tastes" (330).

Reiterated throughout the essay, in figurative phrases as well as in direct statements, the distinction between Macaulay's accurate reasoning and Southey's faulty reasoning, which supports the thesis, is the most important of the many stark contrasts which Macaulay uses to dismiss his opponent's case rather than to refute it carefully. The art/science dialectic not only shapes the argument; in a sense, it is the argument, because specific points debated with Southey are reduced to this dialectic rather than proved. Since only the reviewer treats government scientifically, any of his facts can be used against his opponent; and whatever questions Southey has raised about the quality of life can be dismissed as "imaginative." The operation of this central contrast and related aspects of Macaulay's argumentative strategy can be seen in each part of "Southey's Colloquies."

This long review has three main divisions. The introduction describes the faulty (imaginative) method in Southey's previous work. In the body, which discusses the use of this method in the Colloquies, Macaulay takes up Southey's opinions of the manufacturing system, political economy, and religion, and outlines his general view of the "past progress

of society." The conclusion argues that, since Southey's false method has led him into errors about the past (he has made "the picturesque the test of political good" [342]), it naturally makes his view of the future, or the "probable destination" of society, wrong as well. The review ends with a famous description of progress which celebrates the gradual control man has won over his environment. Often quoted to epitomize Victorian attitudes, the praise of progress, in its context, is a rhetorical device to refute Southey's pessimistic arguments about the future.

The introduction expounds Macaulay's thesis that his opponent treats government as a fine art in various ways: the reviewer praises Southey's narrative works to distinguish them from his arguments; he emphasizes Southey's inconsistency (he was a radical as a young man); and he expresses the underlying science/art contrast more explicitly when he mentions Burke's union of sound reasoning and a powerful imagination to preface the claim that "in the mind of Southey reason has no place at all..." (332).<sup>16</sup> An allusion to Paradise Lost links the introduction to the body of the review:

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<sup>16</sup>This charge is exaggerated, of course, but is partly vindicated by Southey's attack on Hallam in the Quarterly Review, XXXVII (1828), 194-260. Southey gives no evidence for vague charges, for example, that Hallam's mind is warped by Whig opinions, that he is not sufficiently contemptuous of Roman Catholics, and that he opposes legitimate authority. Moreover, the basis of Southey's defense of Laud is the prelate's eloquence.

He [Southey] has passed from one extreme of political opinion to another, as Satan in Milton went round the globe, contriving constantly to 'ride with darkness'....It is not everybody who could have so dexterously avoided blundering on the daylight in the course of a journey to the antipodes (336-37):

It is difficult not to enjoy sallies of this kind, unfair as they are. Macaulay's observation mocks his opponent and thus strengthens the contrast between foolish author and sensible reviewer.

In "Southey's Colloquies," a contrast between liberal politics (Southey's, in the modern sense of "liberal"), and conservative underlies the debate over specific issues. With a few exceptions,<sup>17</sup> the lines are drawn as they would be today, Southey favoring a paternal government which Macaulay denounces as "meddling" and "all-devouring." Southey urges state expenditures for public works; Macaulay wishes government spending restricted. The science/art dialectic touches this difference in political outlook when Macaulay expounds his laissez-faire doctrines. These are stated most emphatically in the last two sentences of the review:

Our rulers will best promote the improvement of the nation by strictly confining themselves to

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<sup>17</sup>Southey's distrust of the average man would be more characteristic of a National Review writer than of a contributor to the New Republic. Modern conservatives do not use the word "authority" in a disparaging sense, as Macaulay often does. To illustrate progress, for example, he states that the English lower classes formerly "paid more reverence to authority, and less to reason, than is usual in our time" (Works, V, 359).

their own legitimate duties, by leaving capital to find its most lucrative course, commodities their fair price, industry and intelligence their natural reward, idleness and folly their natural punishment, by maintaining peace, by defending property, by diminishing the price of law, and by observing strict economy in every department of the state. Let the Government do this: the People will assuredly do the rest (368).

This summary is a paradigm of early Victorian liberalism. The system seemed less natural as the century progressed, as Hard Times and Unto This Last, among other works, clearly demonstrate. The repetition of "natural," here at the conclusion, indirectly furthers the contrast between the right and wrong way to regard government: if Macaulay's system is "natural," Southey's, by implication, is artificial.

Southey is condemned more explicitly in the body of the review, which has two parts: after discussing the manufacturing system, political economy, and religion (specific cases), Macaulay attacks Southey's pessimism (his "general view" of society's past progress). Southey's opinions on the manufacturing system are dismissed as "imaginative." Defending the system with statistics on the poor-rate and the mortality rate, Macaulay tells nothing of the real condition of the workers' lives. Southey had deplored the ugliness of villages which sprang up when men left rural areas to work in factories. Macaulay jeers, "Here are the principles on which nations are to be governed. Rose-bushes and poor-rates, rather than steam-engines and independence" (342). This sharp antithesis

shows how little room the science/art frame provides for genuine debate. "Independence" (a logical consequence of steam engines, Macaulay implies here), is one of the vague abstractions which weakens the early essays in general,<sup>18</sup> and makes the phrase "a Victorian glorification of self-help" fit this review in particular.<sup>19</sup>

Although the rose-bush/steam-engine antithesis suggests a superficial view of government, Macaulay had earlier attacked the Utilitarians with the following critique of their method: ". . . when men...begin to talk of power, happiness, misery, pain, pleasure, motives, objects of desire, as they talk of lines and numbers, there is no end to the contradictions and absurdities into which they fall" (Works, V, 248). But in "Southey," he uses much the same approach. How can this inconsistency be explained? It stems partly from adherence to a via media between radical doctrines and the kind of ultra-Tory views Southey espoused in his Colloquies. Macaulay's rhetorical tactics conform to the defense of this general position, as well as to the support of specific points in an argument. In both cases, when he attacks the Utilitarians and when he attacks Southey, he condemns what he takes to be extreme positions. An

<sup>18</sup>To refute Mill's argument that the interests of the poor clash with those of the middle class, for example, Macaulay asserts that middle class interests are "identical" with those of the "innumerable generations which are to follow" (Works, V, 265).

<sup>19</sup>Roberts uses this phrase to describe the third chapter of Macaulay's History of England in The Pre-eminent Victorian, p. 12.

indifference to philosophies also helps to explain the seemingly contradictory passages in "Mill" and "Southey." Macaulay had no system to be upset by argumentative shifts of this kind. In a sense, he had no great respect for ideas; rhetoric often seems for him an end in itself. Yet Arnold's contention, previously cited, that Macaulay could not see beneath the "rhetorical truth of things" is unfair. At his worst, as in the Bacon essay, Macaulay does seem open to the charge of anti-intellectualism, but his better essays show that his pragmatism is consistent with a love of learning for its own sake.

Although he was a politician who became a leading figure of his party, Macaulay was detached from the modern world, and this detachment may account for the fact that he damns the Utilitarians in one essay but adopts some of their methods in another. His favorite authors preceded the nineteenth century. He recognized the evils which Reform sought to mitigate, of course, but its attraction for him lay in culminating a long "noiseless revolution," a beneficent change which "brought the Parliament into harmony with the Nation" (Trevelyan, II, 14). Thus he saw the 1832 Reform Bill in terms of the 1688 Revolution, not as a step toward democracy. A safe bill, it demonstrated the English talent for compromise, and, far from subverting ancient institutions, it was needed to preserve them. If this willingness to compromise reflects a certain

indifference to political theory, on Macaulay's part, it reflects as well the moderation which prevented another English revolution, in 1848. Macaulay glorified progress, not as a nineteenth-century phenomenon, but as the main action of history. He differs from other Victorian writers in seldom commenting upon "the spirit of the age"<sup>20</sup> or expressing a related theme, found in Mill, Carlyle, and Arnold, the nineteenth century as an age of transition.<sup>21</sup> Long before Hard Times, Macaulay caricatured the Utilitarians, but showed little interest in the political problems which Bentham and Mill confronted; and, in this review, he mocks Southey without giving much attention to the social blights described in the Colloquies.

When he turns to political economy, Macaulay claims that Southey's ideas on finance will not appeal to "our hard-hearted and unimaginative generation"; Southey must find other proofs besides "a similitude touching evaporation and dew" (346). Here again the right way to view government is

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<sup>20</sup>In an early essay on Dante, which appeared in Knight's Quarterly (1824), however, Macaulay notes that descriptions of nature, seldom found in Dante, are characteristic of early nineteenth-century poetry: "The magnificence of the physical world, and its influence upon the human mind, have been the favorite themes of our most eminent poets" (Works, VII, 613).

<sup>21</sup>Mill elaborated this idea in an article called "The Spirit of the Age," Examiner (January 9, 23, 1831), 20-21; 50-52. A more famous expression of the theme is found in Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse." The speaker describes himself as "Wandering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born" (ll. 85-86).

juxtaposed to the wrong way. A descendant of the "unimaginative generation" Macaulay spoke for was Thomas Gradgrind, who told his pupils, "You must discard the word fancy altogether."<sup>22</sup>

Macaulay's arguments about wealth rely mainly on a false analogy between the individual and the state. Southey had distinguished between private spending and public, but Macaulay assumes that the profit motive alone will induce sufficient spending for public needs. His suspicion of government expenditure is clear when he asserts, "In a bad age, the fate of the public is to be robbed outright. In a good age, it is merely to have the dearest and the worst of everything" (347). In a characteristic ploy, he distorts his opponent's position before attacking it: Southey wishes the ruler to be a jack-of-all-trades, he charges,

. . . a Lady Bountiful in every parish, a Paul Fry in every house, spying, eavesdropping, relieving, admonishing, spending our money for us, and choosing our opinions for us. . . .  
 [Southey believes that] a government approaches nearer and nearer to perfection in proportion as it interferes more and more with the habits and notions of individuals (348).

Government here is obviously personified, a rhetorical technique which draws out the analogy between individual and state. After creating this straw man, Macaulay demolishes it easily.

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<sup>22</sup>Charles Dickens, Hard Times (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1854), p. 10. "Sullen socialism," Macaulay labeled Hard Times in his journal, commenting further that he greatly preferred Austen to Dickens (Trevelyan, II, 379).



He also uses opinions he has caricatured to discredit other positions; for example, in the transition from political economy to religion, he states, "Mr. Southey entertains as exaggerated a notion of the wisdom of government as of their power" (349). It was Macaulay who exaggerated Southey's ideas about government power.

He argues next that religion should not be the foundation of civil government, defending the modern view against the Tory belief that church and state should maintain a strong alliance. The argument is more effective here, perhaps because Macaulay does not need the science/art contrast to support his position.<sup>23</sup> Instead, he uses examples and parallels from history to extol religious liberty. The suppression of liberty, attacked in "Milton" and "Hallam," is also attacked in "Southey." From the Whig point of view, powerful governments tend to be oppressive, and history teaches that religious questions ought to be decided by individuals. Macaulay saw persecution not only as an evil in itself, but as a harmful extension of government power. The faith in "rugged individualism" implicit in his economic beliefs takes a more appealing form when he defends freedom of speech. Following Milton's Areopagitica, he argues that unrestricted discussion is the best means of discovering truth. But the best argument, for Macaulay, is the

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<sup>23</sup>The contrast is implied, however, when Macaulay belittles Southey for seeing no "more of a question than will furnish matter for one flowing and well turned sentence" (356).

practical one: free discussion is less dangerous to the state than suppressed discontent. Moreover, the history of Christianity shows that the church is more likely to be corrupted by power than to be

crushed by its opposition. Those who thrust temporal sovereignty upon her treat her as their prototypes treated her author. They bow the knee, and spit upon her; they cry 'Hail!' and smite her on the cheek; they put a sceptre in her hand, but it is a fragile reed...(358).

One of Macaulay's characteristic strategies is shown here: he identifies his position as the one in harmony with true Christianity and makes his opponents' position seem detrimental to it. The strongest suggestion of this contrast comes in the place of emphasis, at the end of the review, when he calls the Tory view of government "Southey's idol." Similarly, to discredit the Utilitarians, he sums up their philosophy in this way: "All that is costly and all that is ornamental in our intellectual treasures must be delivered up, and cast into the furnace--and there comes out this Calf!" (Works, V, 266).

The three sections on manufacturing, economics, and religion are followed by a description of Southey's general view of social progress, a "very gloomy" view, which rests not on facts but on "individual associations" (359). Macaulay again contrasts the scientific method to the artistic, using such evidence as mortality rates to dismiss Southey's "rants... about picturesque cottages..." (361). Misleading comparisons and contrasts weaken this part of the review. Macaulay admits

that the English lower classes suffer hardships, but resorts to the picturesque himself by contrasting these workers to "the lazzaroni who sleep under the porticoes of Naples, or the beggars who besiege the convents of Spain" (362). Because starving Frenchmen in the early nineteenth century were compelled to eat nettles and bean-stalks, the more fortunate English lower classes should be grateful to inhabit "the richest and most highly civilized spot in the world" (363). At the conclusion of this section, Macaulay again relies on a misleading analogy between individual and state to support his position. According to Southey's theory, he charges,

The calamities arising from the collection of wealth in the hands of a few capitalists are to be remedied by collecting it in the hands of one great capitalist, who has no conceivable motive to use it better than other capitalists, the all-devouring state" (365).

At this point, the "scientific" method becomes very imaginative indeed; the state, which earlier in the review was only "meddling," is now "all-devouring."

The conclusion, on society's "probably destiny," represents the most emphatic attack on the view of the past which has made Southey pessimistic about the future. Unfortunately for Macaulay's literary reputation, his glowing account of progress has become a locus classicus of Victorian optimism:

We rely on the natural tendency of the human intellect to truth, and on the natural tendency of society to improvement...History

is full of the signs of this natural progress of society. We see in almost every part of the annals of mankind how the industry of individuals, struggling up against wars, taxes, famines, conflagrations, mischievous prohibitions, and more mischievous protections, creates faster than governments can squander, and repairs whatever invaders can destroy. We see the wealth of nations increasing, and all the arts of life approaching nearer and nearer to perfection... (365-66).

At first glance a rather vague account of history, this passage summarizes specific arguments against Southey: "industry of individuals" stresses the claim that limited government is best; "governments can squander" suggests why. Macaulay evokes laissez-faire beliefs by joining taxes to such evils as war and famine. "Wealth is increasing" puts human suffering into a comforting perspective and disposes of assertions that the lot of the working class has actually become worse. "We see," "natural," "signs"--all these words imply that Macaulay's arguments rest on evidence, that his statements, unlike Southey's, are objective. Thus in the conclusion he suggests the art versus science contrast, or the natural versus the imaginative method of considering government, with which he opened his attack on Southey. Macaulay wishes the reader to believe that the discrepancy between Southey's pessimism and the optimism about the future which history seems to encourage results from applying the false, imaginative method. He began by stating, "Government is to Mr. Southey one of the fine arts" (330). Thus Southey can disregard, he says in effect, the

natural evidence cited throughout the review, most emphatically in its conclusion.

The oratorical style of the passage quoted above differs from the later, more concise style of the Encyclopedia Britannica essays. Here clarity is achieved by repeated phrases and simple antitheses; more subtle contrasts appear in later works. The reviews written between 1825 and 1832, on literary as well as historical subjects, often attempt to survey one or more ages, and thus passages of generalized description such as the conclusion to "Southey" are common in these early works. Macaulay's late, narrative essays are confined to shorter periods of time and their descriptive passages seem less vague.

When passages such as the conclusion to "Southey" are taken out of context, their argumentative purpose is forgotten. Here Macaulay overstates his case to make Southey's pessimism seem foolish and thus to undermine his opponent's arguments. His purpose is only incidentally to urge an interpretation of history: as a reviewer for the leading Whig journal, Macaulay has a more immediate aim, to discredit the Tories. If he can convince readers that a famous Tory is wrong about the connection between past and present, he can suggest that Tory opposition to the Reform Bill is equally misguided.

The balanced sentences quoted above show Macaulay's confidence in reason and order. They imply that the cycle of history is under man's control. There is hardly a place in

sentences like these for the various hard-to-classify feelings and experiences which impressed a man of Southey's temperament. Although Macaulay's confidence is hard to defend, in the light of a modern work such as the Hammonds',<sup>24</sup> it clearly embodies the "spirit of an age. . . exhibited in miniature" ("History, Works, V, 157). It is easy to forget, not only that great technological advances took place during the early part of the nineteenth century, but that the benefits of material expansion were much more apparent than their concomitant social evils, especially in a time of peace.

Since Macaulay opposed his own "natural" method of judging the past to Southey's "imaginative" method, he appropriately used no contrived figurative language to describe progress, but borrowed images from nature. "A single breaker may recede," he observed in an appealing image, "but the tide is evidently coming in" (336). Government must allow hard work and shrewdness to find "their natural reward, idleness and folly their natural punishment" (368). The laws behind these operations appear as fixed as the law governing tides.

This attitude was later ridiculed as Victorian smugness; modern writers have dealt harshly with Macaulay's contemporaries alleging that enthusiasm for quantity led them to ignore quality. The major Victorian prose writers, conscious of this

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<sup>24</sup>J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond, The Age of the Chartists, 1832-1854 (London: Longmans, Green, 1930).

tendency, were persistent critics of their age. Macaulay, however, seems to identify quantity and quality in "Southey's Colloquies." A plausible connection existed in theory between steam engines and independence, but he assumed that the one would lead inevitably to the other, and that Southey, who disagreed, would prefer "rose-bushes and poor-rates." By sharply opposing science to art, by ridiculing Southey for being "picturesque" when he doubted that the quality of life was improving, Macaulay seemed unhesitatingly to rank the steam engine higher than the rose bush.

The review of Southey's Colloquies encompasses a large area, the past progress of society and its destiny; but, as we have seen, Macaulay's argumentative method obscures the complexity of the subject. Nonetheless, his ideas are expressed forcefully, with vivid illustrations and frequent assurances that common sense supports his arguments. When he turned from a largely theoretical topic to a practical question, the discussion of which invited appeals to common sense, Macaulay argued more effectively. Among early reviews, the best example to support this generalization is "Civil Disabilities of the Jews."

#### Civil Disabilities of the Jews

Early in 1830, Macaulay write to the Edinburgh editor:

The Jews are about to petition Parliament for relief from the absurd restrictions which lie on them--the last relic of the old system of

intolerance. I have been applied to by some of them... to write for them in the Edinburgh Review. I would gladly further a cause so good, and you, I think, could have no objection (Trevelyan, I, 152).

Jews at this time could not sit in Parliament or hold certain high offices because of required oaths.<sup>15</sup> Macaulay's opposition to restrictions on the Jews is clear from this letter, as is one foundation of his essay: the policy he opposes is the "last relic" of persecution; hence English lawmakers were guilty not merely of supporting a single unjust measure, but of preserving "the old system of intolerance." Macaulay's essay greatly influenced public opinion on the Jewish question, and many years later it could be said, "So popular had this essay become, so convincing its plea, that it was regarded as the main statement of the Jewish case."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>"The real disabilities, whether civil or political, which were imposed upon the Jews, arose almost entirely from the form of oath or the method of administering it. The political disabilities were occasioned by the tests and forms of oath enacted by Parliament; the civil ones for the most part by the custom, almost universal at one time, of administering the necessary oath upon the New Testament, a method wholly unacceptable to a conscientious Jew." H. S. Q. Henriques, The Jews and the English Law (Oxford: at the University Press, 1908), p. 198. See also Albert Hyamson, "The Disabilities of the Jews," A History of the Jews in England (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908), pp. 319-26.

<sup>26</sup>Israel Abrahams and S. Levy (eds.), Essay and Speech on Jewish Disabilities by Lord Macaulay (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, Hanson, 1909), p. 10. Macaulay's first Parliamentary speech dealt with Jewish Disabilities, and he returned to the subject in a speech delivered on April 17, 1833. The second speech is reprinted in the Abrahams and Levy edition.



"Civil Disabilities of the Jews" is in some ways unrepresentative of the early essays. Relatively short (eleven pages), it is more condensed than "Milton" or "Southey." Its sketches of the past are closely related to the main argument, that Jewish disabilities should be abolished. The essay contains few exaggerations, elaborate paraphrases or sharp contrasts, and more irony than is usual in Macaulay. But "Civil Disabilities of the Jews" reveals his characteristic emphasis on moderation, his pragmatism, and above all, the praise of liberty which is an important theme in nearly all of his work. This review seems in part to negate the optimism of "Southey," for it suggests that modern men are just as intolerant as their ancestors: no intrinsic superiority, Macaulay implies, but only "milder manners" separates the persecutors of history from those who defend intolerant laws of the present. To refute Southey, he argued that history shows "the natural tendency of the human intellect to truth;" but in practice, as a legislator, he was more impressed by man's natural tendency to find excuses for discrimination. Macaulay evidently relied on Christianity, as well as progressive institutions, to counteract this tendency, because he assails discriminatory laws not merely for being outdated, but also for embodying false views of Christianity.

"Civil Disabilities of the Jews" is divided into four parts, corresponding to the four arguments Macaulay seeks to

refute. First, the Constitution of a Christian country will be destroyed if Jews are allowed to legislate. Second, Jews are not true Englishmen because they are unpatriotic. Third, since Jews expect a promised land, they are not greatly concerned about the welfare of England. Fourth, legislators should not grant full citizenship to Jews, because Scripture foretells that their race will be homeless and persecuted. As this list indicates, the essay begins with the strongest opposition claim and ends with the weakest. The framework into which these parts fit is not as evident as this four-part division, but Macaulay suggests it at the end of the introductory paragraph, when he denounces the present laws for maintaining a "system full of absurdity and injustice" (V, 458). "Absurdity" sums up the theories behind disabilities; "injustice" refers to their practical consequences. Macaulay's plan is to attack theoretical objections to change by showing that the reasoning which justifies disabilities can also justify more serious forms of persecution, and to attack practical objections by arguing that they are unchristian.

Christian norms are restricted to the social sphere, however, for the essay's underlying assumption is that civil government is fundamentally secular, not, as the Tories argued, fundamentally Christian.<sup>27</sup> For Macaulay, this belief was no denial of religious values, as it often was for radicals.

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<sup>27</sup>The same assumption underlies the essay on Gladstone.

English history proved to him that too close a bond between church and state harms both institutions.<sup>28</sup> He makes the appeal to Christian values an important part of his argument favoring the Jews, and thus wards off an accusation which Tories were eager to raise, that atheism lurks behind innovating legislation.

In each of the four parts of the review, Macaulay attacks both the theory and practice of Jewish disabilities. The phrase "in fact" marks transitions between these two aspects of the question. As an organizing principle, this dialectic is more effective than the superficial art/science contrast underlying the essay on Southey.

Macaulay finds three theoretical objections to the first, or constitutional argument, used to vindicate the status quo: civil disabilities produce no good to the community, only mortification to the Jews; second, if Jews have a right to property, they must also have a right to political power, because government is the only means of protecting property; and third, since the fundamental purposes of government are to maintain order and to protect property, a man's religion has no bearing on his fitness to govern. After elaborating these ideas, Macaulay restates the point under debate in a way that makes it seem to favor his position: "What is proposed is, not

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<sup>28</sup>The essays "Hallam," "Burleigh and his Times," and "Mackintosh" are three works in which this judgment is apparent.

that the Jews should legislate for a Christian community, but that a legislature composed of Christians and Jews should legislate for a community composed of Christians and Jews" (460). This simple, effective paraphrase is strengthened by the observation that on ecclesiastical questions, Christians differ among themselves as sharply as they differ from Jews. Logically, if religious differences bar men from exercising power, only Churchmen should rule.

"In fact," Macaulay continues, by possessing wealth, Jews possess the substance of political power. He appeals to his readers' practical sense by implying at this point that the discriminatory laws do not work. The first section concludes:

If it is our duty as Christians to exclude the Jews from political power, it must be our duty to treat them as our ancestors treated them, to murder them, and banish them, and rob them. For in that way, and in that way alone, can we really deprive them of political power (462).

If murder and robbery are obviously not the duties of Christians, he suggests, neither are less flagrant injustices. By listing past sufferings of Jews, he implies that discriminating laws are a modern expression of old persecutions. This link puts the opposition case in an unfavorable light.

The other three sections are not as long as the part which refutes the constitutional argument, but they, too, illustrate Macaulay's desire to attribute bad reasoning, as well as bad Christianity, to opponents of reforming legislation.

His language becomes more scornful as he takes up the weaker arguments against the Jews.

The second part of the essay answers the charge that Jews are unpatriotic and should therefore be denied legislative power. Macaulay's rebuttal, in effect, makes a circular argument of the appeal to patriotism: the Jews have been mistreated and thus are unpatriotic, but rulers excuse mistreatment by citing this lack of patriotism. Asserting that the Jews are unpatriotic obscures the true order of cause and effect because "foreign attachments are the fruit of domestic misrule" (463). Macaulay often uses this metaphor to describe political events. For example, he called the 1688 Revolution "the fruitful parent of reforms" (Works, VI, 96), and condemned the first partition of Poland, which resulted from Frederic the Great's alliance with Russia, as "the fruitful parent of other great crimes" (VI, 711). To defend the Jews, he repeats the accusation of misgovernment by declaring, "It has always been the trick of bigots to make their subjects miserable at home, and then to complain that they look for relief abroad; to divide society, and to wonder that it is not united..." (463). This general appeal to history unfavorably characterizes those who support the present laws. Macaulay further discredits the opposition by a homely analogy which makes their argument seem illogical: "If the Jews have not felt towards England like children, it is because she has treated them like a

step-mother" (463). The reviewer's desire to be understood by everyone is apparent from illustrations like these, which adroitly place common sense on his side of the debate. His figurative language becomes harsher when he charges that the patriotism argument reveals "the logic which the wolf employs against the lamb" (463). By this contrast, he portrays the Jews as innocent victims.

"But in fact," the Jews are no more disloyal than any excluded group, a point Macaulay amplifies through a hypothetical case which effectively suggests that discrimination is arbitrary: if all the red-haired people of Europe had been oppressed, banished, and tortured; if, "when manner became milder, they had still been subject to debasing restrictions... what would be the patriotism of gentlemen with red hair?" (464). The analogy unites theoretical and practical objections to the existing law by implying that the reasoning behind persecution, in times of "milder manners," is the same reasoning behind civil disabilities. Following the rhetorical question is a short, ironical speech by a hypothetical opponent of full citizenship for red-haired men. These men, he declares, "cannot be Englishmen: nature has forbidden it: experience proves it to be impossible . . . the constitution . . . is essentially dark-haired" (465). Macaulay's parody of Tory statements is more effective here, in rebuttal, than the straightforward abusive language in which he condemned Southey's views.

The third section of "Civil Disabilities of the Jews" answers the argument that English Jews, expecting to be restored to their own country, are indifferent to the nation's welfare. Theoretically, this proposition is unsound because it demands reasoning from a man's beliefs to his actions. An example from English history illustrates the point: in the sixteenth century, persecutors of Roman Catholics falsely assumed that, if Catholics were loyal to the pope, they were traitors, because the pope had pronounced Elizabeth a usurper. Knowledge of human nature, in addition to history, should prove the Jews' concern for England, since "what is remote and indefinite affects men far less than what is near and certain" (467). In theory, therefore, a Jew can govern the community where he lives, even though he hopes his descendants will be restored to the promised land.

In practice, the fitness of Jews to legislate is guaranteed by the ordinary feelings they share with other men, the wish to live peacefully and prosperously. Rhetorical questions illustrate the point. For example,

Does the expectation of his being restored to the country of his fathers make him insensible to the fluctuation of the stock exchange?... why are we to suppose that feelings which never influence his dealings as a merchant...will acquire a boundless influence over him as soon as he becomes a magistrate or a legislator? (467)

These questions reinforce Macaulay's earlier statement that possessing wealth gives Jews the substance of political power.

The final argument demonstrates most clearly that the present laws are both absurd and unjust: lawmakers will falsify Scripture by giving full citizenship to Jews because Scripture foretells that they will be homeless and persecuted. Macaulay vigorously denounces the theoretical tendency of this argument by protesting that an act cannot be justified merely because Scripture has predicted that it will happen:

If this argument justifies the laws now existing against the Jews, it justifies equally all the cruelties which have ever been committed against them, the sweeping edicts of banishment and confiscation, the dungeon, the rack, and the slow fire (468).

Macaulay has reserved his most emphatic statement on persecution for the essay's conclusion. To stress the point that discrimination against Jews is unworthy of Christians, wrong in practice as well as in theory, he points out that Christ chose an alien and a heretic to illustrate the meaning of neighbor.

It had been suggested facetiously by those who supported Jewish disabilities that the bill to remove them be read on Good Friday. Macaulay takes up this suggestion in a dramatic conclusion:

We know of no day fitter for blotting out from the statute book the last traces of intolerance than the day on which the spirit of intolerance produced the foulest of all judicial murders, the day on which the list of the victims of intolerance, that list wherein Socrates and More are enrolled, was glorified by a yet greater and holier name (469).<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Despite Macaulay's plea, the triumph did not come speedily. Jews were barred from Parliament until 1858 and from



This summary is effective because it repeats the idea that Jewish disabilities fit into a larger context of persecution, and because it explicitly links the Jews, as "victims of intolerance" to Christ. Mention of an Englishman reminds readers of persecution in their own country. The words "absurdity" and "injustice" do not reappear in the essay's conclusion, but the joining of "spirit of intolerance" to "judicial murder" suggests a comparable relationship between false theories and unjust acts.

This defense of the Jews, persuasive in itself, seems even stronger when compared to the Tory position. In 1847, a writer for the Quarterly Review attempted to refute the arguments outlined here, but never really faced them.<sup>30</sup> Instead he denounced Macaulay as a Utilitarian and insisted that allowing Jews to sit in Parliament would eventually weaken Christianity. Faced by Macaulay's specific arguments, the Quarterly's writer could only declare, "...the Christianizing of the State gives the greatest hope for the well-being of the people."<sup>31</sup> What had sometimes resulted from this "Christianizing," Macaulay showed, by historical examples in

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certain high offices until 1871, twelve years after Macaulay's death. The House of Commons passed a bill in 1833 to remove Jewish disabilities, but the bill was defeated by the House of Lords.

<sup>30</sup> John Robertson, "The Macaulay Election of 1846," Quarterly Review, LXXXI (1847), 526-540.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 539.

"Southey," to explain his belief that "the real security of Christianity" lies not in state protection but in the attractiveness of its teaching (V, 357). In "Civil Disabilities of the Jews" he argues that the principles behind Jewish disabilities are unchristian. In the light of the ecumenical movement and the widespread acceptance of pluralism today, Macaulay's position seems both responsible and Christian, but the writer who attacked it in the Quarterly Review thought it was neither.

While Macaulay's defense of the Jews seems unremarkable to us, contemporary opinion should be remembered when judging its impact. The fact that the Quarterly attacked his arguments sixteen years after they first appeared proves the influence of this essay. When it was reprinted fifty years after his death, the editors noted that, although Macaulay championed liberty throughout his life, always remaining loyal to his father's anti-slavery principles, "nothing that he did has raised a more enduring monument to his name than his enthusiastic and triumphant advocacy of Jewish freedom."<sup>32</sup> Among modern readers, unfortunately, this essay is not well known; if it were, the weak arguments of "Southey" might appear less damaging to Macaulay's literary reputation.

The essays "Civil Disabilities of the Jews" and "Southey's Colloquies" plainly reveal the strengths and

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<sup>32</sup>Abrahams and Levy, p. 16.

weaknesses which characterize Macaulay's early essays. Despite their argumentative flaws, these essays are worth reading for their vividness. The ideas in them are not subtle, but the force with which they are expounded, and the profusion of illustrations to make each idea clear, set Macaulay's work apart from other reviews of the period 1825 to 1832. Where his love of antithesis is most apparent, as in "Dryden," and where his practical outlook seems hostile to thought, as in "Southey," the argument is least persuasive; but when he concentrates upon a single issue, using historical parallels and pithy examples to clarify it, he is much more effective. When his starting point is an abstraction like "government," as it is in the Mill and Southey reviews, his devices of amplification often do more to obscure the idea than to illuminate it. On the other hand, when he seeks to explain concrete events or situations, Milton's public conduct, for example, or the plight of the Jews, his descriptive techniques are put to better use. Both the assertion that England is a step-mother to the Jews and the claim that Southey believes in an "all-devouring state" are rhetorical statements. One draws an elucidating parallel to the actual situation, however, but the other demands that the reader accept a shallow interpretation of a complicated matter.

The two essays whose structure has been discussed here reveal two sides to Macaulay. One is the conservative reviewer whose love of English tradition is so great that he cannot

acknowledge the existence of people who do not share its benefits. What is castigated as Macaulay's middle-class smugness is really no more than enthusiasm for English history. On the other side is the somewhat radical Macaulay who, when he attacks Jewish disabilities, says, in effect: let us set our own precedents; the folly of our ancestors need not be preserved. To the extent that he argues from Christian values, his stance is not radical at all; yet, by asking that Members of Parliament act upon the beliefs they profess, he makes the demand of a radical reformer.

John R. Griffin writes justly of Macaulay, "His enthusiasm for the strides of industry was great, but his praise of civil reform and the progressive acquisition of civil liberties was demonstrably greater."<sup>33</sup> The superiority of "Civil Disabilities of the Jews" to "Southey's Colloquies" does not follow necessarily from this fact, but placing these reviews side by side leads one to conclude that, in this case at least, the greater enthusiasm resulted in the more convincing argument.

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<sup>33</sup>Griffin, p. 47.

## CHAPTER III

### "GLADSTONE ON CHURCH AND STATE"

If Macaulay's essays reveal no growth or development, as both nineteenth and twentieth-century critics have claimed, his 1839 essay "Gladstone on Church and State" should closely resemble "Southey's Colloquies" (1830), since both reviews are arguments treating many of the same political questions from the same Whig point of view. But Macaulay's attack on Gladstone differs in two ways from the earlier essay on Southey: the political stance is less conservative, and, more significantly, Macaulay's language is less strident in 1839. This chapter will summarize the political opinion of the later work. The style of the review will be described in order to show that, as an argumentative essay, "Gladstone" is more effective than "Southey." To show that the style of "Gladstone" represents a more striking contrast to "Southey" than its content, the tone of the review and Macaulay's use of antithesis and of metaphor will be discussed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>According to Madden, the style of the Gladstone review is "judicious," distinguishing it from the style of "oratorical" works. See "Macaulay's Style," The Art of Victorian Prose, eds. George Levine and William Madden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 137.

"Gladstone on Church and State," a work which is not well known, may be outlined as follows:

- I. Rebuttal to Gladstone's theory (Works, VI, 326-72)<sup>2</sup>
- A. Gladstone wishes government to profess a religion and to establish it, requiring conformity as a qualification for civil office (333).
1. Profess: Gladstone "lays down broad general doctrines about power, when the only power of which he is thinking is the power of governments, and about conjoint action, when the only conjoint action of which he is thinking is the conjoint action of citizens in a state" (338).
  2. Establish:
    - a. As an abstract question: "The fitness of governments to propagate true religion is by no means proportioned to their fitness for the temporal end of their institution" (342).
    - b. As a practical question:
      - (1) Most governments have been wrong on religious questions.
      - (2) Gladstone shrinks from the consequences of his theory.
- B. What religion ought a government to prefer? Gladstone chooses Christianity, as established in England.
1. But this Church has a very weak claim to apostolic succession.
  2. And the Church clearly lacks the unity which Gladstone claims for it; in fact, diversity is one of the great strengths of the Church.

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<sup>2</sup>Gladstone's book The State in its Relations with the Church is discussed by Desmond Bowen in The Idea of the Victorian Church. A Study of the Church of England 1833-1889 (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1968), pp. 352-57. See also Justin McCarthy, The Story of Gladstone's Life (London: Macmillan, 1897), pp. 65-76. Macaulay's review is briefly summarized in this biography, pp. 67-68. The contemporary reception of Gladstone's book is described by John Morley in The Life of William Ewart Gladstone (3 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1903), I, 175-179. Briefer accounts are contained in more recent biographies: Walter Phelps Hall, Mr. Gladstone (New York: W. W. Norton, 1931), pp. 37-39 and G. T. Garratt, The Two Gladstones (London: Macmillan, 1936), pp. 16-17. Hostile reviews of The State in its Relations with the Church are summarized by Philip Magnus in Gladstone (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1954), pp. 41-42.

## II. Macaulay's theory of Church-State relations (372-380)

- A. First general principle: "A government which considers the religious instruction of the people as a secondary end although intrinsically more important than its primary end, protecting property...will do much good and little harm" (375).
- B. Second general principle: the religion of the majority is that which generally should be taught.
- C. Consequences:
  1. Disabilities indefensible: they make government less efficient for its primary end.
  2. No government ought to force religious instruction on the people in such a way that order is threatened.
  3. An English statesman will wish to preserve the Anglican church: with all its faults, it is better than what would replace it.
  4. The statesman will oppose national churches "established and maintained by the sword," for under them, both spiritual and temporal interests of the people suffer.

The outline indicates an obvious difference between "Southey's Colloquies" and "Gladstone on Church and State": in the earlier work, Macaulay is content merely to attack his opponent's beliefs, but in the Gladstone review he offers alternatives to the theories he has questioned. "Gladstone" may be considered a work of deliberative rhetoric, arranged according to two parts suggested by Aristotle: the second speaker should begin by attacking his opponent's arguments and should then present his own case.<sup>3</sup> After censuring Gladstone's arguments for a close alliance between government and religion,

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<sup>3</sup>The Rhetoric of Aristotle, 3.17, trans. Lane Cooper (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1932), p. 236. "Argument from examples is best-suited to deliberative speaking," Aristotle states (3.17, p. 233). Macaulay uses the two kinds of argument by example which Aristotle describes, choosing both invented parallels and historical parallels to dispute Gladstone's theories.

Macaulay admits, "Perhaps it would be safest for us to stop here" (VI, 372). And he adds, tersely, "It is much easier to pull down than to build up" (372). In 1839 Macaulay apparently considered the author-reviewer debate too important for the flippant ad-hominem arguments used to discredit Southey or the sweeping generalizations which recur in his early essays. Directly stating his own views, which could be assailed, in turn, by another reviewer, Macaulay revised his tactics for the better in "Gladstone."

The essay reveals, moreover, an important development in his theory of government. Implicit in early reviews is the assumption that laissez-faire is a sound principle in other spheres besides economics; thus Macaulay champions limited government in "Southey." If public works are needed, for example, he argues that private investors will come forth to provide them (V, 347). The state must confine itself to its "legitimate duties": maintaining peace and protecting property. Macaulay takes the position that whatever men can do for themselves, the state is unlikely to do better for them. In "Gladstone," however, he acknowledges a more complex relationship between individuals and the state. He distinguishes the main end of government from such secondary ends as supporting the fine arts and financing scientific research. Although government is not established to promote these ends,

It may well happen that a government may have at its command resources which will enable it,



without any injury to its main end, to pursue these collateral ends far more effectually than any individual or any voluntary association could do. If so, government ought to pursue these collateral ends (374).

The key words here, "far more effectually than any individual," signal Macaulay's departure from the narrow laissez-faire attitude of "Southey's Colloquies."<sup>4</sup> He admits in the later essay that government power may rightfully be extended beyond its traditional functions. His Parliamentary speeches during the 1840's, which support factory legislation and state-supported education, show that Macaulay later developed the arguments favoring a strong centralized government which are only implicit in the passage quoted above from "Gladstone." In 1839, although his Whig bias is much less pronounced than in 1830, he could still attack the theory of a paternal government, which he thought lay behind Gladstone's plan for a closer link between Church and State. But a few years later, when he spoke against the Church of Ireland, he seemed to take an essentially paternalistic view of the state when he argued that the main justification of an established church is that it provides religion for the poor. The rich, Macaulay implies, can care for themselves because they can hire their own preachers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Essays written between "Southey" in 1830 and "Gladstone" in 1839 give no evidence that this change came about gradually. Perhaps one reason is that these works are primarily narrative essays which treat past events.

<sup>5</sup>"The Church of Ireland" (1845), Works, VIII, 319-21.

Although this opinion is markedly different from the opinions of "Southey," it does not indicate a change in Macaulay's basic Whig philosophy; it does suggest that his political judgments became more pragmatic as he grew older. By 1839 he had abandoned his rigid laissez-faire outlook. Therefore he was not compelled, when reviewing Gladstone's book, to distinguish sharply between private independence and state power; he distinguishes rather between Gladstone's view of the appropriate uses of power and his own, between one theory of an established church and another. Macaulay assumes that the State is basically secular, whereas a premise of Gladstone's book is that, in the words of his biographer Justin McCarthy, "religion in some form must be the one solid basis of every State."<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately for Macaulay's reputation, his later political beliefs are rarely mentioned by critics.<sup>7</sup> The emphatically expressed ideas of "Southey" are much better known

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<sup>6</sup>McCarthy, p. 72. A more recent biographer, Philip Magnus, states that "Gladstone soon came to regard the book as one of his mistakes, and he abandoned its theory for practical purposes almost as soon as he had enunciated it. But he never suppressed the book, and it ran into several editions. In his heart he was always rather proud of the blow which he had struck against the increasing dominance of secular motives in the nation's life." (Gladstone, p. 42).

<sup>7</sup>The respected literary historian Samuel Chew, for example, takes no notice of "Gladstone on Church and State" in The Nineteenth Century and After, Vol. IV of A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh (4 vols.; 2nd ed.; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), 1327-1330.

than the ideas which Macaulay carefully elaborates in the Gladstone review. The contrast between his early statements on politics and his subsequent views has not gone unnoticed, however. E. E. Kellett writes, "Macaulay's later opinions show a strong movement away from laissez-faire."<sup>8</sup> And G. M. Young declares that by 1845, Macaulay wanted state power extended:

In Macaulay's mind the sphere of State interest now includes not only public order and defense /the assumption in the essay on Southey/, but public health, education, and the hours of labor. It includes, what is most remarkable of all, that triumph of private enterprise--the railways.<sup>9</sup>

When Macaulay assailed public spending in the Southey review, he argued that Parliament should not vote funds to build railroads (V, 347). Although Young and Kellett cite Macaulay's late Parliamentary speeches rather than "Gladstone" for evidence to support their judgments, the political beliefs underlying the review are essentially the same as those embodied in the speeches. In both, Macaulay is concerned with specific problems requiring government action and not, as in "Southey," with theories of power. If Macaulay in 1839 is still suspicious of paternalistic government, he at least no longer regards the state as "meddling" and "all-devouring." In the passage quoted above from "Gladstone," Macaulay admits that

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<sup>8</sup>Early Victorian England 1830-1865, ed. G. M. Young (London: Humphrey Milford, 1934), II, 45.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., II, 458.

there are duties besides keeping order which a government can perform more efficiently than individuals; thus he implies that laissez-faire is not an absolute political principle. This stance foreshadows the 1847 speech in which he repudiates a premise of "Southey's Colloquies": the principles governing economics can be applied to social and political questions. "Never was there a more false analogy," Macaulay declares, to defend state-subsidized education.<sup>10</sup>

Though the refinement of his political beliefs makes "Gladstone" appear a more mature work than "Southey," the style of the later essay represents a more significant development in Macaulay's argumentative method. The restrained tone of "Gladstone on Church and State" is better suited to debate than the sarcastic, contentious tone of "Southey's Colloquies." Moreover, the reviewer's antithetical sentences and metaphors do not oversimplify the questions discussed in the later article. Macaulay avoids the elaborate amplification through parallel structures and figurative paraphrases which characterizes many early works. The following rhetorical question from "Southey," for example, on the wisdom of allowing the established church a monopoly of public education, illustrates the florid quality of Macaulay's early prose:

Can [Southey] conceive any thing more terrible than the situation of a government which rules without apprehension over a people of hypocrites,

<sup>10</sup>"Education," (April 19, 1847), Works, VIII, 393.

which is flattered by the press and cursed in the inner chambers, which exults in the attachment and obedience of its subjects, and knows not that those subjects are leagued against it in a freemasonry of hatred, the sign of which is every day conveyed in the glance of ten thousand eyes, the pressure of ten thousand hands, and the tone of ten thousand voices? (V, 354-55).<sup>11</sup>

Here, as often in Macaulay's early writing, the build-up of successively longer clauses rising to a concluding series of short, emphatic phrases, gives an oratorical ring to the prose. The form of this sentence heightens the self-confident tone conveyed by Macaulay's vehement words.

By contrast, the tone of "Gladstone" is subdued, and, while still confident, is less aggressively self-assured. Before beginning his review of Gladstone's book, Macaulay wrote to Napier, the editor of the Edinburgh Review, that he thought he could effectively attack Gladstone's position on the question of church and state. But his letter continues, "I wish that I could see my way to a good counter-theory; but I catch only glimpses here and there of what I take to be truth" (Trevelyan, II, 50). This cautious attitude and admission of difficulty, found in the review itself as well as in Macaulay's letter, differs greatly from the youthful confidence which marks

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<sup>11</sup> A weakness of this passage, as argumentative writing, is suggested by Aristotle's dictum that "Naturalness is persuasive, artifice just the reverse. People grow suspicious of an artificial speaker, and think he has designs upon them-- as if someone were mixing drinks for them." (Rhetoric, 3.2, trans. Cooper, p. 186.)

Macaulay's bludgeoning assaults on Croker, Robert Montgomery, and Southey. In the intervening years, Macaulay himself had been bitterly attacked, in the Calcutta press, for favoring legal reforms (Trevelyan, I, 391-95) and had struggled with the complicated problem of establishing British schools in India. Perhaps these experiences led him to be more temperate in challenging opinions. At any rate, the contrast between the tone of "Southey's Colloquies" and that of "Gladstone on Church and State" cannot be attributed to the relative fame of the two opponents, for Southey was the venerable Poet Laureate when Macaulay ridiculed him in 1830<sup>12</sup> and Gladstone was at the beginning of his career in 1839, when Macaulay reviewed his first book.

The more restrained tone of "Gladstone" is apparent from its opening paragraphs. Macaulay's exuberant praise of England in "Southey" makes him seem provincial. He begins "Gladstone," however, by stating that writing a thoughtful book is a particularly impressive feat for an English politician because "the tendency of institutions like those of England is to encourage readiness in public men, at the expense both of fulness and exactness" (VI, 327). A glib tongue, Macaulay implies, can gain for a Member of Parliament more influence than he deserves. This stricture is interesting not only

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<sup>12</sup>Chew calls the Southey review "inexcusably severe." The Nineteenth Century and After, p. 1328.

because Macaulay is often thought to epitomize Victorian smugness, but because his own Parliamentary speeches were extravagantly praised.<sup>13</sup> That Macaulay could speak candidly of British institutions is not often recognized, although A. L. Rowse quotes the following sentence from "Moore's Life of Byron" to show that Macaulay was not as provincial as critics have claimed: "We know no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodic fits of morality" (Works, V, 391). Except for the "magisterial 'we'," Rowse concludes, the comment could be taken for Arnold's.<sup>14</sup>

The introduction to "Gladstone" establishes a respectful tone maintained throughout the review; Macaulay does not weaken his case against the author by ad hominem arguments or by jibes such as

Mr Southey does not even pretend to maintain  
Mr. Southey does not bring forward a single fact  
We scarcely know at which end to disentangle  
this knot of absurdities.

As in narrative works, where Macaulay points up the improbability of an event by telling why it should not have happened, in this argumentative essay he praises Gladstone by observing that busy politicians seldom write good books. The technique

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<sup>13</sup>" . . . it is the fashion, among a certain small coterie at least, to talk of him as 'the Burke of our age.'" Noctes Ambrosianae No. LVII, Blackwood's Magazine, XXX (1831), 410.

<sup>14</sup>"Macaulay's Essays," Victorian Literature. Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Austin Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 211.

of stressing improbability is used more gracefully here than in "Milton," in which Macaulay tries to emphasize the poet's achievement by claiming that enlightened ages rarely produce great poetry. Oversimplifications of this kind do not appear in the Gladstone article.

Disparity of tone in "Southey" and "Gladstone" is most clearly manifested by their respective conclusions. The earlier work ends with five paragraphs which celebrate England's rise to prosperity. Exclamations, rhetorical questions, sweeping comparisons, devices for gaining emphasis such as anaphora-- Macaulay repeats the phrases "we rely," "we know," "we see," and "we firmly believe" at the beginning of sentences--characterize this well-known passage. Anaphora is used more sparingly in "Gladstone," but with better effect; for example, to counter Gladstone's assertion that the British conquest of India enjoys the sanction of a treaty: "It is by coercion, it is by the sword, and not by free stipulation with the governed, that England rules India..." (355). The conclusion to Southey is expanded by numerous examples and paraphrases, all made more emphatic by comparative and superlative adjectives and by adverbial intensifiers.

On the other hand, "Gladstone" ends with a concise paragraph in which Macaulay states that disapproval of his theories has not lessened his respect for Gladstone as a man: "We dissent from his opinions but we admire his talents; we



respect his integrity and benevolence; and we hope that he will not suffer political avocations so entirely to engross him, as to leave him no leisure for literature and philosophy" (380). "Dissent" is hardly the word Macaulay would have chosen to summarize his attitude toward the ideas of Southey, an opponent he compared to Milton's Satan (V, 336-37). Croker, for whom his dislike was personal and more intense, he compared to a leg of bad mutton (V, 498). Beatty speculates that Macaulay's argumentative tone changed for the better after he was challenged to a duel by William Wallace, an editor whom he had abused in an 1835 review. Moreover, Beatty cites "Gladstone" as an example of the change.<sup>15</sup>

The simple diction of the passage quoted above indicates a development in Macaulay's argumentative style which Paul Oursel, a nineteenth-century French critic, observed when he praised the conclusion to "Gladstone" in these words: "Le ton est parfaitement simple; nulle recherche, nulle exagération oratoire. Le style n'a rien de pompeux; la langue ferme et pleine ne contient pas un mot inutile."<sup>16</sup> No critique could be less applicable to Macaulay's early arguments than this description of the 1839 Gladstone essay, a description which seems accurate when one considers not only tone in general but also stylistic devices such as antithesis and metaphor.<sup>17</sup> Since

<sup>15</sup>Beatty, p. 208n.

<sup>16</sup>Oursel, p. 143.

<sup>17</sup>Antithesis and metaphor please an audience, according to Aristotle, because they help an audience to learn easily, and everyone likes to learn easily. Antithetical patterns serve the

these devices contribute to the restrained tone of "Gladstone," examples of their typical uses, in each part of the review, should clarify the differences between "Southey's Colloquies" and "Gladstone on Church and State."

Antithetical sentences in "Gladstone" generally do not elaborate broad generalizations or make sharp contrasts, as in early works, but tersely summarize the arguments. Macaulay begins his essay, for example, by claiming that his opponent's rhetoric, "though often good of its kind, darkens and perplexes the logic which it should illustrate" (328).<sup>18</sup> The rigidity of typical antitheses in earlier arguments is avoided here by doubling the first element in the contrast but not the second (darkens, perplexes/illustrate) and by inserting the phrase "often good of its kind" to qualify the adverse judgment. Throughout the review, Macaulay questions Gladstone's logic. Other introductory charges, however, are strengthened less by

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purpose since "things are best known by opposition, and are all the better known when the opposites are put side by side. . ." (Rhetoric, 3.9, trans. Cooper, p. 204.) The pleasure of metaphor results from seeing familiar things in a new light (3.10, p. 206). Aristotle continues, "In respect to the style in which the argument is put, what they [the audience] like in the arrangement is antithesis and balance. . . . What they like in the diction is metaphor--metaphors not far-fetched, for such are hard to grasp [and thus would fail to make the audience learn easily], nor obvious, for such leave no impression [teach nothing new]. (3.10, p. 207.)"

<sup>18</sup>G. M. Young approvingly quotes Macaulay's contention that Gladstone's language is often "lofty though somewhat indistinct" (332) in "Mr. Gladstone," Victorian Essays (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 99.

direct statements in the body of the essay than by the implications of antithetical sentences and metaphors. Macaulay argues that, if tried, Gladstone's theories would produce chaos and that Gladstone "rests his case on entirely new grounds" (330). He tries to isolate his opponent from Anglican tradition, declaring for example that Gladstone claims more reverence for Anglican authority than "the moderate school of Bossuet demands for the Pope" (358).

Antithetical patterns help Macaulay emphasize his introductory statement that one may attack Gladstone's theory of church-state relations without opposing established religion per se. The reviewer wishes to appear a more orthodox and trustworthy defender of the church than Gladstone himself. His differences from Gladstone are portrayed as relative rather than absolute; hence the sharp antitheses used in "Southey's Colloquies" to differentiate the author's position from the reviewer's are inappropriate for the later argument. In "Gladstone," as in "Civil Disabilities of the Jews," Macaulay contrasts what he regards as a misapplication of Christian teaching to his own sounder position, and effects the contrast partly through Biblical imagery which stresses his orthodoxy. In both of these works, however, he avoids the righteous tone of "Southey."

Throughout the 1839 essay, Macaulay hints that he is a traditionalist and Gladstone is an innovator, and thus follows

Aristotle's principle that the speaker must give a favorable impression of himself, for the character of the speaker "is the most potent of all the means to persuasion."<sup>19</sup> The traditionalist/innovator dialectic allows Macaulay to argue from authority: "we may easily defend the truth against Oxford" he says pointedly, "with the same arguments with which, in old times, the truth was defended by Oxford against Rome" (VI, 362). Gladstone was not a Tractarian, but Macaulay's jibe is effective here, for as Gladstone later admitted, "Although I had little of direct connection with Oxford and its teachers, I was regarded in common fame as tarred with their brush."<sup>20</sup> Macaulay's phrase "the truth against Oxford" juxtaposed to the truth "defended by Oxford against Rome" reinforces the distinction he wishes to make between tradition-authority-common sense and religious innovation. Other antithetical patterns help him discredit Gladstone's arguments that the state should profess and establish a religion and that the Anglican church deserves state support because it is descended from the Apostles and is characterized by unity.

Gladstone had argued that the state, having a collective personality, requires a common religion. To refute this claim, Macaulay draws an analogy to an army comprised of men who profess different religions. Using a hypothetical character,

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<sup>19</sup>Rhetoric, 1.2, trans. Cooper, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup>Quoted by Morley, I, 305.

one of his favorite devices for putting an abstract problem in concrete terms, he imagines an English soldier at Blenheim saying, "If we stand by each other we shall most likely beat them. If we send all the Papists and Dutch away, Tallard [the French general] will have every man of us" (340-41).<sup>21</sup>

Macaulay implies, by alluding to one of England's greatest victories, that Gladstone's theory of an established church would have caused defeat. Instead of juxtaposing "win" to "lose," he employs the more colloquial words "beat them/have every man of us." If, in the first sentence, "stand by each other" were replaced by "unite," the thought would be expressed less forcefully. Macaulay's fondness for Old English words-- "stand," "beat," "send" in this passage--can be inferred also from his strictures against Johnson's Latinate diction<sup>22</sup> and, in a later essay, the charge that Horace Walpole's style is "deeply tainted with Gallicism" (Works, VI, 8).

When he turns from the profession of religion to its establishment, Macaulay disputes Gladstone's opinion that dissenters should be excluded from public office; such a policy encourages hypocrisy: "It is very much easier to find

<sup>21</sup>In this part of the essay, Macaulay argues by example, i.e. he uses several instances to attack the general law that citizens in a state require a common religion. Aristotle gives two kinds of argument by example: "One consists in the use of a parallel from the facts of history; the other in the use of an invented parallel." (Rhetoric, 2.20, trans. Cooper, p. 147.) The two are combined when Macaulay cites Blenheim, but uses an "invented parallel," a hypothetical character.

<sup>22</sup>Works, V, 536.

arguments for the divine authority of the Gospel than for the divine authority of the Koran. But it is just as easy to bribe or rack a Jew into Mahometanism as into Christianity" (345). Here Macaulay argues, while making clear his own loyalty to Christianity, that Gladstone opposes truth to force: "find arguments" is the phrase which suggests the discovery of truth, while the juxtaposed phrase "bribe or rack" denotes force. If the criterion of truth makes the Gospel and the Koran antithetical, mere force can make them allies. The epigrammatic quality of Macaulay's summaries is illustrated by the comment that "It is just as easy to bribe or rack a Jew into Mahometanism as into Christianity." The antithetical form stresses the link between force and error. The abrupt phrase "rack a Jew" suggests the arbitrary nature of state intervention in religious questions. Gladstone, of course, had not advocated torture, and Macaulay continues, "From racks, indeed, and from all penalties directed against the persons, the property, and the liberty of heretics, the humane spirit of Mr. Gladstone shrinks with horror" (345). Inverted word order emphasizes "racks," a symbol for the violence which religious intolerance has often precipitated. The paralleled words "the persons, the property, and the liberty of heretics" connect overt persecution to discriminatory laws. The sentence seems ironic, because Gladstone favors "penalties" (civil disabilities) which clearly infringe on the "liberty of heretics." Hence, he is not truly

humane. Macaulay wishes his audience to reflect that custom rather than moral superiority distinguishes an age of torture from an age of civil disabilities; the impulse to discriminate remains the same.

The argument against disabilities is elaborated when Macaulay enthusiastically supports Gladstone's objection to religious persecution. Gladstone stated that "the government is incompetent to exercise minute and constant supervision over religious opinion" (350). And Macaulay agrees because he thinks this objection extends to all laws upholding civil disabilities. The state must not be compelled to decide between

Papists and Protestants, Jansenists and Molinists, Arminians and Calvinists, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Sabellians and Tritheists, Homoiousians, Nestorians and Eutychians, Monothelites and Monophysites, Paedobaptists and Anabaptists (351).

The list, covering a variety of religious differences in the early church and during the Reformation, forces readers to consider the subtlety of some distinctions between heresy and orthodoxy, and indirectly suggests the folly of allowing governments to enforce such distinctions. In the passage cited, Macaulay argues by example. By choosing historical instances, he follows Aristotle's suggestion that "for deliberative speaking the parallels from history are more effective than invented parallels<sup>7</sup>, since in the long run things will turn out in future as they actually have turned out in the past."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Rhetoric, 2.20, trans. Cooper, p. 149.

Trevelyan writes that Macaulay "had a strong and enduring predilection for religious speculation and controversy, and was widely and profoundly read in ecclesiastical history"; and he further states that Macaulay's books on religion are especially well annotated (Trevelyan, II, 462). It is not surprising, therefore, that "Gladstone on Church and State" seems more carefully written than Macaulay's early essays. The discussion of apostolic succession, for example, differs in its succinctness from digressive passages of early works like "Southey," in which the language is vague and abstract. Other evidence that Macaulay devoted more care to the Gladstone review than to earlier works appears in a letter to Napier in March, 1839. "You will see," Macaulay wrote, "that I have made greater alterations than is usual with me. But some parts of the subject are ticklish. I have taken the trouble to turn over the Apostolic fathers, Ignatius, Clemens, Hermas, in order to speak with some knowledge of what I was talking about."<sup>24</sup>

When he turns to the final part of his rebuttal, the question of what religion to establish, Macaulay claims his opponent's view of private judgment counters the traditional Protestant view:<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Selection from the Correspondence of the late Macvey Napier, edited by his son Macvey Napier (London: Macmillan, 1879), p. 289.

<sup>25</sup>In the discussion of private judgment, Macaulay follows an argumentative strategy recommended by Aristotle: define a term to show its "essential meaning" and then go on "to



The Romanist produces repose by means of stupefaction. The Protestant encourages activity, though he knows that where there is much activity there will be some aberration. Mr. Gladstone wishes for the unity of the fifteenth century with the active and searching spirit of the sixteenth. (360)

Macaulay hints that Gladstone's theory of private judgment is only half-Protestant, and at the same time establishes his own trustworthiness by a harsh description of Catholic doctrine. The negative connotations of "Romanist" make it a more appropriate term here than the more neutral "Roman Catholic." The antithetical pattern in the last sentence quoted above, unity/active and searching spirit, is characteristic of patterns in the review as a whole, for it lacks the exact balance which makes antitheses in early essays seem artificial. The contrast here is not rigid; unity in itself is not objectionable, only unity produced by repression. The strategy behind this juxtaposition, unity/active and searching spirit, resembles a strategy in the Areopagitica: Milton condemns restrictions on liberty by comparing them to "Romish" tactics. The Catholic taint which Macaulay professes to find in Gladstone's beliefs

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reason from it on the point at issue." (Rhetoric, 2.23, trans. Cooper, p. 163.) Macaulay argues, "The Protestant doctrine touching the right of private judgment. . . we conceive to be this, that there is on the face of the earth no visible body to whose decrees men are bound to submit their private judgment on points of faith" (VI, 361). Having defined the doctrine, Macaulay reasons that the Anglican church does not constitute such a visible body because it lacks apostolic succession and unity, both of which Gladstone claims for it.

concerning apostolic succession and private judgment may reflect the reviewer's Evangelical upbringing.<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, such inferences must be made cautiously because Macaulay was reticent on the subject of his personal religious beliefs. After political enemies in Leeds spread a rumor that he was a Unitarian, he was asked at a political rally to define his beliefs, but he would say only

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<sup>26</sup>Gladstone's biographer Morley suggests that Gladstone was indirectly influenced by the Oxford Movement through his close friendship with Manning and with James Hope, who corrected for the press The State in its Relations with the Church. (Morley, I, 161-62.) Morley reprints correspondence between Manning and Gladstone on the subject of Newman's religious beliefs in 1843 (I, 310-313) and quotes Gladstone's opinion that in writing Tract Ninety, Newman "placed himself quite outside the Church of England in point of spirit and sympathy" (I, 306). Justin McCarthy wrote in 1897 that Gladstone was attracted by the rituals and antiquity of Catholicism. "But I do not believe," McCarthy continues, "that he had any sympathy with the especial doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. It was at one time assumed by many that Mr. Gladstone was likely to be swept away by the Newman movement into Catholicism. I have, however, spoken with men who were contemporaries of Mr. Gladstone at Oxford, who had themselves since become Roman Catholics, and who told me they never saw reason to believe that Mr. Gladstone was likely to join the Church of Rome." (The Story of Gladstone's Life, pp. 151-52.)

More recent biographers concur in this opinion. J. L. Hammond points out that, while Gladstone's liberalism clashed with the tenets of Newman, Gladstone was influenced by the cultural force of the Oxford Movement to the extent that it helped to liberate him from the "insularity in culture" which characterized the Evangelical school. See Gladstone and Liberalism (New York: Macmillan, 1953), pp. 23-26. The question of Gladstone's ties to the Oxford movement is discussed by W. P. Hall in Mr. Gladstone (New York: Norton, 1931), pp. 47-50. Hall states that "When Newman went over to the old church Gladstone's Protestantism stiffened." (p. 49.) See also G. T. Garratt, The Two Gladstones, pp. 38-40 and The Idea of the Victorian Church, pp. 352-357.

that he was a Christian.<sup>27</sup> Macaulay probably had no formal religion.<sup>28</sup> At any rate, "nowhere in his writings is there any definite confession of religious faith."<sup>29</sup> Religious history interested him greatly, however, and his essays, speeches, and The History of England clearly show that his opinions on religion, like his opinions on other subjects, were moderate. Extreme low-church or high-church beliefs were repugnant to him,<sup>30</sup> and he abhorred fanaticism of any kind. Macaulay has been accused of emphasizing material progress to the exclusion of spiritual values; but while this charge seems justified by "Southey," and to a lesser extent by "Bacon," it is easily refuted by the later essay on Gladstone. Macaulay states plainly that spiritual welfare is intrinsically more important than material welfare; he argues only that "the ends of government are temporal" (330). "Gladstone" demonstrates Macaulay's belief in religion as a social force and his respect for the main teachings of Christianity. It is true on the other hand that his portrait of the seventeenth-century English clergy in the famous third chapter of The History of England

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<sup>27</sup> Frederick Arnold, The Public Life of Lord Macaulay (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1862), p. 111.

<sup>28</sup> Beatty, p. 52.

<sup>29</sup> Arnold, p. 110.

<sup>30</sup> His suspicion of Tractarians is clear from a plea in a Parliamentary speech, "The Sugar Duties," February 26, 1845: "Let us at least keep the debates of this House free from the sophistry of Tract Number Ninety" (Works, VIII, 299.)

(Works, I, 255-62) was thought unduly harsh by some of his contemporaries. A modern historian, Sir Charles Firth, suggests that Macaulay's description of the clergy owed too much to comic dramas of the period.<sup>31</sup>

Macaulay's statements on private judgment preface his discussion of a broader question, apostolic succession, a doctrine which he attacks in two ways: he first argues that apostolic succession is improbable, and he then declares that, even if the Anglican church can claim descent from the apostles, this claim is worthless because churches with stronger claims than that of the Anglican church to apostolic succession (notably the Roman Catholic church) have taught error. Macaulay uses the topic of more or less to argue against apostolic succession. Aristotle notes that "if a thing cannot be found where it is more likely to exist, of course you will not find it where it is less likely."<sup>32</sup> Macaulay applies this principle to the church, arguing that apostolic succession is a doubtful characteristic of the early church and of the medieval church. By citing Hooker and Chillingworth as authorities for his discussion of the question, Macaulay strengthens the impression that he upholds orthodox Protestantism. His second line of argument against apostolic succession is summed up by the pithy

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<sup>31</sup>A Commentary on Macaulay's History of England (London: Macmillan, 1938), p. 97.

<sup>32</sup>Rhetoric, 2.23, trans. Cooper, p. 161.

observation that "No stream can rise higher than its fountain" (VI, 366), i.e. even if apostolic succession can be established for the Anglican church, the claim proves nothing because the Catholic church has taught error. Macaulay's convincing attack on apostolic succession prepares for his statement that unity is not, as Gladstone had claimed, a characteristic of the Anglican church. The church is rather "a bundle of religious systems without number" (369). For Macaulay, however, this diversity is one of its great merits, and thus Gladstone's emphasis on unity strikes him as foolish:

Is it not mere mockery to attach so much importance to unity in form and name, where there is so little in substance, to shudder at the thought of two churches in alliance with one state, and to endure with patience the spectacle of a hundred sects battling within one church? (370)

Despite its exaggeration, the rhetorical question has a telling effect, for the differences between Tractarians and Evangelicals at the time Macaulay wrote, seemed as great as those between Churchmen and dissenters. Thus the antithesis appears natural, unlike many in "Southey's Colloquies."

Concluding his rebuttal of Gladstone, in the discussion of apostolic succession and unity, Macaulay relies on common sense and on authority to create the impression that his position is more sensible than his opponent's. He does not use the sharp contrast between misguided author and enlightened reviewer which informs "Southey"; instead he implies that Gladstone is wrong by analyzing and disproving his arguments.

Macaulay strengthens the implication in the second part of the review as he sets forth his own view of the proper relation between church and state. He concludes that, despite its shortcomings, the Anglican church should be maintained in England because "She teaches more truth with less alloy of error than would be taught by those who, if she were swept away, would occupy the vacant space" (378). "Swept away" implies that a violent upheaval would be needed to end church establishment in England. The phrase "occupy the vacant space" furthers the impression by connoting a military operation. "More truth with less alloy of error" succinctly defines Macaulay's moderate position. If the church embodied pure truth, Gladstone's desire to make it a more dominant power in the state might be justified; if the church were entirely corrupt, Macaulay might sympathize with the radicals' wish to destroy it. Another effective summary is the observation, regarding the Anglican church, that "her frontier sects are much more remote from each other, than one frontier is from the Church of Rome, or the other from the Church of Geneva" (VI, 378). The idea of ideological difference is made concrete by the comparison to physical distance. Macaulay's summary implies that the truth lies between two extremes, the "frontier sects" of Catholicism and Calvinism.

Macaulay concludes his argument with the following antithetical statements:

The world is full of institutions which, though they never ought to have been set up, ought not to be rudely pulled down...it is often wise in practice to be content with the mitigation of an abuse which, looking at in the abstract, we might feel impatient to destroy. (380)

This conclusion shows that antithesis in "Gladstone" is not used as it often is in earlier essays, to contrast good and evil, but to indicate two means to the same end. Hence the effect is discrimination rather than oversimplification. Macaulay admits the appeal of revolutionary change, at the same time arguing against it.

Similarly, when he observes that English institutions tend to "encourage readiness in public men, at the expense both of fulness and exactness," he does not juxtapose qualities entirely unrelated. Even the beginning qualification, "tendency of institutions like those of England," would be out of place in earlier arguments. Among Macaulay's argumentative essays, "Bacon" is a striking example of oversimplification: Bacon's life is sharply contrasted to his work, the first symbolized by a "creeping snake," the second by a "soaring angel." To magnify the importance of Bacon's philosophy, he uses Plato as a foil, a pointed antithesis which weakens the argument.

On the other hand, antithetical patterns in "Gladstone" are not rigid. In a recent study of Macaulay's style, William Madden writes that his antitheses are "falsifying" in some reviews, notably those on literature. But Madden believes that

"The antithetical style is often brilliantly effective in Macaulay's treatment of politics and politicians; in the search for a mean which will be acceptable to parties of the extremes, the compromises reached through practising the 'art of the possible' seem cogent."<sup>33</sup> This judgment clearly fits the Gladstone review, in which Macaulay uses antithesis to describe the strengths and weaknesses of his opponent's argument and to predict the results of applying his theories to concrete situations.

Through summary antitheses like the one in which he concludes the debate, "...it is often wise in practice to be content with the mitigation of an abuse which, looking at it in the abstract, we might feel impatient to destroy," Macaulay says in a few words what would have been greatly amplified in an early essay. Commonplaces in "Gladstone" are tersely phrased--"it is easier to tear down than to build up"--whereas in "Southey" they are lengthily elaborated, often through loose metaphorical paraphrases which emphasize, without actually refining, the original expression. Metaphor in the Gladstone review is more functional.

Profusion of metaphor does not characterize Macaulay's prose as it characterizes much of Carlyle's;<sup>34</sup> Macaulay, for

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<sup>33</sup>Madden, p. 134.

<sup>34</sup>John Holloway, shows how metaphor advances Carlyle's arguments in The Victorian Sage (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965), pp. 36-41.



example, does not rely heavily on metaphor to attack either Southey or Gladstone. Nonetheless, metaphorical passages in the 1839 work reveal a development in Macaulay's style; they sharpen the argument without oversimplifying it. A key metaphor in "Southey" appears near the end of the review when Macaulay argues that material progress is inevitable. "A single breaker may recede," he proclaims, "but the tide is evidently coming in" (V, 366). A pithy summary, this metaphor, like the magic lantern analogy of "Milton," turns a complex problem into a simple one. Such descriptions of human progress in scientific terms make Macaulay seem utilitarian. Value judgments expressed by metaphors of natural process--the claim, for example, that everywhere in the world the British "rise above the mass of those with whom they mix, as surely as oil rises to the top of the water"<sup>35</sup>--contribute to the superficial quality of many early works. In chapter two it was shown that personifications in "Southey"--the state labeled "Paul Fry" and "the one great capitalist"--also have the effect of oversimplifying the reviewer's argument. The point is not that an argument must be complex to be good, but merely that, in discussions of controversial questions, figurative language which reduces every problem to a black and white contrast is inappropriate; for example, the metaphorical tags which oppose Bacon's "philosophy of fruit" to Plato's "philosophy of thorns." Metaphors

<sup>35</sup>"Burleigh and his Times" (1832), Works, V, 599.

in "Gladstone" are more suggestive, as the following examples will illustrate.

Macaulay claims that his opponent's arguments against persecution of dissenters are either invalid or can be used against him: Gladstone's "artillery" is of two kinds, "pieces which will not go off at all, and pieces which go off with a vengeance, and recoil with most crushing effect upon himself" (348). If persecution is unjustified because a government cannot investigate every citizen's beliefs, as Gladstone argues, then the civil disabilities he supports are unjustified on the same grounds. The idea of negative evidence is vividly expressed in the image of a recoiling cannon. Moreover, the allusion to firearms obliquely hints at a charge made earlier: Gladstone's theories would lead to violence. For a modern reader, who takes for granted the principle that religion should not exclude men from public office, Gladstone's position is untenable; Macaulay seems hardly to exaggerate, therefore, when he declares that Gladstone's case against persecution has a "most crushing effect" upon his argument favoring disabilities.

Later in the review, when Macaulay wishes to challenge the opinion that William the Third erred in allowing Scotland a separate church, he claims that the union of England and Scotland "resembles the union of the limbs of one healthful and vigorous body, all moved by one will, all cooperating for common ends" (357). Gladstone therefore opposes what is natural and

what works well in practice, Macaulay implies by his comparison. He argues from consequences<sup>36</sup> that the tranquil state of Scotland compared to Ireland disproves Gladstone's theory that church and state should be closely joined. Through the body metaphor and the Scotland/Ireland, antithesis, Macaulay distinguishes erring author from sensible reviewer more subtly than in "Southey's Colloquies," an argument in which the opponent is characterized largely through name-calling. The image of the mutually dependent parts of a body (England and Scotland) "co-operating for common ends" repeats the idea that men need not agree about religion to live harmoniously. Taine refers to Macaulay's emphasis on this point when he states that in "Gladstone," the reviewer "clearly proves that the State is only a secular association, that its end is wholly temporal... that in entrusting to it the defense of spiritual interests, we overturn the order of things."<sup>37</sup> In Macaulay's words, the defense of spiritual interests may produce a "hideous monster of a state" (358). He makes his argument seem to embody traditional wisdom by choosing a figurative illustration of political harmony which is familiar--which Shakespeare used, for example, in the opening scene of Coriolanus: Menenius applies the fable of the belly to the "mutinous members" of the Roman

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<sup>36</sup>Rhetoric, 2.23, trans. Cooper, p. 166.

<sup>37</sup>History of English Literature, trans. H. Van Laun (4 vols.; London: Chatto and Windus, 1880), IV, 237.

body, the plebians, to persuade them that rebellion will harm their own interests.

Another effective metaphor appears in the transition between the attack on Gladstone and Macaulay's sketch of his own position on the church-state question. Discussing the problem of government grants to dissenters, he points out that differences among Anglicans are so pronounced that grants to Churchmen, as well as to dissenters, may be used to teach various and conflicting doctrines. The question is one of degree, Macaulay claims; its resolution demands that statesmen be guided by circumstances. Then he summarizes by declaring, "That tares are mixed with the wheat is matter of regret; but it is better that wheat and tares should grow together than that the promise of the year should be blighted" (371). The reference (Matthew, 13: 29-30) is to the householder's command that the wheat and tares in his field be allowed to grow together until the harvest. Christ explains to his disciples, "The field is the world: the good seed are the children of the kingdom: but the tares are the children of the wicked one" (13:38).

Macaulay's use of Biblical language is telling for several reasons: through the parable he stresses his orthodoxy, acknowledges the importance of spiritual questions, and reinforces his argument that a closer union between church and state will be detrimental to both institutions. The parable

reminds readers that several pages earlier Macaulay had described a passage in which his opponent mistakenly claimed that Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world" to restrain Peter when he cut off the ear of Malchus. Macaulay corrects Gladstone by stating that the words were addressed to Pilate. By pointing to Gladstone's slight error, Macaulay follows Aristotle's advice: "In deliberative speaking. . . note any false statements your opponent makes in matters apart from the issue; they can be made to seem proofs that his major statements are false."<sup>38</sup> Scripture in fact supports his position, Macaulay hints, by quoting "To Caesar the things which are Caesar's" to defend his belief that state functions should be carefully distinguished from those of the church. This appeal to authority is strengthened, at the end of his rebuttal to Gladstone, by introducing the story of the wheat and the tares.

This parable represents the true situation of the Anglican church, Macaulay says in effect; therefore, since Gladstone supports legislation which distinguishes churchmen from dissenters, he is like the men in the Bible story who wish to turn the tares but who are restrained by their master. The metaphor implies what Macaulay has stated elsewhere in the essay: separating one kind of Christian from another is extremely difficult. Consequently, members of different

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<sup>38</sup>Rhetoric, 3.17, trans. Cooper, p. 233.

religions should be equal in the state, as the wheat and the tares are equal until the harvest.

The parable sums up Macaulay's whole argument. It praises, in a concrete way, the abstract ideal of religious toleration. Between Tory and radical extremes--strengthening the established church and destroying it--lies the moderate course: gradual reform. Such a compromise may be theoretically objectionable, just as allowing the tares to stay with the wheat seems objectionable, but it offers practical advantages. At the end of "Southey," Macaulay openly denounces Tory beliefs; in "Gladstone" he is more subtle, suggesting through the figurative language he chooses that his position conforms better than his opponents' to Christian teaching. In contrast to the two-part pattern of "Southey," the later work shows a more complex structure, consisting of three terms:

extreme (Tory);            mean (Macaulay);            extreme (radical).

Part of the Gladstone review's force undoubtedly comes from Macaulay's deep belief in liberty, implanted by his abolitionist father and strengthened by political experiences, particularly his strong support of Reform and his attempts to make British rule in India more progressive. Although Macaulay always believed in religious freedom, the Gladstone review shows an alteration in his political ideals because it modifies the strict laissez-faire philosophy which the cocksure young writer expounded in "Southey." By 1839, individual freedom and state

power no longer seemed diametrically opposed, a development which Macaulay's style reflects. In "Gladstone on Church and State," neither his antithetical sentences nor his metaphors reinforce the sharp distinction between individuals and the state. Rather, they stress the complexity of questions concerning government power. For Macaulay, the story of the wheat and the tares applies not only to churchmen and dissenters but to all social groups whose interests conflict.

The antithetical style of "Gladstone" reinforces the idea of compromise; the review identifies, for example, the statesman's goal as "truth with some alloy of error." By 1839, Macaulay prefers this pragmatic philosophy to the doctrinaire liberalism of "Southey's Colloquies." Perhaps one reason the earlier work is often labeled "utilitarian" is that its antithetical patterns are frequently so balanced that they appear mechanical. In "Gladstone," Macaulay defends religious liberty in sentences which sound more natural; they lack the perfect symmetry which makes many sentences in his early reviews seem rigid.

Since "Gladstone on Church and State" is an essay of nearly sixty pages, the examination of its political assumptions and several aspects of its style cannot give a comprehensive view of the work. Yet, the consideration of tone, antithesis and metaphor helps to explain why Madden terms the style of Macaulay's later essays "judicious." The style of "Gladstone"

believes the critical commonplace that Macaulay's work reveals no growth or development. Written nine years after "Southey's Colloquies," the Gladstone review is Macaulay's last argumentative essay. Argumentative passages appear in later reviews, but the works themselves are primarily narratives and reflect a growing preoccupation with historical research. Thus, far from being all of a piece, Macaulay's essays show a movement away from polemical to descriptive writing. Moreover, the polemical works reflect a change in argumentative method which this chapter has attempted to illustrate. "Gladstone" is a much more restrained argument than "Southey."

The only critic who has studied Macaulay's essays as a whole, Paul Oursel, wrote in 1882 that Macaulay's early attacks on his contemporaries bear the marks of youthful intemperance and rashness. With age, he continues,

*cette fougue s'est calmée; les attaques, tres vives encores, se sont modérées cependant; le ton est devenu moins agressif. À ce point de vue, comme à tous les autres, on peut signaler un progrès continu dans la serie des Essais.*<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately, Oursel does not elaborate the last statement, which puts forth a judgment unique in Macaulay criticism. He does not say which essays best reveal the progress he sees, but "Gladstone" is an excellent example of Macaulay's "less aggressive" argumentative style. By describing the tone of

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<sup>39</sup>Oursel, p. 106.



Macaulay's later essays, Oursel suggests one measure of their development. Since the argument of "Gladstone" is not weakened by the strident language which often calls attention to itself and obscures points under discussion in early reviews, the 1839 work clearly represents a development in Macaulay's essays.

## CHAPTER IV

### MACAULAY'S THEORY OF HISTORICAL WRITING AND HIS PRACTICE IN "LORD CLIVE"

"Lord Clive" was written in 1840, one year after Macaulay's essay on Gladstone appeared in the Edinburgh Review. "Gladstone is an argument which reflects Macaulay's moderate political views. The essays of the 1830's, however, show a growing preference for narrative writing, a preference shown by "Lord Clive," which is not a debate about the statesman's conduct but rather a description of his career. Referring to his 1832 essay on Hampden, Macaulay wrote to Napier, "It is in part a narrative. This is a sort of composition which I have never yet attempted" (Trevelyan, I, 249). The Edinburgh narratives which follow "Hampden" fall into two categories: broad sketches of historical periods, such as "Ranke"; and works which focus upon a single man: for example, the essays on Lord Clive and Frederic the Great. The latter may be termed "historical essays" to distinguish them from survey narratives such as "Ranke" and "War of the Spanish Succession" and also from later narratives, the Encyclopedia Britannica articles (1853-1859), which are more strictly biographical than the essays on Clive and Frederic.

Macaulay's theory of the historical essay must be pieced together from various sources, because he wrote no commentary on the form which he exploited so successfully. To understand how he conceived this type of narrative, the essay devoted to one man's actions, rather than to his whole life or to his era, one must consider Macaulay's view of historical writing in general, as he outlined it in the 1828 Edinburgh article "History"; his few statements about his own historical essays; and, finally, his practice in a representative work. "Lord Clive," one of Macaulay's most famous works, will serve in this chapter to illustrate his theory of the historical essay.

Although the 1828 article "History"<sup>1</sup> is chiefly interesting for the light it sheds on Macaulay's major work, The History of England from the Accession of James II, it also reveals the theories underlying the Clive essay. One of Macaulay's first contributions to the Edinburgh Review, "History" expounds his belief that the best historical writing blends reason and imagination; indicates his liberal view of history's teaching function; makes clear his respect for social history; describes the resemblances he finds among historical writing, drama, biography, and fiction; and, finally, reveals the

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<sup>1</sup>This review is discussed by Griffin in The Intellectual Milieu of Lord Macaulay, pp. 34-42. See also Sir Charles Firth, A Commentary on Macaulay's History of England (London: Frank Cass, 1964), pp. 17-27.

preoccupation with narrative art which follows logically from his conviction that history is a branch of literature.

Differences between the early narrative essays (survey narratives) which Macaulay contributed to the Edinburgh and such later narratives as "Lord Clive" can be illustrated by two essays on William Pitt, Earl of Chatham. The first, written in 1834, gives only a superficial account of Pitt himself and is mainly a sketch of political intrigue in the mid-eighteenth century. Accounts of Walpole and Henry Fox are not well integrated into the story of Pitt. Ten years later, Macaulay wrote a second essay on Pitt in which the politician emerges as a more complex figure than is portrayed in 1834: his feelings, motives, domestic life, illnesses, and the attitudes of others toward him are all made clear in the 1844 study. Pitt's character is described through his actions; scenes replace the summary passages of the 1834 work. Thus Pitt is more memorable a figure in the 1844 essay. The theme of the first work, Pitt's rise to power, is less carefully elaborated than the theme of the second essay, his fall. By foreshadowings and parallel scenes, Macaulay unifies the second essay. Although "Lord Clive" (1840) falls between the two essays on Pitt, the Clive essay may be considered a historical narrative rather than a survey narrative because its careful organization and dramatic structure, qualities which this chapter will attempt to illustrate, are more characteristic of the 1844 essay on Pitt than of Macaulay's earlier work on the same figure.

Macaulay begins the article "History" by stating that it is not difficult to write history "respectably . . . but to be a really great historian is perhaps the rarest of intellectual distinctions" (Works, V, 122). Since history combines imagination and reason, is "sometimes fiction . . . sometimes theory," the ideal historian possesses both a capacious mind and a vivid imagination; his art should reflect both these gifts. Macaulay claims further that

The writer who does not explain the phenomena as well as state them performs only one half of his office. Facts are the mere dross of history. It is from the abstract truth which interpenetrates them, and lies latent among them like gold in the ore, that the mass derives its whole value: and the precious particles are generally combined with the baser elements in such a manner that the separation is a task of utmost difficulty (Works, V, 131-132).

Regarding the precept that history is philosophy teaching by examples, Macaulay observed that "Unhappily what the philosophy gains in soundness and depth the examples generally lose in vividness." The essay's critique of ancient and modern historical writing amplifies this judgment. Macaulay suggests that the classical writers are vivid but deficient in speculation, and he faults modern historians for the opposite weakness: their accounts are accurate and their generalizations sound, but they write badly; their works lack the charm of the classical narratives. Thus the ideal historian would join to the artistic excellence of classical writers the speculative

range of modern historians:

The instruction derived from history thus written would be of a vivid and practical character. It would be received by the imagination as well as by the reason. It would be not merely traced on the mind, but branded into it. Many truths, too, would be learned, which can be learned in no other manner. (Works, V, 160)

Macaulay here does not mean "instruction" or "truth" in a narrow sense, but simply expresses the traditional view that literature should both please and teach. Although he is a moralist, in the sense that he distributes praise and blame freely, particularly in his early works, he stresses the relativity of moral values, stating for example that "Succeeding generations change the fashion of their morals, with the fashion of their hats and their coaches . . ." (V, 64), and that history teaches "how often vices pass into virtues . . ." (V, 62). He acknowledges, however, that readers of history like heroes and villains; readers especially like scapegoats, for "the tendency of the vulgar is to embody everything" (VII, 176).

As he grew older, Macaulay seemed to judge less censoriously the conduct of historical figures. When he was twenty-six, he was urged by Sydney Smith to avoid a contemptuous tone in his Edinburgh Review articles; and, when Macaulay repeated the caution to his father, he added meekly, "I shall try to mend" (Trevelyan, I, 144). Although Macaulay as a young man believed that "the line of demarcation between good and bad men is so faintly marked as often to elude the most careful

investigation of those who have the best opportunity for judging," and further admitted that "public men, above all, are surrounded with so many temptations and difficulties that some doubt must almost always hang over their real dispositions and intentions,"<sup>2</sup> and his early practice belied these tolerant theories: he harshly judged many historical figures. But in late works his comments upon human weaknesses seem detached, and thus the tone of these late works is quieter and less censorious than the tone of essays written when Macaulay was in his twenties and thirties.<sup>3</sup> Intemperate judgments in the 1831 article on Johnson and the 1834 essay "The Earl of Chatham" reveal the author's stern, moralistic attitude; whereas later essays on the same subjects, "Chatham" in 1844 and "Samuel Johnson" in 1856, show a more dispassionate attitude toward both men, especially Johnson. By the time of "Lord Clive," Macaulay's practice of judging matched the fair-minded theory he expounded in 1824 and again in the 1828 article "History." He urges readers, when judging Clive, to avoid both James Mill's severity and the uncritical praise of Sir John Malcolm, Clive's biographer. Macaulay attempts to place even those actions he

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<sup>2</sup>Works, VII, 685. This quotation is from "Mitford's Review of Greece," Knight's Quarterly Magazine, November, 1824, reprinted in Works, VII, 683-703.

<sup>3</sup>An exception is Barère" (Edinburgh Review, April, 1844), a violent denunciation of the French Revolutionary leader. Macaulay himself admitted that the attack seemed exaggerated, for soon after the article was published he described it in this way: "It is shade, unrelieved by a gleam of light" (Trevelyan, II, 150).

deplored in perspective; for example, he says of the sharp turn of British public opinion against Clive: "It was a very easy exercise of virtue to declaim in England against Clive's rapacity; but not one in a hundred of his accusers would have shown so much self-command in the treasury of Moorshedabad" (VI, 422), the treasury of Bengal, turned over to Clive by Meer Jaffier after Surajah Dowlah's defeat.

Macaulay's stress on social history is clear from the theory of "noiseless revolutions" which he expounds in the 1828 article:

A history in which every particular incident may be true, may, on the whole, be false. The circumstances which have most influence on the happiness of mankind . . . are, for the most part, noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. (Works, V, 156)

Expressing the same thought in another way and suggesting that the study of history enlarges the mind, Macaulay observes that, "Men may know the dates of many battles and the genealogies of many royal houses, and yet be no wiser" (V, 157). Many years later, he scorned "those notions which some writers have of the dignity of history. For fear of alluding to the vulgar concerns of private life, they take no notice of the circumstances which deeply affect the happiness of nations" (Trevelyan II, 108). In other words, they ignore "noiseless revolutions."

Since the facts of social history are often the facts used by biographers, novelists and dramatists, it is not



surprising that Macaulay finds parallels between historical writing and other genres. He uses Boswell's Life of Johnson and Southey's Life of Nelson, works which he judges more readable than many respected histories, to illustrate the following point:

While our historians are practicing all the arts of controversy, they miserably neglect the art of narration, the art of interesting the affections and presenting pictures to the imagination. That a writer may produce these effects without violating truth is sufficiently proved by many excellent biographical works. The immense popularity which well-written books of this kind have acquired, deserves the serious consideration of historians (V, 154).

Citing Sir Walter Scott, the author suggests that the historian should borrow the "details which are the charm of historical romances. . . . A truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated" (V, 158). When Macaulay suggests that "history begins in novel and ends in essay," he paraphrases his introductory argument that history must blend imagination and reason. He draws a more suggestive parallel for interpreting "Lord Clive," however, by comparing historical writing to drama. After praising Tacitus for portraying real men rather than personifications of good and evil, he observes:

The talent which is required to write history thus bears a considerable affinity to the talent of a great dramatist. There is one obvious distinction. The dramatist creates: the historian only disposes. The difference is not in the mode of execution, but in the mode of conception (V, 144).

The last statement, "The difference is not in the mode of execution, but in the mode of conception," has a special relevance to "Lord Clive." Later in this chapter it will be argued that the mode of execution in this late essay is dramatic.

What Macaulay says in passing about biography, fiction, and drama in the article "History" suggests an emphasis on narrative art clearly manifested by other statements in the essay. He reiterates that selection and arrangement are essential to historical writing:

The perfect historian is he in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature. He relates no fact...which is not authenticated by sufficient testimony. But, by judicious selection, rejection, and arrangement, he gives to truth those attractions which have been usurped by fiction. In his narrative a due subordination is observed: some transactions are prominent; others retire. But the scale on which he represents them is increased or diminished, not according to the dignity of the persons concerned in them, but according to the degree in which they elucidate the condition of society and the nature of man (V, 157-58).

The theory that the historian must use contrast<sup>4</sup> skillfully underlies this tribute to Thucydides: "His great powers of painting he reserves for events of which the slightest details are interesting. The simplicity of the setting gives additional lustre to the brilliants" (V, 143). This summary aptly describes "Lord Clive," in which a simple setting enhances

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<sup>4</sup>"Light and shade"; see above, p.

descriptive details. When Macaulay complains that Tacitus "cannot tell a plain story plainly," adding that "he stimulates till stimulants lose their power" (V, 143), he suggests a fault of his own early essays. One measure of the superiority of later works is that, in describing Clive's exploits, Macaulay uses "stimulants" sparingly.

Macaulay's stress on narrative art is also revealed by references to "foreground" and "background," terms which suggest an analogy between landscape painting and historical writing:

History has its foreground and its background: and it is principally in the management of its perspective that one artist differs from another. Some events must be represented on a large scale, others diminished; the great majority will be lost in the dimness of the horizon; and a general idea of their joint effect will be given by a few slight touches.

In this respect no writer has ever equalled Thucydides. He was a perfect master of the art of gradual diminution. His history is sometimes as concise as a chronological chart; yet it is always perspicuous. It is sometimes as minute as one of Lovelace's letters; yet it is never prolix. He never fails to contract and to expand it in the right place (Works, V, 130).

In "Lord Clive," Macaulay arranges foreground and background skillfully. Some correspondence between the theory outlined here and his practice will be noted when the essay itself is described.

The importance Macaulay gave to narrative art in historical writing is clear not only from his theoretical discussion "History" but also from his typical judgments of historians and from one facet of his personality, an "inclination

to fantasy."<sup>5</sup> Macaulay praises Machiavelli's History of Florence, for example, by stating that a reader will obtain from the work "a more vivid and a more faithful impression of the national character and manners than from more correct accounts" (Works, V, 81). He chooses these words deliberately: "faithful" linked to "vivid" and not to "correct" implies that narration is as important as research; accuracy alone will not insure a "faithful" account. Similarly, Mackintosh's History of the Revolution in England in 1688 is praised for "the liveliness of the narrative" (Works, VI, 82).

Artistic arrangement of isolated historical facts interested Macaulay not only because he wished to know how men actually lived in earlier times, but also because he liked to imagine himself taking part in past events. Madden suggests that one of Macaulay's most distinctive features was his "histrionic temperament."<sup>6</sup> The author himself called this trait "my love of castle-building," in a conversation with his sister Margaret. Macaulay told her that his mind transformed the past into a romance; he continued, "with a person of my turn, the minute touches are of as great interest, and perhaps greater, than the most important events" (Trevelyan, I, 183).

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<sup>5</sup>John Clive uses this phrase to describe one phase of the interaction between Macaulay's personality and his work; he also notes the author's "marvellous histrionic talent." See "Macaulay, History, and the Historians," History Today, IX (1959), 835.

<sup>6</sup>The Art of Victorian Prose, p. 138.

"Castle-building" strengthened his memory for dates and facts, he thought, because "A slight fact, a sentence, a word, are of importance in my romance" (I, 184). Critics have been skeptical on this point, however: some have argued that Macaulay's imaginary pictures led him to inaccuracies. Sir Charles Firth concludes, for example, that, while Macaulay acknowledged the scientific dimension of historical writing, he did not "adequately realize its magnitude or its difficulty."<sup>7</sup>

Viewing the past as a "romance," then, confirmed an opinion Macaulay had formed by reading and re-reading both classical and modern historians: the ideal historian is a good storyteller. Although he did not deprecate factual accuracy, he would have approved Pater's distinction between "truth to bare fact" or "accuracy" and the "vraie vérité": truth as expression.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately for Macaulay's reputation, the statement frequently quoted to show his attitude toward historical writing, "I shall not be satisfied unless I produce something which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of the young ladies" (Trevelyan, II, 103-04), makes the writer's conception seem frivolous;<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>"Macaulay's Conception of History," A Commentary on Macaulay's History of England, p. 30. Firth's estimate of Macaulay's work is generally favorable, however.

<sup>8</sup>"Style," Appreciations, Vol. V: The Works (8 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1901), 34.

<sup>9</sup>Frederic Harrison slights Macaulay's theory of historical writing in "Lord Macaulay," Studies in Early Victorian Literature (London: E. Arnold, 1895), pp. 84-86. See also

but, taken in the context of other statements, this whimsical remark indicates only that Macaulay sought to master narrative art, in order that relatively uneducated people as well as specialists could read his History of England.

Other observations reveal, furthermore, that Macaulay knew how many difficulties beset the historian who strives to tell his story artfully.<sup>10</sup> And, despite the complacent view Macaulay took of some matters, despite the unprecedented success of his History of England, he was never satisfied by his own writing. A few years before his death, he noted in his journal, "Arrangement and transition are arts which I value much, but which I do not flatter myself that I have attained" (January 1, 1854; Trevelyan, II, 377). One month later he exclaimed, "What labor it is to make a tolerable book, and how little readers know how much trouble the ordering of the parts has cost the writer! (Trevelyan, II, 377) Part of the writer's art, of course, is to leave no signs of this trouble. In another journal entry, Macaulay writes that he has worked especially hard on a few pages, adding, "The great object is that, after all this trouble, they may read as if they had been spoken off, and may seem to flow as easily as table talk" (July 28, 1850;

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<sup>10</sup>Herbert Butterfield cites the introduction to the History of England to show "the amount of thought Macaulay gave to the whole problem of historical writing...the technique of pure narration, the question of 'the transition from one scene, or topic, to another', the inclusion of an analytical element." See "Narrative History and the Spade-Work Behind It," History, LIII (June, 1968), 172.

Trevelyan, II, 278). Describing his account of the Jacobite conspiracy in 1690, Macaulay admits:

This is a tough chapter. To make the narrative flow along as it ought, every part naturally springing from that which precedes; to carry the reader backward and forward across St. George's Channel without distracting his attention, is not easy (Trevelyan, II, 276).

These statements prove that, as Macaulay conceived it, artistic historical writing involves more than style; it requires comprehending "a large body of complicated events as a whole, and then so narrating them that every part of a complex transaction should become perfectly clear, because every fact is put in its right place."<sup>11</sup>

Macaulay considered the easy "flow" of the story, vital to a long and complicated work such as The History of England, to be important in shorter historical works as well. "Lord Clive," one of the narrative essays devoted to the exploits of a single man, illustrates not only Macaulay's dramatic execution but also the techniques he uses to make the story "flow along as it ought, every part naturally springing from that which precedes." Before these two generalizations are elaborated,

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<sup>11</sup>A. V. Dicey, "Macaulay and His Critics," Nation, LXXIV (1902), 389. More recently, Macaulay's stress on narrative art has been defended by Edwin Yoder: "...while the impulse to analyze and scientize history has been helpful, we retain the need for history as an art, and of that Macaulay is, in English, the unchallenged master....The grant old narrative histories may be a little too confident of their age....But the charm of the past is in its teaching; and one cannot teach, as Macaulay does, without risking error to make a few truths luminous." "Macaulay Revisited," South Atlantic Quarterly, LXIII (1964), 551.

Macaulay's few comments about his historical essays, as distinguished from statements on historical writing in general, should be described. Those which illuminate his theory are, first, references to individual works; second, brief commentaries on the nature of periodical writing, which contrast articles to more formal works and which pertain to "Lord Clive" because the essay first appeared in the Edinburgh Review for January, 1840; and third, a defense of the historical essay which states Macaulay's theory more directly.

In July of 1839, Macaulay told Napier that he hoped to write an essay on Clive: "The subject is a grand one, and admits of decorations and illustrations innumerable" (Trevelyan, II, 66). This remark suggests one requirement for the historical essay, a "grand" subject. Supporting the inference is a letter in which Macaulay tells Napier that he cannot find a good subject for an article:

Romilly's Life is a little stale, Lord Cornwallis is not an attractive subject. Clive and Hastings /subjects Macaulay had previously chosen/ were great men, and their history is full of great events. Cornwallis was a respectable specimen of mediocrity (Trevelyan, II, 113).

Having found a good subject, Macaulay apparently decided that the length of his argumentative essays, generally twenty to fifty pages, would be inadequate for the story he wished to tell. "As to Frederic," he wrote to Napier in January, 1842, "I do not see that I can deal with him well under



seventy pages. I shall try to give a life of him after the manner of Plutarch. That, I think, is my forte. The paper on Clive<sup>12</sup> took greatly. That on Hastings,<sup>13</sup> though in my opinion by no means equal to that on Clive, has been even more successful" (Trevelyan, II, 105).

What did Macaulay mean by stating that his historical essays were written "after the manner of Plutarch"? A letter written from India several years earlier gives a partial explanation: Macaulay told his friend, T. F. Ellis:

I every now and then read one of Plutarch's Lives on an idle afternoon...I like him prodigiously. He is inaccurate, to be sure, and a romancer: but he tells a story delightfully, and his illustrations and sketches of character are as good as anything in ancient eloquence. I have never, till now, rated him fairly (August 25, 1835; Trevelyan, I, 439).

Here, as in the conversation with his sister quoted earlier, Macaulay's emphasis is upon narrative art. His essays on Frederic the Great, Hastings, and Clive are not detailed biographies, nor are they discussions of such questions as British rule in India or the rise of Prussia. Above all, they are well-told stories.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Sixty-seven pages as it originally appeared in the Edinburgh, LXX (January, 1840), 295-362.

<sup>13</sup>Ninety-five pages in the Edinburgh, LXXIV (October, 1841), 160-255.

<sup>14</sup>Macaulay, like Plutarch, has been judged inaccurate. The extent to which factual errors weaken his historical essays seems debatable: for some readers, inaccuracy is unpardonable; but others consider it irrelevant. For a good discussion of

Macaulay clearly admired what D. R. Stuart calls Plutarch's "spacious and discursive treatment of material."<sup>15</sup> Several of Macaulay's essays are book-length: "Warren Hastings," for example, nearly as long as Southey's two-volume Life of Nelson, reveals that its author had an enormous fund of information on countless subjects. As shown in chapter two, Macaulay's style is better adapted to skimming over subjects than to grappling with complex ideas. Since his purpose in "Clive" is to tell a story rather than to win a debate, rapid movement from one topic to another does not create the impression of superficiality given by many early works. His historical essays suggest amplitude because he condenses a great quantity of information in them, whereas in earlier writings, he seems merely discursive when he uses such stylistic devices as paraphrases, lengthy elaboration of commonplaces, and extended parallels. In "Lord Clive," written in 1840, these devices are much less common than in such early essays as "Hallam" and "History," both published in 1828.

Macaulay's reference to the "manner of Plutarch" may also be explained by recalling Plutarch's introduction to his "Life of Alexander." In a famous passage, Plutarch states that his aim is not to give minute accounts of his subjects' lives, but

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the problem see Andrew Browning's essay, "Lord Macaulay, 1800-1859," Historical Journal, II (1959), 157 ff.

<sup>15</sup>Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928), p. 170.

rather to "epitomize the most celebrated parts of their story...."<sup>16</sup> Macaulay, too, prefers the epitome to the exhaustive account. Plutarch continues:

The most glorious exploits do not always furnish us with the clearest signs of virtue or vice in men; sometimes a matter of less moment, an expression or a jest, informs us better of their characters and inclinations than the most famous sieges, the greatest armaments, or the bloodiest battles. Therefore...I must be allowed to give my particular attention to the marks and indications of the souls of men, and...leave more weighty matters and great battles to be treated by others.<sup>17</sup>

Macaulay agreed that apparently trivial facts or actions could hold significance for the historian; and, like Plutarch, he often uses anecdotes to illustrate character. He frequently elaborates points which are both interesting in themselves and integral to the story; an example in "Lord Clive" is the description of the of the bizarre fate of Omichund, the Bengali diplomat whom Clive deceived by a false treaty.

Although parallels between Plutarch's method and Macaulay's are instructive, Macaulay's historical essays differ in several respects from Plutarch's Lives. The edificatory purpose one observes in Plutarch is much less discernible in Macaulay. A few early essays contain narrative passages in

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<sup>16</sup>Eight Great Lives. The Dryden Translation revised by Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. Charles Alexander Robinson, Jr. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), p. 184.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

which Macaulay adopts a moralistic tone,<sup>18</sup> but in such later works as "Lord Clive" and "Warren Hastings," he states his own judgments tentatively. After reading the Clive essay, Crabb Robinson praised Macaulay in his diary for carefully distinguishing "between the praise due to a man for a preponderance of good over evil in his public conduct and that unqualified eulogy due only to the perfect moralist."<sup>19</sup>

The reader of Macaulay's historical essays notes a complexity not found in earlier works such as "Bunyan" or the 1831 essay on Samuel Johnson. Calling the corrupt British in Bengal "ravenous adventurers," Macaulay argues that, in opposing their corruption, Clive faced a "battle far harder than that of Plassey" (Works, VI, 435). The author shows his misgivings about British rule when he states that "frightful oppression and corruption. . . had desolated Bengal" (436). At the end of the work, he observes that Clive will be remembered as a famous conqueror, but his name "is found on a better list," the list of men who have "suffered much for the happiness of mankind" (453). In such passages, when Macaulay disparages military prowess, one recalls that his mother was a Quaker and

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, the passage in which he excoriates Charles I ("Milton," Works, V, 28 ff.) and a passage in the 1831 Johnson essay in which he describes the characteristic failings of writers (V, 521-22).

<sup>19</sup> The Diary of Crabb Robinson, p. 200. Robinson adds, "Macaulay rises every day in my esteem. I believe he will be a powerful aid to the Ministry..." (In September, 1839, Macaulay became Secretary at War in Lord Melbourne's cabinet).

his father an Abolitionist. French and Sanders, editors of the Reader's Macaulay, allude to the complexity of the narrative essays by characterizing Macaulay's imagination in this way: "Though evoked most readily by great deeds in an honorable cause, it could not resist courageous achievement of any sort, and even when the moral sense disapproved, it was exhilarated by the exploits of Hastings or Peterborough or Frederic."<sup>20</sup>

Thus, while he does not limit his descriptions to "glorious exploits," and agrees with Plutarch that single expressions or a routine action may be significant, Macaulay tends to emphasize heroic actions: his battle scenes are generally more detailed than Plutarch's, for example. Another difference is that character revelation is less important to Macaulay than to the classical writer: the historical sketches are dominated by actions, not by motives behind them or by their subtle influences on men. Though he states in the 1828 review "History" that the historian must have a speculative mind, Macaulay seldom probes deeply into human conduct. "Philosophy he scarcely seems to touch," Gladstone wrote, "except on the outer side where it opens into action."<sup>21</sup> His characters are often one-dimensional, partly because their private lives are seldom described. Although the Encyclopedia Britannica articles

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<sup>20</sup> The Reader's Macaulay (New York, 1936), p. i.

<sup>21</sup> Review of Trevelyan's Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay. Quarterly Review, CXLII (1876), 48.

reveal more insight into human nature than is shown by works written twenty-five years earlier, character delineation was not Macaulay's forte.<sup>22</sup>

Macaulay's statements about his own work, then, reveal these underlying principles for the historical essay: the subject must be grand; it should be treated in a fairly long article; and, finally, the narrative should be written "after the manner of Plutarch," although neither edification nor character revelation is the essayist's primary concern. These inferences are made from short passages in Macaulay's journal and his letters, in which he refers rather casually to his work. Elsewhere, however, one finds longer and more significant observations which clarify his theory: first, a discussion of the limitations inherent in periodical writing; and, second, a vindication of his practice in historical essay writing which not only illustrates his theory but gives an excellent introduction to "Lord Clive."

"A bold, dashing, scene-painting manner is that which always succeeds best in periodical writing" (Trevelyan, II, 11), Macaulay declared in 1838; four years later he elaborated the same idea, arguing that periodical articles should be judged leniently because:

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<sup>22</sup> His sister must have said as much, for in a letter to Hannah and Margaret Macaulay dated August 14, 1832, the author grumbles, "I am...angry with Nancy for denying my insight into character. It is one of my strong points. If she knew how far I see into hers, she would be ready to hang herself" (Trevelyan, I, 267-68).

They are not expected to be highly finished. Their natural life is only six weeks. Sometimes their writer is at a distance from the books to which he wants to refer. Sometimes he is forced to hurry through his task in order to catch the post. He may blunder; he may contradict himself; he may break off in the middle of a story; he may give an immoderate extension to one part of his subject, and dismiss an equally important part in a few words. All this is readily forgiven if there be a certain spirit and vivacity in his style. But, as soon as he republishes, he challenges a comparison with all the most symmetrical and polished of human compositions (Trevelyan, II, 110-111).

The phrase "scene-painting manner" describes Macaulay's practice in his historical essays. The defense of "immoderate extensions" of narrative parts which may be intrinsically less important than parts passed over quickly recalls Plutarch's comment that he will describe the marks of character, leaving "more weighty matters and great battles to be treated by others."<sup>23</sup> What is most important for a periodical writer is "a certain spirit and vivacity in his style," which compensates for lack of symmetry and polish in his article.

Macaulay seems to assign a low rank to periodical articles when he claims that they will live only six weeks. Yet this modest prediction tells more about his attitude toward himself than about his approach to writing, which was not so casual as the quoted passage suggests. A more telling commentary appears in a long letter to Napier in which Macaulay distinguishes the historical essay from what he calls "regular"

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<sup>23</sup>Eight Great Lives, p. 184.

history. A serious tone is appropriate to the latter, but not necessarily to the former, he argues. This point is amplified in a key passage:

But I conceive that this sort of composition [the historical essay] has its own character, and its own laws. I do not claim the honor of having invented it; that praise belongs to Mr. Southey; but I may say that I have improved upon his design. The manner of these little historical essays bears, I think, the same analogy to the manner of Tacitus or Gibbon which the manner of Ariosto bears to the manner of Tasso, or the manner of Shakespeare's historical plays to the manner of Sophocles. Ariosto, when he is grave and pathetic, is as grave and pathetic as Tasso; but he often takes a light fleeting tone which suits him admirably, but which in Tasso would be quite out of place. The despair of Constance in Shakespeare is as lofty as that of Oedipus in Sophocles; but the levities of the bastard Faulconbridge would be utterly out of place in Sophocles. Yet we feel that they are not out of place in Shakespeare.

So with these historical articles. Where the subject requires it, they may rise, if the author can manage it, to the highest altitudes of Thucydides. Then, again, they may without impropriety sink to the levity and colloquial ease of Horace Walpole's Letters. This is my theory. Whether I have succeeded in the execution is quite another question (Trevelyan, II, 107-108).

Since this passage constitutes the only direct statement Macaulay made concerning the theory of the historical essay, several of its parts should be discussed: the allusion to Southey, the reference to great dramatists, and the conclusion, in which Macaulay claims that the tone of the historical essay may "rise" or "sink" according to the seriousness of the subject.



It is clear, first of all, that Macaulay considered the historical essay a serious form, even though he spoke slightly of his articles and did not expect to be remembered for them. Despite the fact that he often wrote hastily, his narrative essays are carefully structured, indicating that he considered the problems inherent in the short narrative form.

The respectful allusion to Southey, in the passage quoted, contrasts sharply to Macaulay's scathing attack on the same writer twelve years earlier. The statement that Southey invented the historical essay can be explained by citing two characteristics of late eighteenth-century biography: the tendency to eulogize men, no matter how they had actually lived; and the biographer's habit of writing long, detailed works about their subjects. Southey resisted the eulogizing impulse and stressed artistic selection, as he himself implied in the forward to his Life of Nelson: "...The best eulogy of Nelson is the faithful history of his actions: the best history, that which shall relate them most perspicuously."<sup>24</sup> Since Southey's historical works show his distaste for the "triumph of encyclopedic compilation over artistic composition,"<sup>25</sup> which characterized earlier biographical writing, Macaulay seems to credit Southey with advancing the art of historical writing,

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<sup>24</sup>Life of Nelson (London: J. Murray, 1813), I, 1.

<sup>25</sup>J. W. Reed, English Biography in the Early Nineteenth Century, 1801-1838 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 87.

both by avoiding eulogy and by skillfully selecting and arranging his materials.

If Macaulay's reference to Southey in the passage quoted above gives some clues to the later writer's theory of the historical essay, the allusion to dramatists which follows is equally suggestive. Since he tended to picture men in action, Macaulay was attracted to the intrinsically dramatic parts of history. His historical essays differ from Plutarch's Lives in being more deliberately arranged for heightened effects than the Lives, which preserve, even in translation, Plutarch's conversational tone. Events as Macaulay describes them often have the pre-determined quality of events unfolding in a play. Because man's control over his fate is limited, in Macaulay's view, his actions frequently seem inevitable. Madden suggests that "the principal effect of Macaulay's histrionic style [in the History of England] . . . is to communicate a sense of the inevitability of the action."<sup>26</sup> And John Clive points out Macaulay's habit of ending a series of short sentences with a "resolving period," which reflects "the critical and tense sequence of events that found a happy issue in the Glorious Revolution. . ."<sup>27</sup>

Several allusions to his narrative essays suggest Macaulay's dramatic conception of the past. He calls the

<sup>26</sup>Madden, p. 143.

<sup>27</sup>"Macaulay's Historical Imagination," Review of English Literature, I (October, 1960), 20-21.

historical figures in his articles "dramatis personae," for example.<sup>28</sup> "The stage is too small for the actors," he complains, when planning an article on Edmund Burke which became instead a continuation of his 1834 essay "The Earl of Chatham." (Trevelyan, II, 151). Similarly, in discussing his plan for "Warren Hastings," he speaks of the different "scenes" he imagines, and continues, "The central figure is in the highest degree striking and majestic" (Trevelyan, II, 83). In the same letter (January 11, 1841), Macaulay terms Hastings "far from faultless" but does not elaborate; his brevity here suggests that, as he planned the essay, Hastings' dramatic actions concerned him more than the virtues or vices which these actions revealed.<sup>29</sup> Since Hastings' case had become a cause célèbre, arousing support for the Indian governor as well as fierce opposition, the decision to write neither a denunciation nor a eulogy shows a restraint in the older Macaulay which is not at all characteristic of Macaulay as a young writer. The attention given to the "striking and majestic" qualities of Hastings reflects Macaulay's belief that the historical essay should be primarily an artistic form, not a vehicle for instruction or for

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<sup>28</sup>Selections from the Correspondence of Macvey Napier, p. 385.

<sup>29</sup>Madden argues that when the "oratorical" and "judicious" styles of Macaulay are subordinated to his "histrionic" style, in The History of England, "The private morality of individual actors and the political bias of the Whigs and Tories ...are firmly subordinated to the central action." (The Art of Victorian Prose, p. 143).

political debate. This last point distinguishes the historical essays, relatively late works, from Macaulay's Edinburgh Review work, "Milton," in which narrative clearly serves an argumentative purpose, i.e. elevating the Whigs (while vindicating Milton's public conduct) and thereby discrediting the Tories: seventeenth-century Tories, specifically, but also, by implication, the Tory contemporaries of Macaulay who opposed Reform.

Macaulay's dramatic conception of history and his belief that men are more likely to be determined by events than to control them, as he argues, for example, at the beginning of "Dryden" (Works, V, 83-85) did not, however, cause him to ignore characterization. Although he did not portray subtleties of character, he placed a single man at the center of his historical essays. The Aristotelian idea that a man's actions best reveal his character, an idea which influenced Plutarch,<sup>30</sup> is embodied in Macaulay's Edinburgh articles as well. But since a great man's public actions interested Macaulay more than his private life or inner struggles, essays such as "Clive" and "Chatham" are closer in spirit to dramas than to biographical sketches. This feature of the historical essays becomes clearer if one contrasts the long works "Clive" and "Hastings" to the five biographical articles which Macaulay wrote for the Encyclopedia Britannica in the last decade of his life. By

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<sup>30</sup>Stuart, p. 70.

terming his essay on Clive "flashy," Macaulay implied that spectacle rather than character is its center (Trevelyan, II, 80).<sup>31</sup>

Thus Macaulay's allusion to dramatists, in the passage which explains his theory of the historical essay, can be placed in the larger context of his attitude toward the past, his view of human nature, and his belief that the aim of writing which describes the actions of great men is less to edify or instruct than to entertain. His stress on the artistic nature of historical writing, apparent in his reference to Southey, is also suggested by the analogy developed in the letter quoted above: "The manner of these little historical essays bears, I think, the same analogy to the manner of Tacitus or Gibbon which the manner of Ariosto bears to the manner of Tasso, or the manner of Shakespeare's historical plays to the manner of Sophocles." Macaulay concludes that informality per se is not a fault in historical essay writing. Solemn or serious descriptions may be appropriate to certain parts of an essay, but the writer may allow his narrative to "sink to the levity and colloquial ease of Horace Walpole's Letters" (Trevelyan, II, 107).

In a sense, this defense of an informal tone is a gloss on the remark about Southey, for it stresses Macaulay's belief

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<sup>31</sup>The Oxford English Dictionary takes many examples from Macaulay. One is the word "flashy," from this letter, to mean "sparkling" or "glittering." See Vol. IV, 291.

that the historical essay is a distinct genre. Invented by Southey, "this sort of composition...has its own character, and its own laws" (Trevelyan, II, 107). For Macaulay, two key characteristics of the form are its resemblance to drama and its narrative excellence. The essay "Lord Clive" demonstrates the importance of these characteristics: it embodies a dramatic conception of history; and it reveals techniques which make the story "flow along as it ought, every part naturally springing from that which precedes..." (Trevelyan, II, 276). Since Macaulay expounded his theory of the historical essay in only one letter, his practice with the genre is especially important for understanding his theory.

Macaulay divides his long essay on Clive into three parts, corresponding to Clive's three trips to India. Clearly summarized and distinguished at the end of the work, these parts comprise a drama in which the hero rises from adversity to prosperity and falls again to adversity. In the first act, the obscure young Clive triumphs at Arcot and returns to England a hero. The climax of the second act is his great victory at Plassey, which made him even more popular in England. Since Clive is portrayed as both a soldier and a statesman, his rise has a second peak: his successful attack on British corruption in Bengal. The administrative victory was the more impressive to Macaulay, who states that Clive himself took more pride in his reforms than in his military successes (Works, VI, 434).

The third act, which describes Clive's Indian reforms, ends with his suicide. But avoiding the stark contrasts of his early works, Macaulay moves gradually to this denouement: the falling action is deferred at several points: 1) when Macaulay states that a good defense in Parliament won Clive sympathy (after describing Clive's situation through this metaphor: "...the whole storm, which had long been gathering, now broke at once on the head of Clive" [VI, 445]); 2) when Macaulay points out that Clive was treated more humanely than Dupleix, who, "stripped of his immense fortune, and broken-hearted by humiliating attendance in antechambers, sank into an obscure grave" (450); 3) when the suggestion is made that, had Clive lived to fight in the Revolution, "it is not improbable that the resistance of the Colonists would have been put down. . ." (451); and 4) when Macaulay writes "To the last, however, his genius occasionally flashed through the gloom. . . . He would sometimes. . . display in full vigour all the talents of the soldier and the statesman" (451). By these references to Clive's greatness and to his former triumphs, Macaulay alludes to earlier parts of the essay and avoids the abrupt conclusion which weakens other narrative essays, "Burleigh and his Times," for example. Although he is careful not to exaggerate the contrast between Clive's brilliant career and his unheroic death, Macaulay prepares for the ending: he notes, for example, that Clive became addicted to opium at the end of his life. Another detail which

foreshadows the suicide is a figurative description of Clive's loss of energy. After his retirement, Macaulay states, "Clive's active spirit in an inactive situation drooped and withered like a plant in an uncongenial air" (451).

What follows the suicide may be considered an epilogue (VI, 452-453). Macaulay mitigates to some extent the effect of Clive's suicide by summarizing his achievements in the order of increasing importance: 1) "From his first visit to India dates the renown of English arms in the East"; 2) From his second visit dates Britain's political ascendancy: "such an extent of cultivated territory, such an amount of revenue, such a multitude of subjects, was never added to the dominion of Rome by the most successful proconsul"; 3) From the third trip Macaulay dates the beginning of honest administration in India, for Clive "made dauntless and unsparing war on that gigantic system of oppression, extortion, and corruption" (VI, 452). Thus, while the three parts of the essay bring Clive to his destruction, the three-part epilogue, which summarizes his actions, establishes his claim to immortality. The structure of the work clearly reveals the "anxiousness to impose a dramatic unity upon his vast materials" which Madden finds characteristic of The History of England from the Accession of James II.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Madden, p. 140.



Macaulay's dramatic conception of the historical essay, well illustrated by the rising and falling action shaped by the clear three-part structure of "Lord Clive," is also apparent from his use of other techniques which emphasize the inherently dramatic incidents of Clive's career. Of these techniques, the most conspicuous is the "bold, dashing, scene-painting manner" (Trevelyan, II, 11) which Macaulay thought best for periodical writing. Secondly, characterization by broad strokes makes Clive seem closer to the protagonist of a play than to the main character of a novel or the subject of a biography. As Walter Raleigh noted, "Macaulay's instinctive preference was for action, drama, the pageant of life."<sup>33</sup> Finally, the essay employs techniques which a cursory reading of the work does not reveal, but which contribute to its over-all effect. Macaulay's symbolism, his diction, and his figurative language all heighten the dramatic effects conveyed by vivid scenes.

Macaulay's scene-painting manner is shown by various applications of the foreground and background principle, which he explained in his 1828 essay on history:

Some events must be represented on a large scale, others diminished; the great majority will be lost in the dimness of the horizon; and a general idea of their joint effect will be given by a few slight touches (V, 130).

A scene which illustrates Macaulay's theory is the Black Hole of Calcutta episode (VI, 407-09), which is clearly

<sup>33</sup>On Writing and Writers (London: Edward Arnold, 1926), p. 172.

an event he wished "to be represented on a large scale." In a sense it is the most important event described in "Lord Clive," for British retaliation after Surajah Dowlah's barbarity marked the beginning of their ascendancy in India. The incident also led, ultimately, to Surajah Dowlah's downfall, as the author suggests when he describes the Battle of Plassey. The Black Hole passage begins with background details, Surajah Dowlah's hatred of the British and the flight of the British governor. Macaulay next prepares for the incident itself by the following solemn statement: "Then was committed that great crime, memorable for its singular atrocity, memorable for the tremendous retribution by which it was followed" (407). References to Surajah Dowlah in the following paragraphs keep attention focused on him, while grotesque details emphasize the sufferings of his victims. Macaulay ends this famous passage with two short sentences which introduce a background figure, but indirectly condemn the central figure, Surajah Dowlah: "One Englishwoman had survived that night. She was placed in the haram of the Prince at Moorshedabad" (409). Macaulay does not weaken the effect of these terse sentences by telling the reader how to interpret what has been narrated. Reference to an unnamed Englishwoman, one of the "slight touches" he recommends in his theoretical statement to give a general impression of events, creates in this case an impression of cruelty.

The idea that "some events must be represented on a large scale" is also illustrated by the settings Macaulay chooses. Since India is the scene of Clive's most famous actions, the Indian setting is more prominent in the essay than the English setting, although near the end the balance changes: many pages are devoted to Clive's life in England, a shift of focus which reinforces the theme of his fall from greatness (i.e., by the end of the essay Clive is far removed from the scene of his triumphs). The number of pages Macaulay devotes to each of the three trips is also revealing. He narrates the events of ten years (Clive's first trip to India) in fifteen pages; but in the middle section, which reaches a climax with the great victory at Plassey, twenty pages are devoted to the events of only four years. Thus, in "Clive," Macaulay follows a theory expounded in the 1828 article "History": in well-narrated historical works, "a due subordination is observed: some transactions are prominent; others retire" (Works, V, 158).

Especially effective in "Lord Clive," Macaulay's practice of "scene-painting" follows his theory that a periodical writer "may give an immoderate extension to one part of the subject, and dismiss an equally important part in a few words" (Trevelyan, II, 111). Many English conquests in India and many of Clive's exploits are briefly alluded to, for example, whereas the Black Hole of Calcutta incident is fully described and has proved to be one of Macaulay's most famous narrative passages.

Long periods of Clive's life are quickly passed over, while other very short periods and single incidents comprise large sections of the essay. Macaulay picks inherently dramatic events for his scenes: the siege of Arcot; the battle of Plassey; the conference at Moorshedabad following Surajah Dowlah's defeat, at which the scheming Omichund learns he has been duped by Clive; the defeat of Dutch troops before they can join Meer Jaffier; and, in the third part of the work, the scenes in which Clive confronts the English civil servants and soldiers who hated him for his determination to root out abuses.

Well-spaced throughout the essay, these scenes keep attention focused on Clive. Although many events not directly related to him are described, and a great fund of information about India is included in the work, Macaulay carefully subordinates whatever does not pertain to the hero's actions. "As regards irrelevant digressions," a Victorian critic wrote, Macaulay is "singularly correct."<sup>34</sup> This judgment fits Macaulay's late works, especially "Lord Clive" and the Encyclopedia Britannica essays, but many early reviews contain long digressive passages which have little connection with the subjects under discussion. Invariably interesting and often brilliant, the digressions in such early works as "Southey's Colloquies" and "Samuel Johnson" blur the distinct outline

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<sup>34</sup>William Minto, A Manual of English Prose Literature (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1887), p. 96.

which one finds in "Clive" and which greatly helps the reader keep in mind works as long as Macaulay's essays. Macaulay gains dramatic effect not only by making scenes more prominent in the narrative than summaries, but also by stressing improbability and by choosing exotic or bizarre details which make an action seem unusual or exciting.

The dramatic technique of reversal, in which the opposite of what is expected takes place, is roughly parallel to Macaulay's device of listing all the reasons why a particular event should not have happened before explaining how it did happen. Repeatedly he indicates that Clive is an improbable hero: his parents thought him a "booby," a wild and untractable boy from whom nothing good was expected; he was "bred as a book-keeper," Macaulay reminds us, after describing Clive's splendid victories, gained over native armies whose soldiers outnumbered his own by as much as twenty to one. His successful reforms in Bengal, we learn, were even more astonishing than his military exploits, because British corruption had become widespread and thus any significant reform had become unlikely. The success of England's conquest was itself as improbable as Clive's rise to fame: an English reader should know, Macaulay asserts, "how a handful of his countrymen. . . subjugated, in the course of a few years, one of the greatest empires in the world" (Works, VI, 381-82). This introductory idea is repeated in the essay, at one point to summarize the action at

Plassey: "...Clive had scattered an army of near sixty thousand men, and subdued an empire larger and more populous than Great Britain" (VI, 416).

Exotic or bizarre details also build up the dramatic scenes in "Lord Clive." Twice during his first months in India Clive tried to kill himself, "and twice the pistol which he snapped at his own head failed to go off" (VI, 386); Clive concluded "that surely he was reserved for something great." This detail not only rounds out the story of Clive's early days in India, but foreshadows his suicide at the end of the essay. Other details are chosen to emphasize India's mysteriousness. In his early essays, Macaulay gives the impression that he has no doubts, that he can account for whatever seems puzzling, but when he alludes to Indian customs or to strange events in "Lord Clive," he more willingly grants a certain inexplicable quality to the situations he portrays. He notes, for example, that the day Rajah Sahib chose to storm the fort of Arcot was a great Moslem feast day, when his men believed that those killed while fighting infidels would go directly to the garden of the Houris. Instead of adding a few observations on the superiority of the British to the peoples whom they conquered, or offering self-satisfied remarks about the civilizing influence of Christianity, Macaulay merely summarizes his vivid account by referring to the narcotic made of dried hemp leaves: "Stimulating drugs were employed to aid the effect of religious zeal, and the besiegers,

drunk with enthusiasm, drunk with bang, rushed furiously to the attack" (397). Later, as Macaulay recounts the events which led up to the Battle of Plassey, he pauses to tell how both Clive and Surajah Dowlah felt on the evening before the battle. Clive's opponent "sat gloomily in his tent, haunted, a Greek poet would have said, by the furies of those who had cursed him with their last breath in the Black Hole" (415). Here, Macaulay's disapproval of Surajah Dowlah is expressed less directly than his disapproval of villains who appear in his early works. The reference to the Indian commander's gloom recalls what has gone before, the Black Hole of Calcutta incident, and suggests that Surajah Dowlah is soon to pay for his crime. Shortly thereafter, in the scene which describes Clive's meeting with Omichund at Moorshedabad after Surajah Dowlah has been routed, the British leader announces ominously, "It is now time to undeceive Omichund" (418). Macaulay stresses the great impact Clive's duplicity had on Omichund by digressing briefly:

. . . from the moment of that sudden shock, the unhappy man [Omichund] sank gradually into idiocy. He, who had formerly been distinguished by the strength of his understanding and the simplicity of his habits, now squandered the remains of his fortune on childish trinkets, and loved to exhibit himself dressed in rich garments, and hung with precious stones. In this abject state he languished a few months, and then died (418).

Yet these details are integral to the story, for Clive, Omichund's deceiver, will meet a similar, though less ludicrous

fate: physically exhausted after the Parliamentary investigation of Indian affairs and mortified by the turn of public opinion against him, Clive suffers melancholic fits, becomes addicted to opium, and kills himself. Thus the small-scale rise and fall of Omichund suggests in microcosm the action of Clive's life. Rather than sharply contrasting the English general's heroic life to his death, Macaulay makes the point indirectly, through the story of Omichund.

Although Clive is not a "round" character, described as fully as a major character in a novel, he is clearly not as "flat" as characters in Macaulay's earlier narrative essays: Chatham, Burleigh, Hampden, and Temple. The characterization of Temple clearly follows the "anticipatory scheme"<sup>35</sup> of biography, for his traits illustrate the author's thesis about his character.<sup>36</sup> Clive, on the other hand, is harder to categorize; Macaulay portrays him as a bold and fierce fighter, but also as a humane man. He seems capable of acting either nobly or basely, and Macaulay does not destroy the sense of mastery which the hero's actions occasionally convey by accounting for every motive. Clive seems to inspire both

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<sup>35</sup>Stuart's phrase for the biographical method in which the facts of a man's life are used to illustrate a thesis. (Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography, p. 67.)

<sup>36</sup>"Temple is not a man to our taste...a rare caution in playing that mixed game of skill and hazard, human life; a disposition to be content with small and certain winnings rather than to go on doubling the stake; these seem to us to be the most remarkable features of his character" (Works, VI, 248).



admiration and contempt in Macaulay, who cannot bestow on him the unqualified praise given to Milton (1825) or the emphatically-expressed contempt with which James I and Charles I are treated in several essays. Looking at the techniques used to characterize Clive, one sees that comparisons and contrasts at times ennoble him and at other times reveal his failings. Their main function, however, is to stress the drama of Clive's career.

Macaulay begins his essay by suggesting that the story of Clive is as exciting as accounts of the great conquerors Cortez and Pizarro, a comparison which sets the tone of the essay. The description of Clive's first heroic action, the defense of Arcot, includes a comparison which links Clive to other brilliant generals: Macaulay states that at Arcot ". . . the devotion of the little band to its chief surpassed anything that is related of the Tenth Legion of Caesar, or of the Old Guard of Napoleon" (VI, 396). A more subtle comparison occurs in the account of Plassey:

Conspicuous in the little army [of Clive] were the men of the Thirty-Ninth Regiment, which still bears on its colours, amidst many honourable additions won under Wellington in Spain and Gascony, the name of Plassey, and the proud motto, Primus in Indis (416).

Less flattering to Clive is another parallel, drawn when Macaulay tells how Clive tricked Omichund. To betray the native, the English general used "dissimulation surpassing even the dissimulation of Bengal. . ." (418). On the other hand, to

make the hero's welcome Clive received in England seem especially dramatic, Macaulay mentions that after the English victory at Plassey, William Pitt "described Clive as a heaven-born general, as a man who, bred to the labour of the desk, had displayed a military genius which might excite the admiration of the King of Prussia" (426-27).

After his third visit to India, however, Clive seems much less heroic; he then epitomizes the Nabobs, whose display of rapidly-gained wealth made them despised by their countrymen. Likening Clive to the protagonist of Foote's drama, The Nabob (1772), Macaulay cites a letter, "worthy of Sir Matthew Mite," in which Clive orders "two hundred shirts, the best and finest that can be got for love or money" (443), an order which faintly suggests the foibles of the crazed Omichund described earlier in the essay. But the heroic note predominates in the conclusion, as in the beginning of the work. Macaulay compares his subject's military ability to Trajan's, and he draws a parallel between Clive's career and those of Turgot and Lord William Bentinck.<sup>37</sup>

Contrasts also bring out the various shades of Clive's character. Macaulay relates that when Admiral Watson was ashamed to sign the false treaty used to deceive Omichund, Clive forged his signature. On the other hand, Clive displayed great

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<sup>37</sup>Appointed Governor General of India in 1833, Bentinck accomplished many reforms, including suppression of the Thugs, a gang of professional killers.

strength of character by refusing the immense sums offered to him by Meer Jaffier. Macaulay later contrasts Clive's high-principled eagerness to end British misrule in Bengal to the greed of the English functionaries whom the author calls "ravenous adventurers." He then cites a letter in which Clive declares, "I am come out with a mind superior to all corruption, and...I am determined to destroy these great and growing evils, or perish in the attempt" (434). By quoting this short passage to drive home his point, rather than by paraphrasing what he himself has previously said, Macaulay avoids the heavy emphasis of many passages in his early works. Clive's superiority is also shown by his generosity to fallen enemies: after a plot against him failed, he forgave the younger men and, while upholding his authority, "passed by personal insults and injuries with magnanimous disdain" (437). "Magnanimous" is an especially appropriate word here, for Aristotle observes that the magnanimous man is quick to overlook injuries and soon forgets the wrongs he suffers.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the essay, Clive's great exploits are compared and contrasted to those of Dupleix, governor general of French establishments in India. Dupleix is linked to Clive by an action which gains significance as the essay develops. Macaulay writes that Dupleix planned to commemorate his victory over Nazir Jung by erecting a column "on the four sides of which

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<sup>38</sup>Nicomachean Ethics, iv. 3.

four pompous inscriptions, in four languages, should proclaim his glory to all the nations of the East" (394). This column's symbolic meaning increases when Clive orders his men to destroy it, soon after his victory at Arcot. Having stood for the short-lived French supremacy in India, the column, now in ruins, signifies the beginning of British rule and the beginning of Clive's personal rise to greatness; and the column indicates that Clive is destined to be a more striking and dominant figure than Dupleix. The latter character appears as a foil at another key point, the battle of Plassey. After describing the event and its effects on Clive's career, Macaulay summarizes: "His power was now boundless, and far surpassed even that which Dupleix had attained in the south of India" (423). This observation, in the middle of the essay, recalls the destruction of Dupleix's column in the first section. Finally, at the conclusion, Macaulay underlines the greatness of the English general's deeds by saying, of Clive's last visit to India, "His dexterity and resolution realized, in the course of a few short months, more than all the gorgeous visions which had floated before the imagination of Dupleix" (452). Macaulay places his most emphatic statement of Clive's superiority to Dupleix at the end of the essay, thus illustrating what Minto calls his "climactic use of contrast."<sup>39</sup> Oblique references to Dupleix's column, such as the passage quoted above, help the reader to

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<sup>39</sup>Minto, p. 104.

keep in mind the shape of the story. The column symbol reinforces broad contrasts in the essay: real power vs. nominal power and imperialistic ruthlessness (represented by both the French and the English in India) vs. the enlightened policies of Clive. The author's dramatic execution of "Lord Clive" is typified by this use of Dupleix as a foil to the protagonist.

Although symbolism is not a major characteristic of Macaulay's writing, its use in "Lord Clive" is one of several indications that this late essay is more artistic than many earlier Edinburgh articles. Moreover, consideration of the essay's diction and figurative language strengthens the impression, created in part by the symbolic function of Dupleix's column, that Macaulay gains dramatic effect not only by painting vivid scenes and delineating Clive through bold comparisons and contrasts, but also through more subtle techniques.

In "Lord Clive," Macaulay's diction is often colloquial, but use of informal language does not lessen the sense of artistic control which his carefully-patterned work conveys. In a letter to Napier,<sup>40</sup> Lord Jeffrey defended Macaulay's diction in this way: "I am not so much scandalised as you seem to be at his colloquialisms . . . and indeed have a notion that they sometimes help to give an air of facility and

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<sup>40</sup>April 28, 1842.

confidence to his writing which is one of its greatest attractions."<sup>41</sup> Macaulay's colloquial words and phrases make his descriptions vivid. The schemes of Dupleix were frustrated, we are told, when his French employers ignored his requests for trained soldiers and instead "sent him for troops only the sweepings of the galleys" (400). Clive faced a similar problem, for he received "the worst and lowest wretches that the Company's crimps could pick up in the flash-houses of London" (401).<sup>42</sup> Macaulay expresses the thought that Clive's enemies wanted him humiliated to the point of losing his knighthood by saying that these men hoped "to see his spurs chopped off" (446). The racy language used in these examples illustrates the author's theory that "colloquial ease" is well suited to the historical essay, if not to more formal historical writing. Words which connote rapid action--"instantly" recurs in the essay--suggest excitement and hurry the story forward to its inevitable conclusion.

One reason that "Lord Clive" appears to be a more substantial work than essays written many years earlier is that Macaulay's tone is not glib. The impression of fullness created by the descriptive details he selects, by the facts and incidents which dramatize the mysteriousness of the East,

<sup>41</sup>Selections from the Correspondence of Macvey Napier, p. 387.

<sup>42</sup>crimps: agents who impressed seamen and soldiers; flash-houses: houses frequented by thieves and prostitutes.

balances the rapid narrative pace, a pace which makes earlier works seem superficial. Moreover, climaxes marked by elaborate antithetical patterns and a profusion of words seem forced when compared to the more natural patterns of later work. When Macaulay writes, for example, that Clive "took Budgebudge, routed the garrison of Fort William . . . [and] stormed and sacked Hoogley" (410), he slowly increases the emphasis,

took  
routed  
stormed and sacked,

without creating an exaggerated or strained effect.<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, in the essay's battle scenes, words chosen to heighten the impression do not give a strident ring to the prose. For example, in the sentence which introduces the action at Plassey, Macaulay achieves a quietly solemn tone through anaphora: "The day broke, the day which was to decide the fate of India" (416). Next, specific details rather than generalizations convey the feeling that Surajah Dowlah's army is immense: his troops display "firelocks, pikes, swords, bows and arrows" (415). In the following paragraph, the disaster which befell the Indian armies is described in terms which become gradually more emphatic: after the first exchange, the

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<sup>43</sup>Cf. this sentence from an early work which describes the fate of Machiavelli's works: "His works were misrepresented by the learned, misconstrued by the ignorant, censured by the church, abused, with all the rancour of simulated virtue, by the tools of a base government, and the priests of a baser superstition" (works, V, 82).

British see "disorder" in Surajah Dowlah's troops; soon these faltering men become a "mob"; and finally, the British have "scattered an army of near sixty thousand men" (416). To make certain passages of "Clive" emphatic, Macaulay avoids the obvious techniques used in early works, such as repetition of superlatives or inverted word order, and adopts the more natural practice of selecting strong Anglo-Saxon words for emphasis. "Fastness" is a word, for example, which recurs in dramatic passages, suggesting more effectively than "fort" that Clive's adventures take place in a remote land. "Sprung," "flung," and other past participles of old verbs appear often in the battle scenes of "Lord Clive." A frequently-mentioned quality of the main character is his "boldness." When Macaulay describes the plight of the British trapped in the Black Hole, he writes, "They strove to burst the door" (408). On the whole, the diction of the late Clive essay is simpler and less ornate than that of the early essay on Milton.

A more striking difference between these two works, however, is that Macaulay's chauvinistic opinions of 1825 have disappeared by 1840: successes and failures of British conquests in India are narrated dispassionately, and Macaulay finds several occasions not only to describe the sufferings of the conquered people, but also to denounce the actions of his countrymen. Those who dismiss Macaulay as provincial and smug must ignore several eloquent passages in "Lord Clive" which



show the author's sympathy for the victims of British imperialism, for those who felt "the yoke of foreign masters" (453). Depicting the inhabitants of Bengal, for example, he wrote:

The unhappy race never attempted resistance. Sometimes they submitted in patient misery. Sometimes they fled from the white man, as their fathers had been used to fly from the Mahratta; and the palanquin of the English traveller was often carried through silent villages and towns, which the report of his approach had made desolate (432).

Although many of the rhetorical flourishes used in "Milton" appear also in "Lord Clive," they are put to more varied uses in the later work. In the passage just quoted, for example, Macaulay uses antithesis in an unobtrusive way to describe the natives' plight. The somber and simple diction of this passage makes it very unlike the florid passages of "Milton." The passage cited here illustrates Macaulay's theory that the historical essay's tone may rise to solemnity or fall to a colloquial level, whichever is appropriate to the event or situation being described. When he writes that the "palanquin of the English traveller was often carried through silent villages and towns, which the report of his approach had made desolate," he sets the glamor of Clive's remarkable career into perspective, and implies that his dramatic victories produced evil as well as good results.

Minto suggests another way of contrasting Macaulay's early articles to later works when he comments:

In his earlier essays, he shows an obvious straining after ingenious conceits. His Essay on Milton is, as he said himself, in later years, 'overloaded with gaudy and ungraceful ornament.' In essays written before he was thirty, there are probably twice as many similes as in all his subsequent writings. His 'Milton' contains as many as any six of his later essays.<sup>44</sup>

He generally allows a metaphorical statement to stand alone in "Clive," without the elaborate paraphrases which characterize early articles. Hence, in late works, metaphors are more suggestive than metaphors in such early essays as "Milton" and "Samuel Johnson." A statement at the beginning of "Clive," for example, in which Macaulay observes that England has been "fertile in heroes and statesman" (VI, 382), would probably have been expounded at great length had it been made in an early essay.

Like other devices in the Clive essay, metaphorical language heightens the drama inherent in the main character's actions. In the third "act," Macaulay tells why Clive's last return to England was not met with the enthusiasm of earlier homecomings: the Nabobs had become a despised class; Clive was taken to personify Nabob vices; and a famine in Bengal had turned public opinion against the India company. To summarize these ominous developments and to introduce the following topic, Parliamentary investigation of Indian affairs, Macaulay states, "The whole storm, which had long been gathering, now broke at

<sup>44</sup>Minto, pp. 97-98.

once on the head of Clive" (445). A few paragraphs later, another figurative example drives home the point that Clive's fortunes have turned and the hero has become a hated man: Macaulay describes his enemies as a "low-minded and rancorous pack. . . eager to worry him to death" (448). The words are deliberately chosen, for "low-minded" recalls that Clive's high principles have been stressed in the account of his actions. The reference to a "pack" after its victim, and the word which ends the sentence, "death," foreshadows the end of the essay, Clive's suicide. A similar foreshadowing occurs near the ending, when Macaulay relates that, after being censured by the House of Commons and retiring to his estate, Clive became melancholic: "His active spirit in an inactive situation drooped and withered like a plant in an uncongenial air" (451). The simile prepares for the hero's death. These few examples show that in "Lord Clive," as in the Gladstone article, Macaulay uses metaphorical language to suggest, and not, as often in early works, to exaggerate or to paraphrase, repeating statements without making them more precise. By implicitly comparing a natural action which happens quickly, the wilting of a flower, to Clive's approaching death, Macaulay hints at the mutability theme and suggests that the change from triumph to defeat can occur swiftly. Thus metaphor in the essay, a device for heightening the drama of Clive's acts and keeping attention focused on him, illustrates an important aspect of Macaulay's "scene-painting manner."

Since Macaulay liked to imagine himself taking part in historical events, and since he compared the "manner of Shakespeare's historical plays" to the manner of his historical essays, it is not surprising that many dramatic techniques appear in "Lord Clive." The work's great popularity with both nineteenth and twentieth-century readers indicates that in this late essay, selection and arrangement successfully bring out the inherently dramatic qualities of Clive's actions. But the work succeeds not only because it embodies Macaulay's theory that the historical essay should focus on a man's actions, but also because the narrative moves gracefully from one point to the next. Even if Macaulay had not explicitly praised Southey's short historical works, his admiration for Southey's narrative style could be inferred from "Lord Clive," an essay which illustrates one of Macaulay's central ideas: the writing of history is an art. The historian must strive, therefore, "to make the narrative flow along as it ought, every part naturally springing from that which precedes" (Trevelyan, II, 276). To understand this statement, one may observe the methods used in "Lord Clive" to make the story "flow."

Several previously-mentioned characteristics of the essay contribute to artistic narration--the lucid, three-part structure, for example, and the symbolism of Duplex's column--but other patterns in the work seem especially designed to make

smooth transitions. First, he uses "prospective and retrospective summaries"<sup>45</sup> to keep the story line sharply in focus. Figurative language is a second device used to move the action forward. Macaulay's pithy summaries tell both what has happened and what is about to happen. His figurative language connects Clive's military achievements to a less glamorous subject, administrative work.

At the beginning of the essay, to move from his commentary on the biographies of Clive to the story of Clive himself, Macaulay argues that ". . . our island, so fertile in heroes and statesmen, has scarcely ever produced a man more truly great either in arms or in council" (382). This statement both introduces the idea that Clive's career has two distinct aspects and repeats the point with which Macaulay began: Clive's adventures are as exciting as those of Cortez and Pizarro. An especially poignant transitional sentence appears late in the essay, when Macaulay quotes a letter to show Clive's desire for reform in Bengal. "I do declare, by that great Being who is the searcher of all hearts," Clive wrote, ". . . that I am determined to destroy these great and growing evils, or perish in the attempt" (434). This letter reminds the reader of Clive's previous successes, makes clear the difficult task he now faces, and foreshadows his death. Moreover the phrase "great and growing evils" is significant here because

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

later in the essay Macaulay states that after Clive left India for the last time, "His policy was to a great extent abandoned; and the abuses which he had suppressed began to revive" (444). In the light of this development, Clive's avowal seems an ironic commentary on human ambition.

Macaulay's narration also becomes fluent through the effective use of figurative language. Clive achieved greatness both as a soldier and as a statesman, Macaulay declares at the beginning of the essay, and repeats the point throughout the work. The military part of this career, inherently dramatic, lent itself to picturesque description, but Macaulay faced the difficulty of recounting Clive's administrative deeds and his struggles with Parliament in such a way that they would be interesting and would seem natural developments of the hero's military career. Macaulay makes administration appear dramatic and thus unifies his essay by choosing military imagery to describe Clive's later life: his reforms in Bengal and his attempts to defend his actions in England. To delineate Clive's victory over those who opposed reform, for example, Macaulay writes, "All resistance was quelled" (435), to suggest a parallel between military and administrative success. Turning to the Parliamentary investigation of Indian affairs, he writes: "Clive's parliamentary tactics resembled his military tactics. Deserted, surrounded, outnumbered, and with everything at stake, he did not even deign to stand on the

defensive, but pushed boldly forward to the attack" (446). This description not only makes Clive's situation seem dramatic by pointing to the hero's fortitude, but also reinforces that impression by calling to mind events which have been narrated in the first and second parts of the essay: the defense of Arcot and the victory at Plassey. Thus, while metaphors in "Lord Clive" are not used as profusely as in the Milton essay, their function is not merely decorative. In the examples cited, metaphor relates one part of the story to another.

Macaulay obtains in practice the sense of movement which his theoretical statement recommends through techniques which quicken the pace of the narrative without calling attention to themselves, as rhetorical devices often do in the early essays. For example, the story of Clive moves forward swiftly through antitheses, less pointed than those in earlier articles but effective nonetheless; through abrupt but natural shifts from one action to the next; and through short sentences which, though not unusual in Macaulay's writing, seem more concise in "Lord Clive" than in works written fifteen or twenty years earlier. In these articles, short sentences express broad generalizations or defend ingenious, often superficial paradoxes, whereas in the Clive essay, their functions are to summarize, to condense, and to foreshadow events. Macaulay's animated prose style is inadequate for achieving certain effects, for analyzing complex problems or

showing nuances of character, but the style is well suited to narration. At its best, Macaulay's prose can be eloquently moving, for example, in the description of Clive's last months (VI, 451).

Even Victorian critics who judged Macaulay severely praised his historical essays. Leslie Stephen described "Clive" in this way:

The story seems to tell itself. The characters are so strongly marked, the events fall so easily into their places, that we fancy that the narrator's business has been done to his hand . . . this massive simplicity is really indicative of an art not, it may be, of the highest order, but truly admirable for its purpose.<sup>46</sup>

"Lord Clive" has remained a popular work. Hazen wrote of the essays on Hastings and Clive:

They portray a momentous chapter in British imperial history and abound in striking adventure and in the display of remarkable personal qualities operating upon a vast and mysterious stage. . . Immensely popular for three generations their fascination seems as popular as ever, the magnificence of the scene, the play of personality, the sweep of the destinies involved, still arrest the attention and hold it captive. It will be long before these essays die.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>This summary appears in Stephen's review of Trevelyan's biography reprinted in Hours in a Library (3 vols.; London: Smith, Elder, 1892), II, 370-71. More recently, Abbott has written of Macaulay's historical essays, ". . . his brief lives in the manner of Plutarch", as he called them, have found few rivals in any literature." (Abbott, p. 8). In "Macaulay's Style as an Essayist," G. S. Fraser numbers the Clive essay among Macaulay's best works. (Review of English Literature, I (1960), 17).

<sup>47</sup>Charles Downer Hazen (ed.), Historical Essays by Lord Macaulay (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), p. xvi.



Although the Clive essay has been highly praised, critics have not attempted to show in any detail why it is a good essay; the technique of the work as a whole has not been analyzed. Using Macaulay's theory of the historical essay to illustrate "Lord Clive" allows the reader to see that the work's artistic effects were consciously aimed at by the writer.<sup>48</sup> Macaulay's theory of dramatic execution and his stress on fluent narration are both reflected in his essay "Lord Clive."

Composed in 1840, this work represents a development in Macaulay's essays, as well as an application of his historical theories. "Lord Clive" bears repeated readings far better than the first Edinburgh articles; it is a more complex work than the narratives written in the early 1830's. The later essay lacks the "metallic" quality which Matthew Arnold disliked about Macaulay's writing. Although "Lord Clive" exhibits many of the rhetorical devices which appear in the Milton essay--repetition and antithesis, for example--it does not display the exaggerated and strained effects which weaken the earlier article.

Gladstone offers a good summary of Macaulay's theory of historical writing when he states that "In Macaulay all history

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<sup>48</sup>In a recent article, Ronald Weber relates "History" to Macaulay's essays on Milton and Dryden and concludes that "Macaulay's consistent purpose in the theory he constructs is to replace the novelist as well as the poet with the figure of the ideal historian. . . . Insistently he formulates for the historian the role of poet-philosopher-prophet in the modern world." ("Singer and Seer: Macaulay on the Historian as Poet," Papers on Language and Literature, III [1967], 219.)

is scenic."<sup>49</sup> Although in Gladstone's opinion Macaulay lacked depth, "his power upon the surface was rare and marvellous . . . Ease, brilliancy, pellucid clearness, commanding fascination, the effective marshalling of all facts belonging to the external world on parade--all these gifts Macaulay has."<sup>50</sup> Such gifts are clearly suited to narrative writing rather than to argumentation. At any rate, this impression is given by "Southey's Colloquies," an essay in which the reviewer's descriptive power, his "power upon the surface" blurs the complexities of many problems he discusses. The Clive essay seems a much more substantial work; the phrase "the effective marshalling of all facts belonging to the external world on parade" fits it exactly. Macaulay's imaginative force weakens the Southey review, but the same quality strengthens and unifies an essay written ten years later, "Lord Clive."

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<sup>49</sup>Gladstone, p. 48.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

## CHAPTER V

### "SAMUEL JOHNSON" (1831) AND THE LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON (1856)

Macaulay's later Edinburgh Review articles fall into the two broad categories of surveys or historical sketches, which are digressive and rather loosely organized, and the more formally structured narratives such as "Lord Clive," a work illustrating the author's belief that the historical essay is a distinct genre. Five biographical articles written for the Encyclopedia Britannica between 1853 and 1859, the year Macaulay died, comprise a third type of narrative essay. Shorter and more condensed than his reviews, these articles offer proof that Macaulay's style was not always the same. The changes which occur during the Edinburgh period, 1825-1844, have been described in previous chapters. Since nearly ten years passed before Macaulay turned again to essay writing, the Encyclopedia articles illustrate especially well the development of his short prose works. Concentrating upon his two essays on Samuel Johnson, this chapter will elaborate a brief but suggestive remark in Trevelyan's Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay:

Macaulay's belief about himself as a writer was that he improved to the last; and the question of the superiority of his later over his earlier manner may securely be staked upon a comparison

between the article on Johnson in the Edinburgh Review, and the article on Johnson in the Encyclopedia Britannica (Trevelyan, II, 447).<sup>1</sup>

In 1831 Macaulay reviewed Croker's edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson for the Edinburgh Review. One of his weaker argumentative works, this review attacks Croker, Boswell, and Johnson: Macaulay dismisses Croker's edition as "ill compiled, ill arranged, ill written, and ill printed" (Works, V, 498); he argues in the second part of the review that, if Boswell "had not been a great fool, he would never have been a great writer" (V, 515); finally, Macaulay argues that Johnson's intellect united "great powers with low prejudices" (526). Macaulay's second study of Johnson was written in 1856 for the Encyclopedia Britannica. Separated by twenty-five years, during which Macaulay became one of the most famous writers of his day, the two essays on Johnson mark the development of his prose style, for the Edinburgh article typifies his early, flamboyant writing, and the 1856 essay displays the plainer style of his last works.

"Gladstone on Church and State" and "Lord Clive" show complexities not found in the 1831 "Samuel Johnson," but these works, written before Macaulay had retired from politics, do not show the full extent of the development of his prose style.

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<sup>1</sup>Macaulay's article was written for the 8th edition. It was revised for the 11th edition by T. Seccombe, included in the 14th edition (1939), and reprinted until 1965, when an article on Johnson by S. C. Roberts replaced the Life by Macaulay.

Because he returned to Johnson in the last decade of his life, when failing health limited his work on The History of England, the 1856 narrative essay makes a particularly good contrast to the 1831 review.

Since an argumentative essay differs in intent from a narrative essay, it may be objected that contrasting the two types will not show the development of Macaulay's style. But the terms "argument" and "narrative" are descriptions which classify Macaulay's essays in a general way. The distinction is somewhat arbitrary when two essays have the same subject. Moreover, while the first Johnson essay is an argument in that one of its purposes is to discredit the Tories, it contains many narrative passages. The justification for contrasting Macaulay's two essays on Johnson is that one is an early essay and the other a late essay. Thus if Macaulay's style never changes, as critics have asserted, the style of the late essay should resemble the style of the early essay. In fact, the disparity between Macaulay's two essays on Johnson illustrates the bias of critical judgments such as the following: "All his education was completed by '32, and there he stayed: he suffered from what we would call 'arrested development'. . . . Thus his mind, his nature could never change."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Bonamy Dobrée, "Macaulay," The Criterion, XII (1933), 598. The critic's statement resembles some of Macaulay's own pronouncements.

Isolating for discussion the two Johnson essays may also be questioned on the grounds that an Encyclopedia article would be written more carefully than a periodical work. This objection would be serious if the essays on Johnson were written at the same time and if in the Encyclopedia work Macaulay had obviously toned down his remarks to suit a wider audience than the Whig audience of the Edinburgh Review. But twenty-five years separate the Johnson essays, a fact which allows the reader to speculate that differences between the two works cannot be attributed solely to differences in the place of publication.

There are four marked contrasts between the works on Johnson. The 1856 Life reveals 1) a more favorable view of Johnson than is expressed in the 1831 review; 2) matured critical opinions; 3) a more subtle prose style; and 4) a more complex structure. While all of these contrasts exemplify changes in Macaulay's writing, stylistic and structural differences most clearly indicate his development, for the flexibility and detachment of his late style and the complexity of his narrative pattern are not typical of the Edinburgh articles. If the differences between Macaulay's early and late opinions of Johnson's character were only slight, one could infer that he softened his judgments for the Encyclopedia. Yet the 1856 essay expresses a genuine fondness for Johnson which, if at all present in 1831, would probably have been expressed in the Edinburgh piece, since Macaulay's jibes at the Tories found

a more suitable target in the politician Croker than in the literary figures Boswell and Johnson. Similarly, the contrast between critical passages in 1831 and 1856 cannot be dismissed as the result of publication in a standard reference work, for two long essays written for the Edinburgh in the 1840's, "Madame D'Arblay" and "Addison," show Macaulay's departure from some of the critical norms implicit in the 1831 review. The judgment that the later Samuel Johnson essay is superior to Macaulay's first work on the same figure does not depend, then, entirely on stylistic differences between the two works, although juxtaposing parallel passages from the two essays on Johnson shows most concretely that Macaulay's writing is not always the same. Finally, the organization of the late work suggests a mastery of structure not demonstrated by the 1831 essay on Johnson.

Macaulay was young and famous in 1831 when he first wrote about Samuel Johnson, and the tone of the review reflects its author's cocksure attitude. He does to Johnson what six years before he had accused Johnson of doing to Milton, for he makes Johnson "the butt of much clumsy ridicule" (Works, V, 4). Exaggerated phrasing expresses a censorious attitude toward Johnson:

folly and meanness of all bigotry but his own  
 lowest, fiercest, most absurd extravagances of party  
 spirit  
 he never examined  
 his whole code  
 he repeatedly laid it down  
 he could see no merit.

Although Macaulay faults Johnson for deciding literary questions "like a lawyer," he makes the following pronouncement on Johnson's diction: Johnson "felt a vicious partiality for terms which, long after our own speech had been fixed, were borrowed from the Greek and Latin, and which, therefore, even when lawfully naturalised, must be considered as born aliens, not entitled to rank with the king's English" (V, 536).

Another characteristic of the essay and of Macaulay's early essays in general is the elaboration of shallow paradoxical statements. We are told, for example, that the distinguishing feature of Johnson's intellect was "the union of great powers with low prejudices" (526), a statement which is variously paraphrased:

his mind dwindled. . . from gigantic elevation/  
to dwarfish littleness  
a mind at least as remarkable for narrowness/  
as for strength.

Here Macaulay uses the sharp antithetical patterns which, in an essay published one year earlier, he had condemned in other writers. "By judicious selection and judicious exaggeration," he wrote in the Byron essay, "The intellect and the disposition of any human being might be described as being made up of nothing but startling contrasts" (Works, V, 411). A writer who relies on exaggerated contrasts produces "not a man, but a personified epigram" (412).

Unfortunately for Macaulay's reputation, the essay which makes Johnson seem a "personified epigram" is taken as his final



verdict on Johnson. As George Birkbeck Hill wrote:

The vigorous sketch that he dashed off in the days of his youth for the pages of the Edinburgh Review is doubtless more widely known than the life that he wrote with such exquisite skill when he was now in the fulness of his powers. In the essay we seem to look upon the picture of a Tory painted by a Whig. In the life we have the portrait of one great man drawn by another great man.<sup>3</sup>

As Hill indicates, twenty-five years after reviewing Croker's edition of Boswell, Macaulay viewed Johnson more sympathetically. Some vivid and grotesque details used in 1831 to describe Johnson's appearance and character are repeated, but the context is entirely different: in the 1856 work, such details elaborate a point the author wishes to stress: Johnson's poverty, his poor health, and his melancholy nature created his eccentricities.<sup>4</sup> The influence of his early years upon his habits and actions as an adult are emphasized, making the author seem more perceptive in 1856 than in 1831, when his exaggerated descriptions caricatured Johnson.<sup>5</sup> Macaulay's later and more sympathetic view of the man is foreshadowed by a passage in the

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<sup>3</sup>Dr. Johnson: His Friends and His Critics (London: Smith, Elder, 1878), p. 97.

<sup>4</sup>In a brief introductory note to his edition of the second Johnson essay, Clinton W. Lucas observes that "generally in the treatment of Johnson, the "Life" breathes a more tolerant and sympathetic spirit than does the article of 1831." Macaulay's Life of Samuel Johnson (New York: American Book Co., 1910), p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>Hill comments on some of these distortions, for example, Macaulay's account of the Cock Lane ghost episode (V, 527) in the second chapter of Dr. Johnson: His Friends and His Critics. See especially pp. 98-123.

1843 essay "Madame D'Arblay," in which he states that Johnson's benevolence had been recognized, "but how gentle and endearing his deportment could be, was not known till the Recollections of Madame D'Arblay were published" (Works, VII, 17). Since the work Macaulay refers to was published after his review of Croker's Boswell appeared, it may have been partly responsible for his later and more generous treatment of Johnson. In Macaulay's 1856 article, phrases such as the following, often used as transitional summaries, give his observations a compassionate sound:

under the influence of his disease  
with such infirmities of mind and body  
the effect of the privations and sufferings  
one hard struggle with poverty  
seven years which he passed in the drudgery of penning  
definitions.

Macaulay, who himself faced no comparable obstacles, nonetheless emphasizes Johnson's difficulties and recounts, with obvious pride in Johnson, the story of his letter to Chesterfield.

A final instance of Macaulay's greater sympathy in the later essay<sup>6</sup> is the account of Johnson's death. Written only

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<sup>6</sup>A small sign of Macaulay's partiality toward Johnson is his indictment of Mrs. Thrale, an indictment which Warren P. Mild, in an unpublished dissertation titled "Macaulay as a Critic of Eighteenth Century Literature" (Minnesota, 1951), interprets in this way: "Macaulay's ill-treatment of Mrs. Thrale in the article for the Encyclopedia Britannica can be explained on no rational basis. It must have grown either out of Macaulay's disproportioned moral sense or out of a congenital inability to respect women as women" (p. 182). Since Macaulay often uses the rhetorical device of disparaging one person to elevate another, Mild's inferences seem groundless. Phrases such as

three years before Macaulay's own death, this description, like the funeral scene in "William Pitt" (1859), perhaps owes some of its effectiveness to the author's feeling that he would soon die. At the end of the Life, Johnson is portrayed as a complex man: "resolved to stand one English winter more," he is "courageous against pain, but timid against death" (VII, 355-56). Unlike antitheses in the 1831 "Samuel Johnson," this juxtaposition of courage and timidity seems to describe the real Johnson, and not to caricature him.

If this later and more objective view of Johnson is not as well known as Macaulay's superficial comments of 1831, the critical opinions expounded in the 1856 work are also less familiar to readers than those advanced in the Edinburgh Review. The early work justifies Macaulay's low opinion of his critical ability.<sup>7</sup> To a certain extent, criticism in the early Johnson essay is subordinated to the author's argumentative purpose, discrediting Croker's edition of Boswell.<sup>8</sup> But critical

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"disproportioned moral sense" and "congenital inability" illustrate the patronizing tone of much Macaulay criticism.

<sup>7</sup>In a letter to Napier dated June 26, 1838, Macaulay wrote: ". . . I am not successful in analysing the effect of works of genius. I have written several things on historical, political, and moral questions. . . by which I should be willing to be estimated; but I have never written a page of criticism on poetry, or the fine arts, which I would not burn if I had the power" (Trevelyan, II, 3).

<sup>8</sup>For an account of Macaulay's literary and political feuds with J. W. Croker see Beatty, pp. 136-144. More partial to Macaulay is the account in Trevelyan, I, 123-25. John Wilson answers Macaulay's charges in "Noctes Ambrosianae" No. LIX,

passages in the essay can be taken seriously, aside from their rhetorical function, because they typify criticism in Macaulay's early essays. The criticism of "Samuel Johnson" has been used to judge both Macaulay's ability as a critic and his estimate of Johnson's work. It is only just, therefore, to examine the critical passages of the 1831 essay in the light of Macaulay's later judgments to determine whether his criticism in 1856 indicates any revised opinions. As Harrold and Templeman state in their notes to the 1831 review, "More than any other of Macaulay's essays, this one has built up the legend of Macaulay the exaggerator."<sup>9</sup>

The paradoxical statement in the 1831 essay that Boswell wrote a great book because he was a great fool has become notorious. The paradox is consistent, however, with the primitivistic theories expounded in "Milton," for Macaulay attributes no conscious art to Boswell. By contrast, in the 1856 essay, Macaulay, still no admirer of Boswell's character, describes the process of his biographical work:

During those visits his chief business was to watch Johnson to discover all Johnson's habits, to turn the conversation to subjects about

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Blackwood's Magazine, XXX (1831), 830-38. One of North's characters says of Macaulay's attack on Croker, "Fee! faw! fum! I smell the bluid o' a pairty man" (p. 838). See also E. S. deBeer, "Macaulay and Croker: the Review of Croker's Boswell," Review of English Studies, n.s. X (1959), 388-97.

<sup>9</sup>English Prose of the Victorian Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 1595. The editors believe, however, that in 1856 Macaulay "drew practically the same picture of Johnson and Boswell."

which Johnson was likely to say something remarkable, and to fill quarto note books with minutes of what Johnson had said. In this way were gathered the materials, out of which was afterwards constructed the most interesting biographical work in the world (VII, 347).

As portrayed here, Boswell is not the "inspired idiot"<sup>10</sup> of 1831; Macaulay distinguishes the man from the work more carefully in 1856. The description of Boswell's method and the observation that his work was "constructed" seem to deny the glib assertion, made in 1831, that Boswell wrote a great book because he was a fool. Perhaps defending the great fool/great writer paradox was more a rhetorical exercise than a serious statement of the critic's opinion. In any event, writing twenty-five years later, Macaulay still points out that Boswell lacked the qualities normally thought requisite for great writers and compares him to "those creepers which botanists call parasites" (VII, 346), but he merely alludes to the improbability of the situation without interrupting his narrative to direct the reader's judgment.

Macaulay's early judgments are noticeably different from those expressed in the 1856 essay; hence, a brief comparison of other critical passages seems warranted. In 1831, Macaulay's opinion of Johnson's writing is moralistic, vague, and oversimplified, while his 1856 article demonstrates more complex views.

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<sup>10</sup>Macaulay actually applied this term to Goldsmith: "Goldsmith was very justly described by one of his contemporaries as an inspired idiot. . ." But the statement is made in the Johnson review to amplify the great fool/great writer paradox.

Reviewing Robert Montgomery's poems in 1830, Macaulay argued that the critic has a public duty to attack bad writing, in order to undermine its influence: "Those who are best fitted to guide the public opinion think it beneath them to expose mere nonsense, and comfort themselves by reflecting that such popularity cannot last. This contemptuous lenity has been carried too far. . ." (Works, V, 375-76). Macaulay of course had greater respect for Johnson than for Montgomery, but his assertion here helps to explain the moralistic tone of the 1831 review of Croker's Boswell. Twenty-five years later, Macaulay is more detached; he reveals his attitude by this praise of Johnson: "He had learned, both from his own observation and from literary history, that the place of books in the public estimation is fixed, not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them" (VII, 573). This aphorism probably reflects Macaulay's feeling about his own work in 1856, when four volumes of the History of England had been published. The thought that the place of books is fixed "not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them" suggests a development away from the critic-as-judge attitude of his earlier criticism. In 1856, Macaulay apparently did not consider "Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur" an appropriate motto for literary critics. Perhaps as he wrote about Samuel Johnson he recalled that, despite his vigorous attack on Montgomery in 1830, the poet's works sold very well in the following decades.

Another reason that the 1856 Johnson article lacks a moralistic tone is that its observations are much more specific than those in the original essay and in the early reviews generally. In his first reviews, Macaulay defends theories of literature, but in his late Edinburgh works he describes specific works without first setting up a theoretical context. This development away from theory, apparent in the critical passages of "Addison" (1843) and in the essay on Fanny Burney (1843), which contains an excellent analysis of Jane Austen's comic technique,<sup>11</sup> is especially clear from the Encyclopedia articles on Bunyan, Goldsmith, and Johnson. The vague quality of the 1831 essay on Johnson is well-illustrated by the following judgment: "His whole code of criticism rested on pure assumption, for which he sometimes quoted a precedent or an authority, but rarely troubled himself to give a reason drawn from the nature of things" (V, 531). Aside from being exaggerated,

whole code  
 pure assumption  
 rarely troubled,

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<sup>11</sup>Jane Austen was one of Macaulay's favorite authors. Trevelyan wrote, "Pride and Prejudice, and the five sister novels remained without a rival in his affections. He never for a moment wavered in his allegiance to Miss Austen. In 1858 he notes in his journal, 'If I could get materials, I really would write a short life of that wonderful woman and raise a little money to put up a monument to her in Winchester Cathedral'" (Trevelyan, II, 466). Henry James described Macaulay as Jane Austen's "first slightly ponderous amoroso," in a lecture on Balzac. (The Question of Our Speech. The Lesson of Balzac. Two lectures /Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1905/, p. 62.)

the statement is manifestly unfair, if one recalls Johnson's "Preface to Shakespeare" and the appeal to common sense which underlies his discussion of the unities. By contrast, Macaulay in 1856 offered concrete observations about individual works. Finding "The Vanity of Human Wishes" superior to Juvenal's Tenth Satire in its description of writers' lives, he disputes in effect the theory expounded in "Milton" that, "as civilisation advances, poetry almost necessarily declines" (V, 4), a theory found also in the 1828 review "Dryden." By praising both Juvenal and Johnson for verisimilitude (VII, 335), Macaulay appears to contradict the poetry-as-illusion theory elaborated by his discussion of "the extreme remoteness of the associations" which Milton's poetry produces (V, 9), and implicit in his preference of Milton's "dim intimations" to the "exact details of Dante" (V, 14).

In the Encyclopedia articles, Macaulay gives his personal opinion less directly and less emphatically than in early works; for example, when he treats the Rambler in 1856, he notes that some critics termed the work perfect, while others condemned it. But the "best critics," although finding an occasional fault of diction,

did justice to the acuteness of Johnson's observations on morals and manners, to the constant precision and frequent brilliancy of his language, to the weighty and magnificent eloquence of many serious passages, and to the solemn yet pleasing humor of some of the lighter papers (VII, 337).



Here the mean-between-extremes attitude characteristic of Macaulay clarifies rather than simplifies the discussion, and the balanced construction reinforces the idea that the Rambler is a work too complex to be dismissed by hasty praise or blame. None of the good qualities attributed to Johnson in the above passage is mentioned in the 1831 review, in which Johnson's opinions on literature are dismissed as "whims." The strident tone of many critical passages in the Edinburgh articles is not found in the passage cited here, a passage whose concreteness also distinguishes it from critical discussions in early reviews. The anti-Tory prejudice which mars critical passages in the first essay on Johnson does not appear in the later work. Perhaps years of historical research made Macaulay less dogmatic in expressing his opinions. Whig biases are less prominent in the 1835 Mackintosh essay than in "Hallam" (1828), an essay which covers the same period, and less apparent in the 1844 essay on Chatham than in an essay written ten years earlier about the same man.

But the strongest proof that Macaulay's critical judgment had matured by 1856 is that, in the second essay on Johnson, his opinions are not only specific and detached from politics, but are more discriminating than judgments advanced in the 1831 review. For example, The Lives of The Poets, a work not even mentioned in 1831, is introduced as being "on the whole, the best of Johnson's works" (VII, 352-53) and characterized as follows:

The narratives are as entertaining as any novel. The remarks on life and human nature are eminently shrewd and profound. The criticisms are often excellent, and, even when grossly and provokingly unjust, well deserve to be studied. For, however erroneous they may be they mean something, a praise to which much of what is called criticism in our time has no pretensions (353).

Here Macaulay sets aside one tenet of his early criticism, for he had written in "Dryden" (1828) that ". . . the science of criticism, like every other science, is constantly tending toward perfection" (V, 95). In view of Macaulay's high praise of The Lives of the Poets and for many of Johnson's other works, René Wellek's recent statement that Macaulay "thought the actual writings of Dr. Johnson justly falling into oblivion"<sup>12</sup> seems "grossly and provokingly unjust" to Macaulay, whose 1856 essay foreshadows the rise in Johnson's critical reputation, and whose judgment that his best work is The Lives of the Poets is widely held today. Furthermore, if Matthew Arnold thought Macaulay unfair to Johnson, he surely would not have chosen Macaulay's 1856 article as an introduction to his edition of The Lives of the Poets.<sup>13</sup>

Macaulay's critical insight may also be shown by contrasting his attitude toward Johnson's style in 1831 with the

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<sup>12</sup>A History of Modern Literary Criticism, Vol. III: Age of Transition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 129.

<sup>13</sup>The Six Chief Lives from Johnson's "Lives of the Poets" with Macaulay's "Life of Johnson" (London: Macmillan, 1879). See below, p. 15.

more discriminating judgments of 1856. As a young man, Macaulay wrote confidently in the Edinburgh Review:

As soon as he [Johnson] took his pen in his hand to write for the public, his style became systematically vicious. All his books are written in a learned language, in a language which nobody hears from his mother or his nurse, in a language in which nobody ever quarrels, or drives bargains, or makes love. . . he did his sentences out of English into Johnsonese (V, 535-36).

Macaulay then gives this verdict: "A manner which does not sit easy on the mannerist, which has been adopted on principle, and which can be sustained only by constant effort, is always offensive. And such is the manner of Johnson" (536). The last statement epitomizes Macaulay's early writing: the oversimplified summary, the air of certitude, and the inversion for emphasis. In 1856, his view of Johnson's style, considerably altered, shows how his critical opinions had matured.<sup>14</sup> In the later article he notes, first of all, that Johnson's early style is occasionally "turgid even to absurdity" (V, 337), but finds the language of the Journey to the Hebrides (1775) "somewhat easier and more graceful than that of his early writings" (349).

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<sup>14</sup>Other evidence is his revised opinion of Goldsmith's historical writing. Macaulay's early judgment, given in his Minute on Education (which argued that English should be the language of instruction in India), is that "Goldsmith's Histories of Greece and Rome are miserable performances. . ." (Trevelyan, I, 408). But a very different view is set forth in the Life of Goldsmith, which Macaulay wrote in 1856: "He was a great, perhaps an unequalled, master of the arts of selection and condensation. In these respects his histories of Rome and of England, and still more his own abridgements of these histories, well deserve to be studied" (Works, VII, 319).

This development toward simplicity Macaulay finds most apparent in the Lives of the Poets, a work whose diction shows "a colloquial ease which it had formerly wanted" (353). Macaulay here rejects an antithesis he elaborated in 1831, when he sharply contrasted Johnson's conversational style ("forcible," "natural") to his "pompous and unbending" written style (V, 335-37). Thus the 1856 Life shows as clearly as "Gladstone" and "Lord Clive" that stark contrasts are not uniformly characteristic of Macaulay's style, and that, in his best essays, contrast often illuminates a question. By discussing both Johnson's early "turgid" manner and the "colloquial ease" of The Lives of the Poets, Macaulay shows that his antithetical patterns can shape discriminating judgments, when they are used more carefully than, for example, in the early Southey review or in the study of Bacon. The soaring angel/creeping snake dichotomy of the latter work makes it appear superficial.

The impression that both Macaulay's criticism and his estimate of Johnson's character are stated more moderately in 1856 than in 1831 can be tested by examining passages in which a similar thought is expressed. Juxtaposed passages will indicate the development in Macaulay's prose which Trevelyan alluded to when he termed the Encyclopedia articles "compact in form, crisp and nervous<sup>15</sup> in style" (Trevelyan, II, 47).

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<sup>15</sup>O. E. D.: "Of writings, arguments, etc.: vigorous, powerful, forcible; free from weakness and diffuseness" (VII, 96)

Matthew Arnold, a writer much less sympathetic to Macaulay, also hinted at this development when he judged the 1856 essay on Samuel Johnson "a work which shows Macaulay at his very best; a work written when his style was matured, and when his resources were in all their fulness."<sup>16</sup> Arnold did not elaborate his opinion that, in 1856, Macaulay's "style was matured," and his indictments of Macaulay's style remain better known than the view expressed in Preface quoted above. But his statement can be justified through parallel passages. For example, to illustrate the change from Macaulay's early style to his later style, here are two passages which describe Boswell's weaknesses:

1831

Servile and impertinent, shallow and pedantic, a bigot and a sot, bloated with family pride, and eternally blustering about the dignity of a born gentleman, yet stooping to be a tale-bearer, an eavesdropper, a common butt in the taverns of London, so curious to know everybody who was talked about, that, Tory and high-churchman as he was, he manoeuvred, we have been told, for an introduction to Tom Paine, so vain of the most childish distinctions, that when he had been to court, he drove to the office where his book was printing without changing clothes, and summoned all the printer's devils to admire his new ruffles and sword; such was this man, and such he was content and proud to be (Works, V, 514).

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<sup>16</sup> Arnold, p. xxv. Arnold adds, "The subject, too, was one which he knew thoroughly, and for which he felt cordial sympathy; indeed by his mental habit Macaulay himself belonged, in many respects, to the eighteenth century rather than to our own."

1856

That he was a coxcomb and a bore, weak, vain, pushing, curious, garrulous, was obvious to all who were acquainted with him. That he could not reason, that he had no wit, no humour, no eloquence, is apparent from his writings (VII, 346).

Both passages give disparaging descriptions of Boswell, but the second appears more moderate because the author cites two sources for his interpretation, biassed as it may be, whereas in 1831 he writes as an angry judge. H. A. Morgan concludes,

Macaulay's strictures on Boswell are unjustified, because they are conceived in something very like malice. . . . It has been said of Gibbon that he wrote about Christianity as if it had done him a personal injury. So writes Macaulay about Boswell.<sup>17</sup>

The emphatic quality of the early reviews is shown by the form of the 1831 sentence, which illustrates G. S. Fraser's comment that Macaulay "seems often to be exploiting the possibilities of a rhetorical medium for the medium's own sake,"<sup>18</sup> The subject, Boswell's folly, seems in the first excerpt to be merely a pretext for the author's elaborations. To begin the indictment, Macaulay uses polysyndeton to emphasize Boswell's defects:

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<sup>17</sup>"Boswell and Macaulay," Contemporary Review, CXCI (1958), 29. See also Hill, chapter four, "Lord Macaulay on Boswell." Hill observes, "It is strange how a man of Macaulay's common sense, wide reading, and knowledge of the world could have fallen into such a rhetorical passion with Boswell" (p. 160).

<sup>18</sup>"Macaulay's Style as an Essayist," Review of English Literature, I (October, 1960), 12.

servile and impertinent  
 shallow and pedantic  
 a bigot and a sot.

The piling up of damning evidence continues in a larger antithetical unit, opposing participial phrases, "blustering . . . yet stooping." A further expansion is the device of narratio, the story of Tom Paine, which heightens the antithetical effect of the passage (Tory/Republican). "So curious to know," the phrase which begins the anecdote concerning Tom Paine, is later balanced by "so vain of the most childish distinctions," which, in turn, introduces another story to discredit Boswell. Since the second of these phrases begins a longer story, the climax is especially abrupt: "Such was this man, and such he was content and proud to be." The use of anaphora, "such. . . and such. . ." drives home the point that the last accusation is the most damning of all. Lengthened for emphasis, "content and proud" parallels "servile and impertinent," the phrase with which the passage began.

Obviously structured for rhetorical effect, the 1831 passage has a mechanical quality which results, in part, from exaggerated phrasing but also from repetitions of sounds; and thus this description of Boswell supports Robert Louis Stevenson's claim that Macaulay's prose is weakened at times by sound repetitions.<sup>19</sup> At the beginning of the passage, for example, the phoneme "er" is repeated four times:

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<sup>19</sup>"On Style in Literature: Its Technical Elements," Contemporary Review, XLVII (April, 1885), 559-60.

servile  
impertinent  
eternally  
blustering.

The first two of these words are paired, and the third modifies the fourth; hence the repetition is especially obvious. The overuse of s's makes the description sound harsh, as do repetitions of p and b:

impertinent	bigot
pedantic	bloated
pride	blustering
proud	about
Paine	born
printer	butt

Heavy alliteration gives the passage a strident ring. Thus, the strained effect of Macaulay's early description of Boswell comes not only from the piling up of words and phrases, but also from the sounds of the passage.

The second excerpt has a terse quality which is uncharacteristic of Macaulay's early prose but typical of his Encyclopedia articles, and, to a lesser extent, of such late Edinburgh Review works as "Addison" (1843) and "The Earl of Chatham" (1844). The 1856 passage quoted above, like the description of Boswell which Macaulay wrote many years earlier, reveals a formal style, but the effects of balance and antithesis are gained more naturally than in the early passage. The quieter tone of the late passage results from less oratorical phrasing and from diction which is less pejorative: "weak," "garrulous," "vain," and "curious" have replaced



"servile," "pedantic," "bloated," and "eternally blustering."

Other differences in Macaulay's style can be seen from two narrative passages describing the literary profession when Johnson came to London. The later passage is more concrete and demonstrates a more effective use of contrast.

1831

After months of starvation and despair, a full third night or a well-received dedication filled the pocket of the lean, ragged, unwashed poet with guineas. He hastened to enjoy those luxuries with the images of which his mind had been haunted while he was sleeping amidst the cinders and eating potatoes at the Irish ordinary in Shoe Lane. A week of taverns soon qualified him for another year of night-cellars. Such was the life of Savage, of Boyse, and of a crowd of others. Sometimes blazing in gold-laced hats and waistcoats; sometimes living in bed because their coats had gone to pieces, or wearing paper cravats because their linen was in pawn. . . They knew luxury; they knew beggary; but they never knew comfort. These men were irreclaimable. They looked on a regular and frugal life with the same aversion which an old gypsy or a Mohawk hunter feels for a stationary abode, and for the restraints and securities of civilised communities. They were as untameable, as much wedded to their desolate freedom, as the wild ass. They could no more be broken in to the offices of social man than the unicorn could be trained to serve and abide by the crib (Works, V, 522).

1856

Even an author whose reputation was established, and whose works were popular, such an author as Thomson, whose Seasons were in every library, such an author as Fielding, whose Pasquin had had a greater run than any drama since *The Beggar's Opera*, was sometimes glad to obtain, by pawning his best coat, the means of dining on tripe at a cookshop underground, where he could wipe his

hands, after his greasy meal, on the back of a Newfoundland dog. It is easy, therefore, to imagine what humiliations and privations must have awaited the novice who had still to earn a name. One of the publishers to whom Johnson applied for employment measured with a scornful eye that athletic though uncouth frame, and exclaimed, 'You had better get a porter's knot, and carry trunks.' Nor was the advice bad; for a porter was likely to be as plentifully fed, and as comfortably lodged, as a poet (VII, 329).

The first of these excerpts gives several paraphrases of the same idea; it is a series of expansions and contractions revealing no organic unity. Vivid without being precise, the excerpt illustrates W. P. Ker's point that, "In Macaulay's prose the continuity of the narrative or dissertation is frequently sacrificed for the sake of a number of small rhetorical points. . . . The cumulative effect is not always secured."<sup>20</sup> Paraphrasing this idea, Ker notes that "strings of particulars" interfere with the cumulative effect. In the passage cited, the Mohawk, the gipsy, and the animals from Job (39:5-9) are picturesque but have only a faint connection with the ragged poet whose hardships they are meant to illustrate. The vague quality of the first passage results partly from its many word pairs:

nouns

starvation and despair  
hats and waistcoats  
gipsy or Mohawk  
restraints and securities

verbs

serve and abide  
lying or wearing

<sup>20</sup>"Macaulay," English Prose, ed. Henry Craik (5 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1896), V, The Nineteenth Century, 413.

These amplifications do not concretely describe the poet's situation.

On the other hand, the paragraph from which the second passage is taken moves easily from the general to the particular and to a terse summary of the whole, each sentence clarifying the original thought that, when Johnson went to London, literary work was not as profitable as it had been earlier and would again become in the nineteenth century. The poverty of Thomson and Fielding illustrates the general statement. Macaulay then gives an even more specific example, one anecdote concerning Johnson. The second passage shows the influence of the History of England: the vaguely pictorial quality of the 1831 excerpt quoted above can be contrasted to the scenic effect of the late passage, in which a single line given to the publisher, "You had better get a porter's knot, and carry trunks," and details such as "scornful eye" and "uncouth frame" give the reader a clear picture without forcing upon him the author's judgment. While the 1831 passage supports Walter Raleigh's claim that Macaulay's reader is often "battered about the head and stunned into assent, fatigued and exhausted by the monotony of emphasis, the violence of ready-made judgments,"<sup>21</sup> the second passage is a more effective description. Its heightened effect is gained more subtly, through concrete examples.

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<sup>21</sup>On Writing and Writers (London: Edward Arnold, 1926), p. 179.

The second passage also demonstrates a more suggestive use of contrast. The exaggerated contrasts of the 1831 passage recall Gladstone's observation that Macaulay often "filled in his picture before his outline was complete, and then with an extreme of confidence he supplied the color from his own mind and prepossessions, instead of submitting to take them from his theme."<sup>22</sup> For example, the opposition between "a regular and frugal life" and the aversion which "a Mohawk hunter feels for a stationary abode" does not appear naturally to come from the theme of a poet's suffering. In the 1856 Johnson essay, however, the theme is handled more surely: for example, the later excerpt reveals antithetical patterns which are merely suggested. Besides the stated contrasts of established writer/novice and porter/poet, Macaulay implicitly contrasts deserved reward for literary talent with its actual reward, and Johnson's ability, or his potential, with his appearance. A sense of wrongness and disorder is conveyed through the juxtaposition of the successful publisher, who merely prints books, and the writers without whom he would have nothing to sell. The paragraph ends with statements which imply both general and specific contrasts through the stated antithesis of porter/poet:

- (general) 1) worldliness v. unworldliness
- (specific) 2) advice which an ordinary man would take v. advice which Johnson, a superior man, would scorn.

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<sup>22</sup> "Lord Macaulay," Quarterly Review, CXLII (1876), 23.

By reversing the reader's expectation--"Nor was the advice bad"--and appearing to side with the publisher, although clearly sympathizing with Johnson, the author stresses the improbability of success for a man in Johnson's position.

Descriptive passages in the early essay are often weakened by antitheses such as the following remark about the Grub street poets: "They knew luxury; they knew beggary; but they never knew comfort" (V, 522). This exaggerated summary lacks the succinct quality of Macaulay's later narrative style, as exemplified by the conclusion to the Johnson anecdote: the publisher advises Johnson to become a porter and Macaulay adds, "Nor was the advice bad; for a porter was likely to be as plentifully fed, and as comfortably lodged, as a poet" (VII, 329). The luxury/beggary antithesis of 1831 has been replaced by a more concrete expression of a similar idea. Macaulay's later description lacks the heavy emphasis of the repeated "they knew" in the 1831 passage, and gains its effect rather by short balanced phrases:

as plentifully fed  
as comfortably lodged,

and an antithesis which is softened by intervening words:

"porter. . . poet." More suggestive than the epigrammatic statements in earlier works, this summary allows the reader to consider how material values triumph and also unifies the essay by 1) stressing the difficulties Johnson faced and by 2) foreshadowing his later problems.

Finally, parallel passages demonstrate that Macaulay uses analogy more precisely in the 1856 Life than in the review of 1831. Since analogy is a well-known characteristic of his style, the contrast between the two passages is especially helpful for marking the development from his early arguments to the short narrative essays which he contributed to the Encyclopedia Britannica. Here are two accounts of Johnson's politics:

### 1831

His calm and settled opinion seems to have been that forms of government have little or no influence on the happiness of society. This opinion, erroneous as it is, ought at least to have preserved him from all intemperance on political questions. It did not, however, preserve him from the lowest, fiercest, and most absurd extravagances of party-spirit, from rants which, in everything but the diction, resembled those of Squire Western. He was, as a politician, half ice and half fire. On the side of his intellect he was a mere Pococurante,<sup>23</sup> far too apathetic about public affairs, far too skeptical as to the good or evil tendency of any form of policy. His passions, on the contrary, were violent even to slaying against all who leaned to Whiggish principles. The well-known lines which he inserted in Goldsmith's "Traveller" express what seems to have been his deliberate judgment:

How small, of all that human hearts endure,  
That part which kings or laws can cause or cure!  
He had previously put expressions very similar into the mouth of Rasselas. It is amusing to contrast these passages with the torrents of raving abuse which he poured forth against the Long Parliament and the American Congress (V, 528-29).

<sup>23</sup>Pococurante: Italian for "little caring." A character in Candide (ch. xxv) who disparages whatever the hero praises.

1856

He had from a child been an enemy of the reigning dynasty. His Jacobite prejudices had been exhibited with little disguise in his works and in his conversation. Even in his massy and elaborate Dictionary, he had, with a strange want of taste and judgment, inserted bitter and contumelious reflections on the Whig party. . . . (VII, 341-42). He loved biography, literary history, the history of manners; but political history was positively distasteful to him. The question at issue between the colonies and the mother country was a question about which he had really nothing to say. He failed, therefore, [in Taxation no Tyranny] as the greatest men must fail when they attempt to do that for which they are unfit; as Burke would have failed if Burke had tried to write comedies like those of Sheridan; as Reynolds would have failed if Reynolds had tried to paint landscapes like those of Wilson. Happily, Johnson soon had an opportunity of proving most signally that his failure was not to be ascribed to intellectual decay (VII, 352).<sup>24</sup>

In the first passage, Macaulay's analogies show the faults of his argumentative style: Johnson is ridiculed by analogies to Squire Western and to Pococurante which are merely asserted rather than defended. Sharp antithesis in the passage--"half ice and half fire"--strengthen the impression that the comparisons are chosen arbitrarily.

The 1856 passage clearly reveals Macaulay's development because its analogies seem carefully selected and exactly right in their context. Johnson is elevated in a natural way by the comparisons to his famous contemporaries. More tersely expressed than the analogies of the first passage, those in the

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<sup>24</sup>Macaulay refers here to The Lives of the Poets.

1856 essay make the idea precise; they concentrate the reader's attention on the topic being discussed, whereas the analogies to Squire Western and Pococurante are frivolous digressions.

These two passages demonstrate Macaulay's growth in a more general way, however, for the later passage reflects more insight into human nature as well as a more perceptive attitude toward Johnson. In 1831, Macaulay mocks Johnson for a very natural human inconsistency: a gap between professed beliefs and actions; Johnson claimed to be indifferent to forms of government, but he was a passionate Tory. Instead of condemning Johnson in 1856, Macaulay reminds the reader that Johnson's parents had been Tories, and thus he puts the writer's beliefs into a sympathetic perspective, while alluding to the influence of childhood training on a man's habits. He also suggests that Johnson's political bias was out of harmony with the rest of his character.

Macaulay's moderation in the late essay can also be gauged by contrasting the strident language used in 1831 to characterize Johnson's political writing, "torrents of raving abuse," with the more specific and less censorious phrase "bitter and contumelious reflections on the Whig party," a phrase worthy of Johnson himself. As he grew older, Macaulay became more temperate in his political judgments. Tories and Whigs who appear in his early reviews are often portrayed as villains and heroes. In 1846, however, Macaulay wrote to Napier



to complain of comparable party spirit in an article by Lord John Russell: "I should have liked to see some frank admissions of the great errors which the Whigs, like all other men, have committed."<sup>25</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that ten years later he wrote fairly of Johnson's politics.

Parallel passages from Macaulay's two essays on Samuel Johnson demonstrate the terse style of the late work. The 1856 article shows that Macaulay's narrative excellence is found not only in the long essays he wrote for the Edinburgh Review in the late 1830's and early 1840's, but is exhibited as well by a shorter and more restricted form, the Encyclopedia article, a form which did not allow Macaulay to illustrate his subjects' lives by the panoramic scenes and ample descriptive passages of "Frederic the Great" or "Warren Hastings." Although more strictly biographical than the Edinburgh works, the five essays written in the 1850's skillfully combine literary history and criticism with biography. Their concise quality is illustrated by the passage which has been quoted from the 1856 Life of Johnson.

But this work reveals not only that Macaulay's late prose is relatively simple and natural, compared to his early writing; it also demonstrates that his last works are more complex in structure than his reviews. Although his works are carefully structured, as a rule, the 1856 essay on Johnson is

<sup>25</sup>Correspondence of Macvey Napier, p. 519.

more subtly arranged than, for example, the three-part review "Samuel Johnson" or the antithetical "Bacon," in which Bacon's life is sharply opposed to his work. The structural complexity of the late essay on Johnson can be shown by 1) its division into parts; and 2) its use of metaphor as a unifying device.

In essays about writers, Macaulay often follows the order of Johnson's Lives of the Poets by first giving a biographical sketch and then considering the writer's works. The transition is clearly marked, for example, in the early review, "Machiavelli," when Macaulay states, "Having now, we hope, in some degree cleared the personal character of Machiavelli, we come to the consideration of his works" (V, 64). The essay on Addison (1843) shows a different pattern, however, for Macaulay attempts to join biography and criticism in describing a writer whom he greatly admired. The synthesis is one measure of his growing preference for narrative writing. But the interweaving of biography and criticism for an eighty-page review on Addison did not present the challenge of incorporating all the important facts of a writer's life and works into the short space of an Encyclopedia article. For the latter work, Macaulay's narrative had to be especially condensed.

The 1856 Life of Johnson appears to be organized according to a loose chronological plan. Yet certain passages at the beginning, middle, and end of the work indicate a deliberate structure besides that provided by chronology. The

essay has two main parts: Johnson's life and work before 1762, the year he received a pension; and his life and work after 1762. Since the drama of Johnson's struggle for literary recognition appealed to Macaulay more than his psychological complexities, he portrays Johnson as a man contending against great difficulties, especially sickness and poverty. This theme appears at the beginning of the essay when Macaulay lists Johnson's childhood afflictions and adds, "But the force of his mind overcame every impediment" (VII, 324-25). The prediction of success becomes clear in the middle of the essay, in the following transitional paragraph. After Macaulay tells of the pension, he summarizes:

This event produced a change in Johnson's whole way of life. For the first time since his boyhood he no longer felt the daily goad urging him to the daily toil. He was at liberty, after thirty years of anxiety and drudgery, to indulge his constitutional indolence, to lie in bed till two in the afternoon, and to sit up talking to four in the morning, without fearing either the printer's devil or the sheriff's officer (VII, 342).

A good example of Macaulay's concise narrative style, this passage restates what has gone before and prepares for what will come in several ways: "since his boyhood" recalls the events described at the beginning of the essay; the phrases "daily toil" and "printer's devil" allude to previously-described circumstances surrounding works Johnson wrote before 1762; "thirty years of anxiety and drudgery" is a phrase which reinforces the earlier statement that ". . . this celebrated man

was left, at two-and-twenty, to fight his way through the world" (327); and "at liberty" after receiving a pension recalls Johnson's unsuccessful attempt to win Chesterfield's patronage. Other parts of this transition suggest what will come: "to sit up talking" prepares for the description of Johnson's club; and, finally, by stating that financial stability relieved Johnson of certain fears, Macaulay hints that other fears will prey upon him.

The essay concludes with the statement that Johnson "was both a great and a good man" (356). At first glance, this summary appears unrelated to the essay's structure, but the two words correspond in a general way to the two parts of the essay: the greatness of Johnson is emphasized in section one, which describes his struggle from poverty to relative prosperity, while his goodness is described in the second part. Freed from the necessity of writing to support himself, Johnson enjoyed the company of his Club and of the Thrales; Macaulay's descriptions of Johnson's private life are more detailed in the second part of the essay than in the first. In the first section, historical information which is interesting in itself, for example, the account of the literary profession when Johnson came to London, emphasizes Johnson's public life. The idea that Johnson was a "good man" is implied in Macaulay's vivid account of the destitute people whom he sheltered. But the account of Johnson's death which closes the essay sharpens the impression of his goodness, not by direct statement but through a scene:

The ablest physicians and surgeons attended him, and refused to accept fees from him. Burke parted from him with deep emotion. Windham sat much in the sick room, arranged the pillows, and sent his own servant to watch a night by the bed. Frances Burney, whom the old man had cherished with fatherly kindness, stood weeping at the door; while Langton, whose piety eminently qualified him to be an adviser and comforter at such a time, received the last pressure of his friend's hand within. . . (356).

The somber tone of this passage well illustrates Macaulay's growth and development as an essayist. Twenty-five years after displaying his rhetorical skills by mocking Johnson, Macaulay described him in a more restrained style. The allusions to Johnson's loving friends in this passage imply Macaulay's own fondness for Johnson. Perhaps he felt in Johnson's death a presentiment of his own.

While information in the 1856 essay on Johnson is not arranged for heightened dramatic effect, as in "Lord Clive," the essay's two-part structure unifies the story of Johnson's life by focusing upon incidents which portray him as "both a great and a good man." The essay is also unified by figurative language, used more sparingly than in Macaulay's Edinburgh articles, but with greater effect.

To summarize his introductory paragraphs describing Johnson's inability, his poverty, and his sicknesses, Macaulay writes: "The light from heaven shone on him indeed, but not in a direct line, or with its own pure splendour. The rays had to struggle through a disturbing medium; they reached him

refracted, dulled and discoloured by the thick gloom which had settled on his soul. . ." (327). This light metaphor epitomizes the whole essay: instead of the sharply-opposed qualities which Macaulay attributes to Johnson in 1831, he here suggests complexity. Johnson was a man of great ability ("light from heaven") but his life was full of hardships ("rays. . . reached him refracted. . ."), and he possessed a melancholy temperament ("thick gloom which had settled on his soul"). When writing about Johnson in 1831, Macaulay had remarked that "The mind of the critic was hedged round by an uninterrupted fence of prejudices and superstitions" (V, 530). The effect of this figurative statement is not only to disparage Johnson but greatly to oversimplify his criticism. The description is vivid and pointed, but fails to illustrate the question. By contrast, the more involved figurative paraphrase which Macaulay writes in the later essay is suggestive; and it becomes more significant as the story unfolds. The various difficulties portrayed in the essay carry forward the idea of refracted rays and "thick gloom." Near the end of the essay, Macaulay uses a metaphor which recalls the original one: Johnson at seventy-two found "his whole life darkened by the shadow of death" (354), and alters it by making the darkness seem to triumph over the light. But in the scene which concludes the essay, the following statement appears: "When at length the moment, dreaded through so many years, came close, the dark cloud passed away from Johnson's mind. His

temper became unusually patient and gentle. . ." (356). The rays of heaven, no longer "dulled and discoloured," symbolize death-as-rebirth, but more specifically, in this context, prepare for the summary that Johnson "was both a great and a good man." The passing of the cloud suggests Johnson's triumph over his many difficulties and thus alludes to his greatness; and the phrase chosen to describe him as he lay dying--"patient and gentle"--emphasizes his goodness. Macaulay's figurative language, therefore, not only portrays Johnson sympathetically but also corresponds to the general two-part division of the essay.

Both Johnson's moral and intellectual qualities are implied by the statement that "the light from heaven shone upon him indeed. . ." (327). Macaulay's early prose style cannot do justice to the complexity of Johnson, for its stark contrasts and contrived analogies blur many distinctions. A man of extremes, Johnson could not be fitted to the mean-between-extremes pattern of Macaulay's arguments. Hence the language of the severe judgments passed upon Johnson in 1831 mirrors an inflexible attitude, an almost Puritanical recoiling from Johnson's excesses.

Macaulay's late narrative style, on the other hand, is better suited to describing, in concrete terms, the life of a real human being. The light metaphor chosen as a paradigm of Johnson's life shows the development of Macaulay's prose style:

as a rhetorical device for characterizing Johnson, it replaces the shallow paradoxes and over-wrought descriptions of the 1831 essay. A metaphor of natural process, it shows that, in the 1856 Life, single rhetorical effects are subordinated to the general impression.<sup>26</sup>

Macaulay's two essays on Samuel Johnson, one written when the young reviewer was a Member of Parliament who passionately supported Reform, and the second written much later, in the same year when failing health caused him to retire from Parliament, show changes in his opinion of Johnson, his critical judgments, his style, and his structure. Hence the contrast

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<sup>26</sup> At times, Macaulay's late writing shows traces of his early, exaggerated style. When Seccombe revised the 1856 Life for the 11th edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, he eliminated some of its more vivid passages. On Johnson as a schoolmaster, for example:

Macaulay's original version

"Indeed, his appearance was so strange, and his temper so violent, that his schoolroom must have resembled an ogre's den."

Seccombe's revision

"The 'faces' that Johnson habitually made (probably nervous contortions due to his disorder) may well have alarmed parents."

Seccombe also toned down Macaulay's description of Dr. Levett:

Macaulay's original version

"Levett, who bled and dosed coal-heavers and hackney coachmen and received for fees crusts of bread, bits of bacon, glasses of gin, and sometimes a little copper. . ."

Seccombe's revision

". . . Levett, who had a wide practice, but among the very poorest class . . ."



between the two works supports the judgment of Trevelyan which was quoted at the beginning of the chapter: "The question of the superiority of his late over his earlier manner may securely be staked upon a comparison between the article on Johnson in the Edinburgh Review, and the article on Johnson in the Encyclopedia Britannica" (Trevelyan, II, 447). The 1831 work, an argumentative essay, reveals little insight into either Johnson or his work. But in the narrative essay of 1856, Macaulay demonstrates a more restrained "manner," giving in relatively concise prose a sympathetic account of a man very different from himself.

Macaulay's increasing preference for narrative essays as he grew older and the success of his narrative method, illustrated by "Lord Clive" and by the contrast between two essays on Samuel Johnson, suggests that the change in his writing from arguments to narratives is in itself a sign of the development of his style, for he gradually found a form suited to his ideas. Although Macaulay's arguments differ among themselves, as the three works "Southey's Colloquies," "Civil Disabilities of the Jews," and "Gladstone" clearly demonstrate, the argumentative essays on the whole are not strong as arguments, judged by Aristotle's norm that "Naturalness is persuasive, artifice just the reverse."<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the narrative works show a better adaptation of style to content.

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<sup>27</sup>Rhetoric, 3.2, trans. Lane Cooper, p. 186.

For example, the use of contrast in "Southey" reveals Macaulay's artifice, whereas contrast is used in the narrative essays, more skillfully in "Lord Clive" (1840) than in Macaulay's first narrative, "Hampden" (1832), to develop character and to shape the story. Finally, narrative passages quoted in this chapter from the 1856 Johnson essay show a significant departure from the heightened, oratorical style characteristic of Macaulay's early writing. Macaulay in 1831 creates a "personified epigram" to stand for Johnson, but by 1856 he had found a style to express the complexities and contradictions of a real man.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The development of Macaulay's essays may be summarized by considering the following questions: 1) recent critical evaluations of his work; 2) the relationship between his two central themes; 3) changes in his opinions; 4) stylistic differences among his essays; and 5) division of the essays into arguments and narratives.

Concentrating upon Macaulay's individual works shows that they can be read for their intrinsic worth. Critics have implicitly denied the literary value of Macaulay's essays by using them as he used books he reviewed, as pegs upon which to hang discussions of related subjects. Critics have extracted ideas and beliefs from the essays to illustrate the spirit of the Victorian age. Thus, in a recent article, Ronald Weber concludes that Macaulay's works should be valued "for their portrayal of a characteristic response of the Victorian age to the literary arts."<sup>1</sup> But interpreting the essays as "a characteristic response" blurs many distinctions among individual

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<sup>1</sup>"Singer and Seer: Macaulay on the Historian as Poet," Papers on Language and Literature, III (1967), 210.

works. Although William Madden points out some of these distinctions by terming Macaulay's various styles "oratorical," "judicious," and "histrionic," his purpose is not to illuminate specific works but rather to find in them proofs of the character weaknesses which he ascribes to Macaulay. This method inevitably results in some distortions of individual essays. For example, arguing that Macaulay's style reflects "incompatible impulses in Macaulay himself," Madden states, "Privately, we know, Macaulay took great delight in . . . Plato's dialogues, but publically he felt obliged to denounce Plato. . . ." <sup>2</sup> In fact, the denunciation of Plato in "Bacon" is a rhetorical device to elevate Bacon's philosophy, and should not be taken seriously as the author's considered opinion of Plato.

Macaulay's statements about Greek philosophy in "Bacon" can be explained by one principle in Aristotle's Rhetoric: to prove that a certain thing is great, show that it compares favorably with something already acknowledged to be great. If Macaulay can prove that Bacon's philosophy is superior to Plato's, he can establish Bacon's greatness. The reader loses sight of the rhetorical function of the Plato section of "Bacon" when Macaulay's statements are taken out of context. The same is true of other essays which are studied for their biographical or historical interest, and not for their own merit. Although

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<sup>2</sup>"Macaulay's Style," The Art of Victorian Prose, ed. George Levine and William Madden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 150.

George Levine stresses the art of Macaulay's prose by relating The History of England to Victorian fiction, he devotes thirty-eight pages of his recently-published study The Boundaries of Fiction to a sketch of Macaulay's personality. For Levine, Macaulay's writings reflect "a defense erected against the pains of contemporary experience."<sup>3</sup> The works also reveal, according to Levine, a "split" between Macaulay's "inner and public lives"<sup>4</sup> and show the author's "emotional self-indulgences."<sup>5</sup>

R. C. Jebb, one of the few critics who suggested that Macaulay's essays be read for their intrinsic merit, in their original form rather than in excerpts, stated in 1900:

In the sixties and seventies it was not uncommon to hear /Macaulay/ described as a mere rhetorician. . . . He has passed, without serious scathe, through the ordeal of much criticism, both broad and minute. And at the present day there are at least some readers who can see his greatness as a literary artist even more clearly than it was seen by his contemporaries.<sup>6</sup>

Macaulay's "greatness as a literary artist" is not acknowledged today, however, and the range and variety of his essays is not

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<sup>3</sup>The Boundaries of Fiction: Carlyle, Macaulay, Newman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 83.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 102. Levine's attitude toward Macaulay and some assumptions in his essay are revealed by the following statement: Macaulay's "attachment to his sisters was notoriously and strangely intense. It replaced in his life the ordinary attachments of marriage and children, which would have entailed a steadily growing group of commitments and, therefore, exposures." (p. 87.)

<sup>6</sup>Macaulay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), p. 8.

generally recognized. Unless his individual works are read carefully, unless the kinds of critical distinctions which are made, for example, between Tennyson's early lyrics and his later poetry, or between Pickwick Papers and Bleak House, can be made also for Macaulay's essays, their author will probably continue to be regarded as "a sort of human counterpart to the Great Exhibition,"<sup>7</sup> or classified simply as a writer for whom literature was "a retreat from life rather than an extension of it."<sup>8</sup>

Passing to the second question, Macaulay's chief themes, one must admit some justification for seeing Macaulay as the epitome of Victorian complacency. But since his faults are obvious and have been pointed out by critics of both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, they need not be catalogued here. What should be stressed is the relationship between his belief in progress and his devotion to the cause of civil and religious liberty. Beatty identifies progress as Macaulay's central theme,<sup>9</sup> while Stirling concludes that the right of private judgment is "the leading principle in the political, philosophical, and religious opinions of Lord Macaulay."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup>John Clive, "Macaulay, History, and the Historians," History Today, IX (1959), 830. Clive disputes this oversimplified view.

<sup>8</sup>Levine, p. 163.

<sup>9</sup>Beatty, p. 270.

<sup>10</sup>James Hutchinson Stirling, Jerrold, Tennyson and Macaulay with other Critical Essays (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1868), p. 122.

One way to reconcile these views is to point out that Macaulay found the idea of progress attractive because of his sanguine temperament, and not because he placed material values ahead of spiritual values, as many of his critics have argued. For Macaulay, the connection between progress and liberty is that of means to an end: material welfare is good in itself but is chiefly valuable for extending human freedom. Macaulay's praise of the middle class, often ridiculed, can be related to his zeal for freedom.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, his Whig bias can be placed in the context of this description: he saw the Whigs as "a party which, though guilty of many errors and some crimes, has the glory of having established our civil and religious liberties on a firm foundation" ("Edinburgh Election 1839, Works, VIII, 158). Macaulay's enthusiasm for the seventeenth century stems from the growth of liberty during that period. While the theme of England's increasing material prosperity is central to The History of England, Macaulay's more important aim was, as he stated, to present "an entire view of all the transactions which took place, between the Revolution which brought the Crown into harmony with the Parliament, and the Revolution which brought the Parliament into harmony with the

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<sup>11</sup>See Griffin, pp. 64-66. Griffin suggests that ". . . liberty for Macaulay was the most important element in his interpretation of the idea of Progress." (p. 64.) Macaulay's conception of progress is sympathetically described in chapter four of Griffin's book The Intellectual Milieu of Lord Macaulay, pp. 49-67.

nation" (Trevelyan, II, 13-14). In other words, he wished to trace the growth of English liberty. The editors of The Reader's Macaulay note Macaulay's stress on liberty and its connection to his theory of progress when they write:

Actually, his aim was much the same as Arnold's, 'to make reason and the will of God prevail' . . . . Five causes for which he made his greatest efforts--proper representation in Parliament,<sup>12</sup> equal civil rights for those of all races and religions,<sup>13</sup> freedom of the press, capable and humane government for India<sup>14</sup> and Ireland<sup>15</sup> and the just protection of authors--have been approved everywhere for at least a hundred years. Therefore, although he may have lent aid and comfort to the Philistine by

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<sup>12</sup>Macaulay fought for the Reform Bill even though it abolished the borough which he represented.

<sup>13</sup>Macaulay attacked restrictions on the Jews. See chapter two.

<sup>14</sup>Speaking of India, Macaulay declared: "We have to engraft on despotism those blessings which are the natural fruits of liberty. . . . India has suffered enough already from the distinction of castes, and from the deeply rooted prejudices which that distinction has engendered. God forbid that we should inflict upon her the curse of a new caste, that we should send her a new breed of Brahmins. . . ." ("Government of India," July 10, 1833, Works, VIII, 134.)

<sup>15</sup>In a speech favoring increased grants to Maynooth College in Ireland, Macaulay stated: "The state of things which exists in Ireland never could have existed had not Ireland been closely connected with a country, which possessed a great superiority of power, and which abused that superiority. The burden which we are now, I hope, about to lay upon ourselves is but a small penalty for a great injustice" (Works, VIII, 311). Macaulay concluded the speech by saying that he knew his vote might cost him his seat in Parliament (as it did in the Edinburgh election of 1847), but he declared, "Obloquy so earned I shall readily meet. As to my seat in Parliament, I will never hold it by an ignominious tenure; and I am sure that I can never lose it in a more honorable cause" (VIII, 315).



joining in praise of tangible achievement, his goal was the same as that of his critics, and he disagreed with them mainly in his method of approaching it.<sup>16</sup>

Viewing Macaulay's themes in another way, the reader discovers that, in general, argumentative essays expound the theory of progress, while in later essays, which are mainly narratives, the theme of liberty predominates. These essays describe various kinds of freedom: in the works on Lord Clive and Johnson, an individual's triumph over great difficulties is stressed; the idea that a commoner can rise to a high government post is dramatized in "Addison" (1843); freedom of speech under Frederic the Great is praised, although Macaulay is not, like Carlyle, a great admirer of the Prussian ruler; and the growth of political liberty in England is traced in the second essay on Chatham (1844). Tempering his praise of British institutions in "William Pitt" (1859), the author points out the disadvantages of Parliamentary government (VII, 378).

At the present time, since Macaulay's first reviews are more widely read than the late works, his emphasis on freedom is not generally appreciated, nor is the close tie of this theme to the doctrine of material progress understood. In the nineteenth century, however, Macaulay's devotion to liberty was clearly recognized. Thackeray wrote, for example, "He is always in a storm of revolt and protest and indignation against wrong,

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<sup>16</sup>French and Sanders, p. 6.

craft, tyranny. How he cheers heroic resistance; how he backs and applauds freedom struggling for its own."<sup>17</sup> Taine agreed that this theme should be stressed: "Macaulay cannot look calmly on the oppression of man; every outrage on human will hurts him like a personal outrage."<sup>18</sup> Consequently, Taine calls him "a liberal in the largest and best sense of the word."<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately for Macaulay's reputation, Taine's verdict has been overlooked; and Macaulay is now often judged a liberal in the narrow sense: a believer in outdated economics and a naive optimist, who trusts that progress is inevitable.

Furthermore, the critical view that Macaulay never changed has helped to maintain these pejorative connotations of "liberal." Describing Macaulay's changes of opinion (part three) and the changes in his style (part four) will summarize the evidence against the judgment that his work offers no sign of development. His statements on politics and literature best indicate differences in his point of view.

The term "Whig" must be qualified by the differing political stances one finds in Macaulay's essays. Summarized in chapter two, the political discussion in "Southey" is vague and abstract; the reviewer exuberantly defends laissez-faire and mocks Southey for doubting the beneficence of its operation.

<sup>17</sup>"Nil Nisi Bonum," Cornhill, I (1860), 134.

<sup>18</sup>History of English Literature, trans. H. Van Laun (4 vols.; London: Chatto and Windus, 1880), IV, 238.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 237.

But in the later Gladstone review, described in chapter three, and in speeches of the 1840's, Macaulay argues against abstract good (as represented by Gladstone's plan for a closer union of Church and State and by the Tories' desire to maintain Protestantism in Ireland) and concludes that, in certain areas such as education and public health, governments must intervene for the public welfare. The analysis of "Lord Clive" in chapter four shows that Macaulay's political opinions became more moderate as he grew older; the youthful cockiness with which he attacked Mill in 1827 is no longer apparent in late reviews. For example, the beginning of "The Earl of Chatham" (1844) reveals Macaulay's detachment: the Whig and Tory parties, no longer made up of heroes and villains, as in "Hallam" (1828), are described as follows:

We may consider each of them as the representative of a great principle, essential to the welfare of nations. One is, in an especial manner, the guardian of liberty, and the other, of order. One is the moving power, and the other the steadying power of the state. One is the sail, without which society would make no progress, the other the ballast, without which there would be small safety in a tempest (Works, VII, 205).

The tone of this passage is restrained, in marked contrast to the tone of political passages in "Milton" (1825). Another measure of the author's later freedom from partisan bias is the difference between the early treatment of Samuel Johnson's Tory politics and the evaluation found in the 1856 study. Macaulay is much more sympathetic to Johnson in the later work.

Trevelyan's biography gives other evidence that Macaulay became detached from politics as he grew older. In 1849, for example, he noted in his journal: "I read the Morning Chronicle of 1811. How scandalously the Whig Press treated the Duke of Wellington, till his merit became too great to be disputed! How extravagantly unjust party spirit makes men!" (Trevelyan, II, 261-62).<sup>20</sup>

Macaulay's literary criticism, as well as his political opinions, underwent some changes. The primitivistic doctrines of the essays on Milton and Dryden are not found in works written many years later, in "Addison" or in "Goldsmith." Criticism in Macaulay's early works, especially in "Milton" and "Samuel Johnson," is subordinated to an argumentative end, whereas in late essays, in "Madame D'Arblay" (1843), for example, the author describes his responses to works without using the works as evidence to support a thesis. Thus in the 1831 Johnson review, The Lives of the Poets does not fit the argument that Johnson's mind united great powers with low prejudices, and is omitted from the essay. But Macaulay's purpose in 1856 is to give a full account of Johnson's life and works; consequently, The Lives of the Poets forms an important

<sup>20</sup>Macaulay made his first public speech at an anti-slavery rally in London (June 24, 1824), but his feelings about slavery also became more temperate as he grew older; in the last year of his life he wrote in his journal: "I hate slavery from the bottom of my soul; and yet I am made sick by the cant and the silly mock reasons of the Abolitionists. The nigger driver and the negrophile are two odious things to me" (Trevelyan, I, 23n).

section of the late essay. The difference in emphasis between early and late criticism is also reflected by the fact that, in late works, Macaulay gives much specific commentary on individual works. Descriptions in his first reviews, by contrast, are vague and greatly over-simplified: in 1831, Johnson's writings are dismissed in a few paragraphs about literary bias and mannerism; and Pilgrim's Progress is judged "the only work of its kind which possesses a strong human interest" (Works, V, 446).

The opinion that Macaulay never changed his mind is easily refuted by Trevelyan's biography, for many letters and journal entries indicate Macaulay's revised views of authors and their works. To his friend Ellis, for example, Macaulay wrote:

A young man, whatever his genius may be, is no judge of such a writer as Thucydides. I had no high opinion of him ten years ago. I have now been reading him with a mind accustomed to historical researches, and to political affairs; and I am astonished at my own former blindness, and at his greatness.<sup>21</sup>

He continues:

I could not bear Euripides at college. I now read my recantation. He has faults undoubtedly. But what a poet! . . . Instead of depreciating

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<sup>21</sup>February 8, 1935; Trevelyan, I, 431. After his own history was published, Macaulay appreciated even more fully the greatness of Thucydides: in 1848 he wrote in his journal: "I admire him more than ever" (Trevelyan, II, 244). Other journal entries reveal Macaulay's modest estimate of his own work. Near the end of his life he wrote, ". . . how short life, and how long art! I feel as if I had but just begun to understand how to write; and the probability is that I have very nearly done writing" (June 1, 1858; Trevelyan, II, 451).

him, as I have done, I may, for aught I know, end by editing him (Trevelyan, I, 431).

It is important, however, that these changes in political and literary opinion, worth noting because they have been ignored by critics, be distinguished from development of ideas. The works discussed in this study reveal differences in Macaulay's views, some significant, but illustrate no profound growth in his ideas.

Critics who label Macaulay a Utilitarian, a pragmatist, or a materialist imply that he does not take ideas seriously, but this notion is superficial. It is true that Macaulay did not have a speculative mind and that his works offer few profound insights into theoretical questions. But on the other hand, Macaulay's essays provoke mental stimulation and reveal a high degree of intellectual seriousness. One sign of this seriousness is his eagerness to show what false ideas underly religious intolerance. Another is his conviction that men must understand the past to have any hope of progress in the future. If Macaulay's ideas were as shallow as the Utilitarian tag suggests, his works would probably be neglected entirely. On the other hand, it seems unfruitful to stress the intellectual content of his works: although the Gladstone essay demonstrates a skillful handling of a theory, the better-known essay on Bacon shows Macaulay's limitations as a thinker. To treat seriously Macaulay's early attacks on Croker and Mill, Fong must conclude that the good ideas of these essays are obscured by stylistic

weaknesses: ". . . however complacent his tone, however flamboyant his rhetoric, the substance of his arguments is sound."<sup>22</sup> In fact, in these essays and especially in "Bacon," Macaulay's arguments are extremely weak.

Moreover, the sharp distinction between style and substance in the passage just cited disguises the fact that genuine evidence for Macaulay's development can be found in his style, the fourth point of this conclusion. The sharp antithetical style of "Bacon" greatly weakens Macaulay's arguments, whereas the less obvious antithetical pattern of "Gladstone" is better suited to argument. In "Lord Clive," the alternation of the setting between England and India, the contrast of Clive and Dupleix, and the dramatic pattern of rising and falling action all contribute to the success of the narrative. Samuel Johnson is made vivid in 1831 by antithetical tags, by contrasts which make him a "personified epigram," but in the 1856 essay, selection and arrangement of details make him seem a more complex character.

The development of Macaulay's style may also be summarized in this way: in the early essays, Macaulay disparages writers for faults which mar his own work; but in later essays, his practice conforms better to his own theories of good writing.

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<sup>22</sup>David Fong, "The Development of Macaulay as a Critic and Essayist" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1967), p. 90.

Discussing modern writers in "History" (1828), for example, he points out that

. . . a little exaggeration, a little suppression, a judicious use of epithets, a watchful and searching scepticism with respect to the evidence on one side, a convenient credulity with respect to every report or tradition on the other, may easily make a saint of Laud, or tyrant of Henry the Fourth (Works, V, 152).

Exaggeration, suppression, and "a judicious use of epithets" aptly characterize "Southey"; but in the later Gladstone review, Macaulay confronts the issues themselves, neither claiming that the truth lies entirely on his side, nor caricaturing his opponent. Macaulay accuses Bacon of a "want of discrimination" in using analogies (VI, 237-39); yet his own early essays are full of misleading and imprecise analogies. They are used freely, for example, to discredit Croker, Boswell, and Johnson in the 1831 review "Samuel Johnson." "All the vices of the gambler and of the beggar were blended with those of the author," Macaulay writes to express the thought that writers in Johnson's time were often penniless. "They were as untameable," he continues, "as much wedded to their desolate freedom, as the wild ass" (Works, V, 522). The Encyclopedia articles reveal more suggestive analogies. To stress the point that Atterbury was a clever and ingenious man rather than a profound thinker, Macaulay writes that he possessed "a mind inexhaustibly rich in all the resources of controversy. He had little gold, but he beat that little out to the very thinnest leaf," so that



Atterbury impressed readers "who did not resort to balances and tests" (Works, VII, 287). Coming at the beginning of the essay on Atterbury, this analogy is a unifying device, for events described later illustrate the idea that Atterbury had "little gold" but "beat that little out to the very thinnest leaf." The inadequacy of stark contrasts for portraying character is thoughtfully discussed by Macaulay in the 1830 review "Byron" (V, 411-12), but until his late essays, Macaulay relies heavily on such contrasts to illustrate character. Describing Byron, he states that the poet "belonged half to the old, and half to the new school of poetry. His personal taste led him to the former; his thirst of praise to the latter. . ." (Works, V, 409). Clive, however, is portrayed as a more complex character, as are the subjects of the Encyclopedia Britannica essays. In the late 1820's, Macaulay harshly derided the Utilitarians for reducing human complexities to "lines and numbers"; yet his facile judgments of men and events in the first reviews make him seem vulnerable to the same charge. Narrative essays written in the early 1830's such as "Hampden" and "Burleigh and his Times" show little sense of complexity, but in Macaulay's last Edinburgh articles, which treat Addison, Fanny Burney, and the elder William Pitt, one finds greater penetration of character. Macaulay thought the Utilitarians' readiness to explain everything an unappealing trait; yet only in his last Edinburgh essay and in the five short lives written in the 1850's does the

reader find any sense of mystery or wonder in his own essays. The description of William Pitt's funeral, however, written in 1859, has a feeling of mystery, a somber quality, not found in the Edinburgh articles:

The 22nd of February was fixed for the funeral. The corpse, having lain in state during two days in the Painted Chamber, was borne with great pomp to the northern transept of the Abbey. A splendid train of princes, nobles, bishops, and privy councillors followed. The grave of Pitt had been made near to the spot where his great rival ∟Fox∟ was soon to lie. The sadness of the assistants was beyond that of ordinary mourners. For he whom they were committing to the dust had died of sorrows and anxieties of which none of the survivors could be altogether without a share. Wilberforce, who carried the banner before the hearse, described the awful ceremony with deep feeling. As the coffin descended into the earth, he said, the eagle face of Chatham from above seemed to look down with consternation into the dark house which was receiving all that remained of so much power and glory (VII, 410).

This paragraph typifies the style of Macaulay's last essays. The simple diction and sentence patterns fit the vanitas vanitatum theme. Through stated and implied contrasts the difficulties of life are suggested. The paragraph develops, not through the statement-paraphrase-recapitulation pattern which gives many early reviews a strained effect, but rather through a scene framed by balanced words: "corpse," at the beginning of the passage, and "all that remained" at the conclusion. Antithesis and balance are unobtrusive in this description. "The dark house" can be thought of as the Abbey, the coffin, or the grave itself.

Although Macaulay's late writing is more concise, more restrained, and more suggestive than his early prose, his style remains public and formal. It reflects the historian's preoccupation with British institutions and the men who shaped them. But the facile judgments of early reviews, the description of Johnson, for example, as "the most pedantic of critics and the most bigoted of Tories" ("Bunyan," Works, V, 447), are uncharacteristic of Macaulay's Encyclopedia articles. Macaulay does not change, then, from an Augustan to a Romantic. Despite his well-known praise of nineteenth-century England, by taste and temperament he belongs to the eighteenth century.

But his style develops in an important sense, for, although Macaulay was basically a moderate, this trait is obscured by the florid language of his early reviews, in which lack of moderation comes from sharp contrasts, superficial paradoxes, heavy emphasis, and exaggerated diction. In later works, however, Macaulay's style better expresses moderate ideas; the mean-between-extremes ideal is applied to political and historical questions in restrained and precise language. In critical passages of late works, this moderation is reflected by a tendency to describe rather than to judge works. The sensitivity shown in his description of Austen's character drawing in 1843 is even more apparent thirteen years later, when he analyzes Johnson's Lives of the Poets.

Macaulay's development has been summarized through discussions of his current literary reputation; of the

relationship between his central themes, progress and liberty; of changes in his opinions; and of stylistic differences among the essays, which provide the best evidence of his growth and change. Finally, the development of the essays can be seen by characterizing them as argumentative and narrative works.

Writing to Napier in 1843, Macaulay observed, "The most hostile critic must admit, I think, that I have improved greatly as a writer" (Trevelyan, II, 127), but even sympathetic critics did not agree; and judgments such as the often-quoted remark of Gladstone, "Full-orbed he was seen above the horizon; and full-orbed, after thirty-five years of constantly emitting splendour, he sank beneath it,"<sup>23</sup> imply that Macaulay's writing did not change. But the broad generalization that his early works are arguments and the later essays descriptive or narrative shows the inadequacy of criticism which assumes that Macaulay's writing never changes. Examining each of the works written between 1825 and 1859, from "Milton" to "William Pitt,"<sup>24</sup> indicates that, as an essayist, Macaulay was most successful with his narrative works.

His major weakness as a writer, lack of subtlety, was much less a handicap in description than in argumentation. The argumentative essays, the work of a young man immersed in

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<sup>23</sup>"The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay," Quarterly Review, CXLII (1876), 9.

<sup>24</sup>See Appendix.

politics, are often reprinted, but changing tastes and the growth of literary scholarship have made many of them seem dated, for, as Johnson says, "the opinions prevalent in one age, as truths above the reach of controversy, are confuted and rejected in another. . ."<sup>25</sup> Macaulay's arguments are thin and superficial when compared to those of Arnold, Newman, or Ruskin; yet his narrative essays are unsurpassed. In later life, Macaulay withdrew from politics to study the past.<sup>26</sup> The superiority of his narrative essays to earlier works is not surprising if one recalls that an aim in his chief work, The History of England, was to arrange his material as skillfully as possible; the arts of selection and condensation manifested by the late Edinburgh essays and especially by the Encyclopedia articles were developed by writing and rewriting The History of England. Macaulay's last essays show more awareness of the difficulties and uncertainties of life than is found in his early works.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>"Preface to Shakespeare," Samuel Johnson. Selected Prose and Poetry, ed. Bertrand H. Bronson (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1952), p. 274.

<sup>26</sup>"Macaulay's indifference to the vicissitudes of party politics had by this time [1857] grown into a confirmed habit of mind" (Trevelyan, II, 430).

<sup>27</sup>One reason, perhaps, was the Indian Mutiny. On his fifty-seventh birthday, October 25, 1857, Macaulay wrote in his journal: "The Indian troubles have affected my spirits more than any other public event in the whole course of my life. . . I may say that, till this year, I did not know what real vindictive hatred meant" (Trevelyan, II, 437).

The stereotyped view of Macaulay as a writer who never changed derives mainly from the argumentative essays.<sup>28</sup> This view is well illustrated by Bagehot's claim that Macaulay had a "power of reducing human actions to formulae or principles,"<sup>29</sup> an opinion which seems justified only if the artificial quality of early reviews is taken to represent Macaulay's work as a whole. In late Edinburgh essays, in "Addison" and in "The Earl of Chatham," human actions are not reduced to abstractions, but these narrative works are not well known. Similarly, both the "inspired idiot" paradox and the juxtaposition of great powers and low prejudices which explain Boswell and Johnson in 1831 have disappeared by 1856. Macaulay's Encyclopedia articles, especially those on Johnson and William Pitt, are accurately described by Jebb as "mature and careful pieces. . . restrained in style."<sup>30</sup>

When Macaulay died, the Edinburgh Review characterized him in the following way:

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<sup>28</sup>For example, Harrold and Templeman, while including sections of The History of England and all of "Lord Clive," give disproportionate emphasis to reviews Macaulay wrote before he was thirty-two: "Milton," "Southey's Colloquies," "Bunyan," and "Samuel Johnson."

<sup>29</sup>Literary Studies (London: Longmans, Green, 1891), II, 247.

<sup>30</sup>Jebb, p. 43. Even Strachey, who believed that "his manner never changed," respected Macaulay's narrative ability: "The rhetoric of the style, from being the servant of platitude, becomes the servant of excitement. Every word is valuable: there is no hesitation, no confusion, and no waste." See "Macaulay," Portraits in Miniature and Other Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1931), p. 176.

Profoundly versed in the story of her growth and imbued with the spirit of her freedom. . . Lord Macaulay was essentially English in his habits of thought and in his tastes. The strongest of all his feelings was the love and pride excited in him by his native land.<sup>31</sup>

The development of Macaulay's essays from arguments to narratives shows the various ways in which this patriotism is expressed. In his first Edinburgh articles, "the love and pride excited in him by his native land" seems chauvinistic: England is extravagantly praised. But Macaulay's patriotic feeling takes a more appealing form when he attacks Jewish disabilities, urging that the civil liberties enjoyed by most Englishmen be extended to all. Several years later, in the Gladstone review, the characteristically British distrust of theories which is evident throughout Macaulay's writing seems progressive and humanitarian, for the reviewer defends religious freedom on the grounds that English history and common sense alike prove it essential to the country's welfare. Macaulay's long narrative essays, particularly "Lord Clive," the one which he liked best, clearly express his love of England, but the patriotism of the Clive essay is different from that of "Southey" because, in 1839, Macaulay attacked the evils of English imperialism. He focuses upon the drama of Clive's career and treats English rule of India as a fact, a point of departure for the story, not as an historical movement or action to be vindicated, in the way, many years

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<sup>31</sup> Edinburgh Review, CXL (January, 1860), 273-74.

earlier, he had vindicated the assassination of Charles I. Finally, Macaulay shows himself "essentially English in his habits of thought and in his tastes" as well as "profoundly versed" in the story of England's growth by the short essays he contributed to the Encyclopedia Britannica in the last decade of his life. Describing figures from the period he loved, the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and treating the subjects he knew best, politics and literature, Macaulay showed his mature patriotism by portraying without eulogizing great men whom England had produced. His portraits do not resemble the psychological studies of Victorian fiction, but are written more in the spirit of eighteenth-century fiction; Macaulay reveals the drama of the past through external action. In 1856, he saw much more to admire in Samuel Johnson than he had seen twenty-five years earlier. A modest man, Macaulay probably did not think, while writing that Johnson was "laid in Westminster Abbey, among the eminent men of whom he had been the historian," that in only three years the same could be said of himself.

The purpose of this study has been to challenge the critical assumption that Macaulay's essays reveal no growth or change. Chapter one discusses Macaulay's development in a general way. The characteristic features of his early essays are outlined in chapter two. Showing how the success of Macaulay's debate with Gladstone depends on the effective use of rhetorical devices, chapter three traces the development of his



argumentative style. The "substance" of the Southey review might appear as sound as that of "Gladstone" if it were paraphrased, but the essays themselves have differing styles, which can best be illustrated when the works are taken as wholes. Similarly, "Lord Clive" is read today not for its content, not for the information it gives about the British conquest of India, but for its prose style. Chapter four attempts to illustrate the style of the essay by relating Macaulay's narrative and dramatic techniques to his theory of the historical essay. Since a period of twenty-five years separates the two essays on Samuel Johnson, these works offer a convenient basis for contrasting, in chapter five, Macaulay's early style, the style of Edinburgh articles written in the 1820's and early 1830's, to the more concise style of the five essays he wrote during the last years of his life. These studies of Johnson show especially well Macaulay's development from Whig polemicist to literary historian.

## APPENDIX I

### MACAULAY'S ESSAYS 1825-1859

#### I. Argumentative Essays

##### "Milton" (1825)

The occasion of Macaulay's first contribution to the Edinburgh Review<sup>1</sup> was the discovery and translation of De Doctrina Christiana, a work which Macaulay passes over quickly. His review, an impassioned defense of Milton, established his literary reputation: "Like Lord Byron, he awoke one morning and found himself famous" (Trevelyan, I, 117). The essay has two main parts: an evaluation of Milton's poetry and a vindication of his public conduct. In the first section, Macaulay tries to make Milton's work appear especially impressive by arguing that the writing of great poetry in an enlightened age is a remarkable achievement. To defend this primitivistic notion, he elaborates a theory of poetry-as-illusion: as men become less credulous, "the phantoms which the poet calls up grow fainter and fainter" (Works, V, 7). This superficial view of poetry does not appear in Macaulay's late essays nor in the Preface to

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<sup>1</sup>Works, V, 1-45.

the Lays of Ancient Rome (1841); and, like many theories in early essays, seems to be expounded not for its intrinsic worth but for its usefulness in argument. Macaulay identifies suggestiveness as the most striking quality of Milton's poetry, comparing the English poet's "dim intimations" with the "exact details" of Dante. Macaulay concludes the first section of the review and introduces the second part by stating that Milton's poetry reflects the loftiness of spirit which also characterizes his public conduct. The second and longer section is the heart of Macaulay's argument, for, to establish Milton's greatness, he must vindicate his public conduct. Underlying this section is the assumption that defiance of tyranny is a virtue; all of Milton's acts are seen in a positive light. For example, the assassination of Charles I is justified by an analogy which makes it seem as patriotic as the actions which culminated in the Revolution of 1688. Macaulay argues further that, avoiding the extremes of the Puritan and Royalist parties (Macaulay characteristically praises the mean between extremes), Milton united the best qualities of both parties. The capstone of the defense is the assertion that Milton fought for "the freedom of the human mind," not for partisan causes. He attacked "those deeply-rooted errors on which almost all abuses are founded, the servile worship of eminent men and the irrational dread of innovation" (V, 43). This judgment shows the intensity of Macaulay's attachment to the Whig party and reveals, in its

strong words and balanced phrases, the self-confident vigor of his early style. "Milton" displays sharp contrasts of ideas and exaggerations, antithetical sentences, amplification by paraphrase, and extensive use of figurative language. Although many passages are written in a heightened, oratorical style, some sentences have a terse, aphoristic quality: "If men are to wait for liberty til they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait forever" (V, 31). The section on Milton's public life reinforces the favorable impression created by the first part, and thus Macaulay prepares for his eulogistic conclusion. Although he scorns hero-worship ("Boswellism"), he pleads that exceptions be made for a few men who have "stood the closest scrutiny and the severest tests." Macaulay later judged his first Edinburgh Review article "overloaded with gaudy and ungraceful ornament."<sup>2</sup> Yet "Milton" has remained one of his most famous works.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Critical and Historical Essays Contributed to the Edinburgh Review (3 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, 1843), Preface, I, viii.

<sup>3</sup>C. W. French's edition contains a good introduction and notes. Milton. Thomas B. Macaulay. Address on Milton. Matthew Arnold (New York: Macmillan, 1898). This edition was revised in 1930 by H. Y. Moffett. P. T. Cresswell contributed notes to the essay for A. M. P. Hughes' edition, Milton. Poetry and Prose with Essays by Johnson, Hazlitt, Macaulay (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1920), pp. 194-98. See also W. J. Courthope, A Consideration of Macaulay's Comparison of Dante and Milton ("British Academy Proceedings 1907-1908"; London, 1912) and G. Sampson, "Macaulay and Milton," Edinburgh Review, CCXLII (1925), 165-78. For a rhetorical analysis of Macaulay's first Edinburgh work see Martin J. Svaglic's article "Classical Rhetoric and Victorian Prose," The Art of Victorian Prose, ed.

"Machiavelli" (1827)

In this essay<sup>4</sup> Macaulay attacks the stereotyped view of Machiavelli as "the Tempter, the Evil Principle, the discoverer of ambition and revenge" (V, 46) and argues that he must be understood in the context of his time. To clear Machiavelli's name, Macaulay first sketches the period in which he lived and then describes his literary, political, and historical works. As in "Milton," the author uses hatred of tyranny as a norm for judging his subject an admirable man. Macaulay shows that the moral values of Italy were different from those of northern Europe: Italians of Machiavelli's era judged leniently "those crimes which require self-command, address, quick observation, fertile invention, and profound knowledge of human nature" (59). Thus The Prince reflects its age. Macaulay elevates the work by contrasting it to Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, which reveals the two greatest faults of style: obscurity and affectation. By contrast, "The judicious and candid mind of Machiavelli shows itself in his luminous, manly, and polished language" (79).

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George Levine and William Madden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 273-86. Macaulay's literary criticism in the Milton essay is the subject of two articles: P. L. Carver, "The Sources of Macaulay's 'Essay on Milton'," Review of English Studies, VI (1930), 49-62; and Frederick L. Jones, "Macaulay's Theory of Poetry in Milton," Modern Language Quarterly, XIII (1953), 356-62. More recently, the critical judgments of "Milton" have been discussed by René Wellek. See A History of Modern Literary Criticism 1750-1950 (5 vols.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), III, 126-28.

<sup>4</sup>Works, V, 46-82.

Macaulay's emphasis on social history is clear not only from his attempt to see Machiavelli in perspective, and from the observation that "Historians rarely descend to those details from which alone the real state of a community can be collected" (52), but also from his judgment that Machiavelli's History of Florence presents "a more vivid and a more faithful impression of the national character and manners" (81) than is given by more accurate accounts. Another significant remark, in the light of Macaulay's own historical writing, is that, in the best histories, "a little of the exaggeration of fictitious narrative is judiciously employed. Something is lost in accuracy; but much is gained in effect" (81). The essay ends on a paradoxical note: "The name of the man whose genius had illuminated all the dark places of policy, and to whose patriotic wisdom an oppressed people had owed their last chance of emancipation and revenge, passed into a proverb of infamy" (82). The antithesis and balance of the sentence characterize the review as a whole. Analogies from history elaborate Macaulay's generalizations, as do parallels drawn between historical developments and physical processes, for example, "In the Italian States, as in many natural bodies, untimely decrepitude was the penalty of precocious maturity" (55).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>James Anthony Froude attacked "Machiavelli" at the beginning of an essay titled "Reynard the Fox." Short Studies on Great Subjects (4 vols.; London: Longmans, 1888), I, 602-05. Froude thought Macaulay blurred the distinction between right and wrong by arguing that moral values change with

"Dryden" (1828)

Macaulay begins this review<sup>6</sup> by elaborating one of his favorite ideas, the age forms the man. His central argument, "The creative faculty, and the critical faculty, cannot exist together in the highest perfection" (86), has two parts: a survey of literary history from Greek and Roman writers to Milton, and an evaluation of Dryden, who is judged "an incomparable reasoner in verse" (V, 114), and therefore a writer pre-eminent among the second or critical class of poets.

Macaulay divides Dryden's works into those written before 1678, courtly panegyrics and plays, which are marred by exaggeration, poor character drawing and bombast; and later works, satires, fables, and odes, in which "his language became less turgid" (114). Macaulay regards Dryden's last work, the "Ode on St. Cecilia's day," as his best: "the master-piece of the second class of poetry. . ." (120). Other vague statements support the thesis; for example, "Annus Mirabilis" was produced, Macaulay asserts, "not by creation, but by construction" (105). In critical passages of his late essays, Macaulay does not argue, as in "Dryden," that criticism is a science which is "constantly tending toward perfection" (95). In this review, the idea that the growth of civilization is inimical to poetry, developed in

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circumstances. Macaulay had stated for example: "Succeeding generations change the fashion of their morals, with the fashion of their hats and their coaches" (V, 64).

<sup>6</sup>Works, V, 83-121.

"Milton," is somewhat refined, for Macaulay says that the first works of the imagination are crude: "information" and "experience" are needed, not to strengthen the imagination, which is especially strong in children, savages, and madmen (as argued in "Milton"), but rather "for the purpose of enabling the artist to communicate his conception to others" (93). The pleasure of poetry, however, is still regarded as that of "agreeable error" (90). Macaulay did not include this essay in the 1843 edition of his Edinburgh works, perhaps because he found its analogies superficial. He wrote, for example, that Dryden's work exhibits "the sluttish magnificence of a Russian noble, all vermin and diamonds. . ." (118) and that Dryden's early writings "resembled the gigantic works of those Chinese gardeners who attempt to rival nature herself. . . to imitate in artificial plantations the vastness and the gloom of some primeval forest" (120).<sup>7</sup>

"History" (1828)

This review<sup>8</sup> is important for illustrating Macaulay's ideas about history and for indicating the methods he was later to use in writing The History of England from the Accession of James II. The main divisions of the review, ancient and modern,

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<sup>7</sup>Macaulay's theory of poetry in "Dryden" is discussed by Ronald Weber in "Singer and Seer: Macaulay on the Historian as Poet," Papers on Language and Literature, III (1967), 211-13.

<sup>8</sup>Works, V, 122-61.



are paralleled by a contrast between imagination and reason, the strengths, respectively, of ancient writers and modern writers. The essay also contrasts history as it has been written with history as it ought to be written. Macaulay argues that the changes which influence men most profoundly are "noiseless revolutions":

They are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives. . . . We know that nations may be miserable amidst victories and prosperous amidst defeats. We read of the fall of a wise minister and the rise of profligate favorites. But we must remember how small a proportion the good or evil effected by a single statesman can bear to the good or evil of a great social system (V, 156).

The last sentence shows that Macaulay differed from Carlyle, but Carlyle's early essay "Thoughts on History" resembles Macaulay's review in two aspects: Carlyle urges historians to look beyond public events; and he stresses the artistic nature of historical writing by distinguishing the "Artist" in history, who has an "Idea of the Whole," from the "Artisan," who merely gives facts.<sup>9</sup> Macaulay concludes by describing the ideal historian as one whose work reveals "the character and spirit of the age in miniature," but he admits that a historian who achieved a perfect balance of reason and imagination "would indeed be an intellectual prodigy" (V, 161).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Fraser's Magazine, II (November, 1830), 413-18.

<sup>10</sup>The historical theories of the review are discussed in more detail at the beginning of chapter four. Firth takes up this review in the second chapter of A Commentary on Macaulay's History of England (London: Frank Cass, 1964), pp. 17-27.

"Hallam" (1828)

In this essay,<sup>11</sup> Macaulay reviews Hallam's Constitutional History of England from the Accession of Henry VII to the Death of George II. The body of the review (pp. 166-235) surveys the period covered by Hallam; it is preceded by a general estimate of Hallam's work and followed by a discussion of Reform. As in the Milton essay, Macaulay emphasizes the writer's achievement by telling what difficulties he overcame; in Hallam's case these are conflicting theories of history, "a labyrinth of falsehood and sophistry" (166). Although he suggests that ideal historical writing is an imitative art (162), Macaulay praises Hallam's work, a "critical and argumentative history." But evaluating Hallam is subordinate to the reviewer's larger aim: using the book at hand as a vehicle for urging Reform. In "Hallam," Macaulay gives an interpretation of English history which he never altered:

The conflict of the seventeenth century was maintained by the Parliament against the Crown. The conflict which commenced in the middle of the eighteenth century, which still remains undecided. . . is between a large portion of the people on the one side, and the Crown and the Parliament united on the other (233).

He connects the 1688 Revolution to England's present condition (in 1828) by urging that once again the fundamental principles

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Firth's study was published first by Macmillan in 1938. See also John R. Griffin, The Intellectual Milieu of Lord Macaulay (Ottawa: Ottawa University Press, 1964), pp. 32-42.

<sup>11</sup>Works, V, 162-238.

of the Constitution must be saved "by alterations in the subordinate parts" (237). Macaulay's trust in reason and common sense is apparent at the end of the review: "In all movements of the human mind which tend to great revolutions there is a crisis at which moderate concession may amend, conciliate, and preserve" (238). The historical survey illustrates two assumptions underlying the review: political liberty is the mark of a good era, and the forerunners of the Whig party were champions of liberty during the reigns of the Tudors and Stuarts. Thus the concluding section, on the Reform Bill, is integral to the essay: if England adopts the Whig plan for Reform, a good period in its history will follow. At the end of "Hallam," Macaulay argues, as in "History," that the study of history has a practical end, the guiding of future actions. Macaulay favors the Whig interpretation of history not only as a partisan but also as a sage: the struggle to extend liberty can only be a noiseless revolution if it is led by moderate men. "Happy will it be for England," he concludes, therefore, if, in the crisis which agitation for Reform will soon bring, "her interests be confided to men for whom history has not recorded the long series of human crimes and follies in vain" (238).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>"Hallam" is discussed by Oursel in Les Essais de Lord Macaulay (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1882), pp. 187-92. Oursel feels that, in defending the English Revolution, Macaulay puts too much stress on circumstances and judges Cromwell too leniently.

"Mill on Government" (1829)

This review<sup>13</sup> attacks James Mill's Essay on Government.

An implicit assumption in the review is that the errors of the Utilitarians will discredit all reformers and must therefore be challenged. Macaulay's thesis is that "the theory of Mr. Mill rests altogether on false principles, and that even on those false principles he does not reason logically" (V, 240). The false principles are a priori reasoning applied to political questions, i.e. the attempt to deduce theories of government from the principles of human nature (266). A priori reasoning leads the Utilitarians to "talk of power, happiness, misery, pain, pleasure, motives, objects of desire, as they talk of lines and numbers. . . (248). But even if Mill reasoned correctly, Macaulay argues, his conclusions would be false because the upper and middle classes are the "natural representatives of the human race" (265). The limitations of Whig liberalism are clear from Macaulay's treatment of the poor: he admits that their interests may clash with the interests of the middle class but judges middle class interests "identical" with those of the "innumerable generations which are to follow" (265). In the conclusion, Macaulay repeats his objections to a priori reasoning and suggests a better method, induction: "perpetually bringing the theory to the test of new facts" (270). The debate is reduced to simple terms by this comparison: as a great

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<sup>13</sup>Works, V, 239-71.

doctor with a variety of skills is better than a quack with one cure-all, induction offers more "real utility" than Mill's method, which produces only "barren theories," a charge which foreshadows the argumentative strategy of the Bacon essay: opposing the philosophy of "thorns" (ancient) to Bacon's philosophy of "fruit."<sup>14</sup>

"Westminster Reviewer's Defense of Mill" (1829)

After the appearance of "Mill's Essay on Government," the Westminster Review printed two articles titled "'Greatest Happiness' Principle" which attacked Macaulay's views: the first appeared in Vol. XI (1829), 254-68, the second in Vol. XII (1830), 246-62. Macaulay answered these articles in his next two contributions to the Edinburgh, "Westminster Reviewer's Defense of Mill"<sup>15</sup> and "Utilitarian Theory of Government."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup>The best account of Macaulay's debates with the Utilitarians is given by G. L. Nesbitt in Benthamite Reviewing. The First Years of the Westminster Review, 1824-1836 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), pp. 139-44. Nesbitt explains that, although the Westminster announced that Bentham would answer Macaulay's attack on Mill, the actual rebuttal was written by Perronet Thompson, owner of the Westminster, because the paper submitted by Bentham summarized his theories and did not answer Macaulay's objections to Utilitarianism. For other background information on the debate see Joseph Hamburger, Intellectuals in Politics. John Stuart Mill and the Philosophical Radicals (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 25-27 and pp. 78-82. See also Beatty, pp. 81-86. A brief summary of "Mill on Government" is given by Elie Halévy in The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism, trans. Mary Morris (London: Faber and Faber, 1928), p. 485. Halévy suggests that Macaulay's tirade against Mill enhanced the reputation of the Utilitarians.

<sup>15</sup>Works, V, 272-300.

<sup>16</sup>Works, V, 301-39.

Each of these essays is divided into a rebuttal section and a discussion of the "greatest happiness principle." For Macaulay, this principle is included in Christian morality and "has always been latent under the words social contract, justice, benevolence, patriotism, liberty, and so forth" (V, 295). A statement at the end of "Westminster Reviewer's Defense of Mill" is important for understanding all three works. Parliamentary reform might be thwarted, Macaulay warns, "if once an association be formed in the public mind between Reform and Utilitarianism" (V, 299). Hence he attacks the Utilitarians with special vigor to distinguish Whig goals from those of radical reformers. Among the tactics he uses to discredit the Utilitarians are 1) analogies: he compares Utilitarians to scholastic philosophers; 2) allusions: for example, alluding to Tristram Shandy, the author declares that "The project of mending a bad world by teaching people to give new names to old things reminds us of Walter Shandy's scheme for compensating the loss of his son's nose by christening him Trismegistus. What society wants is a new motive, not a new cant" (V, 296); and 3) loaded words: calling the Utilitarians a "sect" hints that they are unorthodox, a judgment implicit in Macaulay's argument that the greatest happiness principle is contained in Christian teaching. These tactics build up a contrast between the sensible reviewer and his foolish opponents. John Holloway has shown how carefully Arnold created a similar contrast between himself and

those he attacks. (The Victorian Sage [New York: Norton, 1965], pp. 225-43.) Macaulay is less subtle than Arnold: he uses ridicule rather than irony, for example, to discredit his opponents. Long before Dickens caricatured Utilitarian philosophers in Hard Times, Macaulay poked fun at them: "...though quibbling about self-interest and motives, and objects of desire, and the greatest happiness of the greatest number, is but a poor employment for a grown man, it certainly hurts the health less than hard drinking. . . and is immeasurably more humane than cock-fighting" (271).

#### "Utilitarian Theory of Government" (1829)

In this review, Macaulay states his own theories more directly than in the previous essays on the Utilitarians. He outlines a via media between conservatism and radicalism, rejecting universal suffrage but enthusiastically supporting Reform: "Our fervent wish, and. . . sanguine hope, is that we may see such a reform in the House of Commons as may render its votes the express image of the opinion of the middle orders of Britain" (V, 328). This position follows from the principle expounded in "Hallam": reform in order to preserve. Through an enthymeme, Macaulay argues that a government which protects persons and property is a good government, but he ignores the question of means. He implies that theories of government will gradually be improved, but he disparages the greatest happiness principle by noting the varieties of human behavior: "Every man

has tastes and propensities, which he is disposed to gratify at a risk and expense which people of different temperaments and habits think extravagant" (324).<sup>17</sup>

"Southey's Colloquies" (1830)

See chapter two for an analysis of this review,<sup>18</sup> in which Macaulay attacks Sir Thomas More; or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society, a work Southey published in 1829. One of Macaulay's best-known reviews, "Southey's Colloquies" is often reprinted and quoted to exemplify Victorian attitudes: laissez-faire liberalism, optimism, and belief in progress.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>One reader who saw some truth in Macaulay's strictures was John Stuart Mill. He wrote in his Autobiography that, although he considered Macaulay wrong to choose "the empirical mode of treating political phenomena, against the philosophical," and although he found the tone of Macaulay's reviews "unbecoming," he had to admit that his father's premises "were really too narrow." (Autobiography /London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1873/, p. 158. For Mill's general view of the controversy between his father, James Mill, and Macaulay, see pp. 157-161.

<sup>18</sup>Works, V, 330-68.

<sup>19</sup>Macaulay's review was attacked in an article titled "Mr. Thomas Macaulay and Mr. Southey," Fraser's, I (1830), 580-600. For background information on Southey's book and Macaulay's review see Geoffrey Carnall, Robert Southey and his Age. The Development of a Conservative Mind (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1960), pp. 179-81. George Levine's anthology The Emergence of Victorian Consciousness (New York: The Free Press, 1967) includes an excerpt from the Southey review and an introductory note, p. 128. See also pp. 112-13. Another short description of "Southey's Colloquies" is given by Peter Geyl in "Macaulay in his Essays," the second chapter of his book Debates with Historians (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1955), pp. 30-32.



"Mr. Robert Montgomery" (1830)

Like poets who appear in the Dunciad, Robert Montgomery owes his place in literary history to an attack upon him by a more famous writer. In one of his most vituperative reviews,<sup>20</sup> Macaulay attacks "the puffing of books," a practice common in 1830, and one which "all who are anxious for the purity of the national taste, or for the honor of the literary character" must denounce vigorously (V, 372). Although Macaulay considers Montgomery no worse than other writers whose reputations have been inflated, he takes special delight in ridiculing bad didactic poetry, not because he wishes to discredit religion, but because he thinks defending Christian doctrine in bad verse will only make it seem ludicrous. Two of Montgomery's poems are dissected in the review: The Omnipresence of the Deity, and Satan. Parts of the first, Macaulay claims, are plagiarized from Dryden and Pope; the work reveals "false imagery and false English" (384) in its original parts. Since Macaulay finds no satanic qualities in Montgomery's Satan, he advises the poet to change a few lines and republish the work with the title Gabriel. In the essay on Machiavelli, Macaulay referred to the Edinburgh's "literary tribunal" (V, 46), and this review shows how seriously he took the public function of the critic. Later

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<sup>20</sup>Works, V, 369-87.

essays indicate Macaulay's departure from the critic-as-judge attitude of "Montgomery."<sup>21</sup>

"Sadler's Law of Population" (1830)

The book which Macaulay reviewed in this essay<sup>22</sup> attacked the Malthusian theory that population, if not checked, would increase in a geometric progression. Sadler argued that "the prolificness of human beings, otherwise similarly circumstanced, varies inversely as their numbers" (V, 425). To refute Sadler, Macaulay first argues that if Sadler's theory is true, it "is as much a theory of superfecundity as that of Mr. Malthus"; he then demonstrates, through statistical tables, that Sadler's theory is untrue; and, finally, he discusses Sadler's attack on the theory of geometric progression. Macaulay describes Sadler's theories in abusive language. The statistics used to refute Sadler are of little interest to the modern reader, but the review is significant for indicating Macaulay's position on the debate between religion and science. Sadler had judged

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<sup>21</sup>For an account of Macaulay's Montgomery review see Thomas R. Lounsbury's Life and Times of Tennyson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915), pp. 193-98. This review is briefly discussed in "Macaulay vs. Montgomery," Notes and Queries, June 18, 1938, pp. 435-36. "Montgomery" is summarized by David Fong in "The Development of Macaulay as a Critic and Essayist" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1967), pp. 76-80.

<sup>22</sup>Works, V, 419-44. Macaulay defeated Sadler in the Leeds election of 1832. Both men had previously represented rotten boroughs, abolished by the Reform Bill of 1832. Leeds had no Parliamentary representation until 1832.

Malthusian theories incompatible with Christian doctrine.

Macaulay argued, with characteristic vigor:

A man who wishes to serve the cause of religion ought to hesitate long before he stakes the truth of religion on the event of a controversy respecting facts in the physical world. For a time he may succeed in making a theory which he dislikes unpopular by persuading the public that it contradicts the Scriptures and is inconsistent with the attributes of the Deity (429-30).

He goes on to say that science must eventually triumph in such a debate. Citing Copernicus, Macaulay notes: "In the present generation, and in our own country, the prevailing system of geology has been, with equal folly [with folly equal to that of Copernicus' opponents] attacked on the ground that it is inconsistent with the Mosaic dates" (430). (The first part of Lyell's Principles of Geology was published in 1830, the same year in which Sadler's Law of Population appeared.) Macaulay has no patience with Sadler's "blundering piety" (430).<sup>23</sup>

"Sadler's Refutation Refuted" (1831)

After Macaulay's attack, Sadler published A Refutation of an Article in the Edinburgh Review entitled "Sadler's Law of

<sup>23</sup>In a short essay about the Victorian period titled "The Mood of Doubt," Humphrey House notes that Macaulay did not really understand the feelings Southey expressed in his Colloquies. And he continues: "In another essay, too, I think Macaulay failed to appreciate or deliberately shirked one of the greatest problems, one of the greatest causes of pessimism--in his essay on Sadler's Law of Population. Sadler's book was a hideously rhetorical and rather crazily argued attack on Malthus. Macaulay jeers Sadler out of court, but he never comes to grips with what lies behind him, the theory which overshadowed and darkened all English life for seventy years." (Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians /New York: E. P. Dutton, 1966/, p. 74.)

Population, and Disproof of Human Superfecundity" (London: John Murray, 1830). Although he presents many statistics, Sadler seems to argue mainly from authority. He considers it impossible to hold Malthusian doctrines and believe in traditional Christian teaching on God's benevolence (p. 7), and he therefore regards his own theory as an argument "in favor of natural and revealed religion" (p. 75). Sadler shows, however, that Macaulay distorted his statements on the problem of evil: Macaulay had made Sadler seem foolish for thinking overpopulation an evil harder to reconcile with divine goodness than any other existing evil, but Sadler's objection is much less theoretical: he disputes the assumption that the suffering of the poor is inevitable. He considers Malthusian doctrines inhumane and therefore contrary to Christianity. Behind the quibbles about statistical method in these debates between Sadler and Macaulay lie fundamentally different views of society's obligation toward the poor. Sadler was an early champion of factory reform; Macaulay's laissez-faire liberalism is only implicit in his attacks on Sadler, but his attitude toward social problems is indicated by the abstract quality of his discussion and by his flippant tone. "Aspiring to the character of a Christian philosopher, [Sadler] can never preserve through a single paragraph either the calmness of a philosopher or the meekness of a Christian" (471). By such ad hominem arguments, Macaulay weakens his early essays. Yet

he merely adopts the tone of contemporary reviewing in his attack on Sadler's book.<sup>24</sup>

"John Bunyan" (1830)

In this article,<sup>25</sup> Macaulay reviews Southey's edition of Pilgrim's Progress. "Bunyan" differs from other early reviews in that its tone is not polemical; Macaulay wishes to pay "homage to the genius of a great man" (445). He gives an enthusiastic description of Pilgrim's Progress, but his description advances a shallow thesis: "The characteristic peculiarity of the Pilgrim's Progress [Macaulay frequently finds one distinguishing characteristic of an event, a work, or a person] is that it is the only work of its kind which possesses a strong human interest" (446). He argues more convincingly that Bunyan's religious feelings must be interpreted in the context of the seventeenth century, and that some parallels exist between characters in Pilgrim's Progress and contemporaries of Bunyan. Macaulay praises Bunyan for his "mild theology." He admires his work for demonstrating the richness

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<sup>24</sup>"Sadler's Refutation Refuted," Works, V, 470-97. Sadler's statistics are also challenged by an article titled "Malthus," Quarterly Review, XLV (1831), 97-145. The author argues that both Malthus and Sadler are wrong. He concludes that human happiness will be greatly increased by the multiplication of Englishmen, who embody, in his words, "mankind in that form which must be most pleasing to the contemplation of the Creator. . ." (p. 145).

<sup>25</sup>Works, V, 445-57.

of "the old unpolluted English language" (456). Characteristically, Macaulay elaborates his ideas through comparison and contrast: Bunyan vs. Shelley; Pilgrim's Progress vs. the Faerie Queene; and Pilgrim's Progress vs. Grace Abounding. The use of exaggeration and climax, two devices common in his early work, is illustrated by the ending of the review:

...though there were many clever men in England during the latter half of the seventeenth century, there were only two minds which possessed the imaginative faculty in a very eminent degree. One of those minds produced the Paradise Lost, the other the Pilgrim's Progress (457).

Often in Macaulay's early reviews, the last sentence of a paragraph is a short, antithetical summary in which alliteration is freely used, as in the concluding sentence quoted above.

#### "Civil Disabilities of the Jews" (1831)

This review<sup>26</sup> is discussed in the last section of chapter two. Four years after the review was published, Macaulay spoke on the same subject in the House of Commons. In the speech, Macaulay changed the order of his arguments: the essay's second section, on alleged lack of patriotism among Jews, appears last in the speech, and is expanded to consider bigoted charges made by the Tory opposition, for example, that Jews are a sordid and mean race; that they are clannish; and that they care only for making money. Thus Macaulay ends the speech by attacking his opponent's biases rather than their arguments. Another

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<sup>26</sup>Works, V, 459-69.

difference between the essay and the speech is that in the latter, Macaulay's ideas are expressed in shorter, more emphatic sentences. "Property is power" sums up his first argument, that Jews have the substance of political power in economic power, and what is held back is merely the sign of power. The aphorism "bigotry will never want a pretence" sums up the last argument, that the Tories accuse Jews of lacking patriotism to justify their own discrimination. Finally, the conclusion is more emphatic in the speech than in the review.<sup>27</sup> Macaulay declares that Christianity needs no support from intolerant laws and strengthens his point with military language:

Let us not, mistaking her character and her interests, fight the battle of truth with the weapons of error, and endeavor to support by

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<sup>27</sup>"Civil Disabilities of the Jews" is not well known, but it is reprinted in two recent anthologies: Hugh Trevor-Roper's selection of Macaulay's works (Critical and Historical Essays [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965]) and The Art of Prose (New York: Scribner's, 1965). The essay was reprinted to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Macaulay's death. Israel Abrahams and S. Levy (eds.), Essay and Speech on Jewish Disabilities by Lord Macaulay (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, Hanson, 1909). Macaulay's stand on the Jewish question is the subject of an article by John Robertson, "The Macaulay Election of 1846 Containing Comments on the Macaulay Rejection of 1847," Quarterly Review, LXXXI (1847), 526-40. The Quarterly defended Tory support of Jewish disabilities. Many years earlier, the Tory position had been attacked in a Westminster Review article, "Disabilities of the Jews," X (1829), 435-43. On this subject, if not on Utilitarianism, Macaulay agreed with the Westminster Review that discriminatory legislation should be abolished.

For background information on legislation affecting Jews see H. S. Q. Henriques, The Jews and the English Law (Oxford: at the University Press, 1908) and Albert Hyamson, A History of the Jews in England (London: Methuen, 1928), pp. 260-66.

oppression that religion which first taught the human race the great lesson of universal charity (VIII, 110).

"Moore's Life of Byron" (1831)

"I never wrote anything with less heart," Macaulay said of this review.<sup>28</sup> As a consequence, perhaps, the style of "Byron"<sup>29</sup> is less florid than the style of earlier reviews. This work is divided into two parts, the life and works of the poet, linked by a section in which Macaulay discusses true "correctness" in poetry and the differences between eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century poetry (pp. 396-409). Macaulay recognizes more complexity in Byron than in many writers discussed in early reviews, notably Boswell and Johnson; an appealing quality of "Byron" is its lack of moral censure. Noting that Byron was extravagantly praised and vilified, Macaulay recommends a more moderate view. "We know no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodic fits of morality," he declares (V, 391). He clearly admires Byron for going to Greece to fight for freedom, and he describes the poet's last days sympathetically. When Macaulay turns to poetry, he seems to abandon the poetry-as-pleasing-falsehood idea of "Milton" and "Dryden" and to acknowledge that poetry has

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<sup>28</sup>Letter to Hannah Macaulay, June 10, 1831; Trevelyan, I, 222.

<sup>29</sup>Works, V, 388-418.



its own truth and value. He tells how it is superior to other imitative arts and concludes:

The heart of man is the province of poetry alone. . . . The deeper and more complex parts of human nature can be exhibited by means of words alone. Thus the objects of the imitation of poetry are the whole external and the whole internal universe, the face of nature, the vicissitudes of fortune, man as he is in himself, man as he appears in society, all things which really exist, all things of which we can form an image in our minds by combining together parts of things which really exist. The domain of this imperial art is commensurate with the imaginative faculty (404).

Here Macaulay takes poetry more seriously than in "Milton." On the other hand, sweeping generalizations about Augustan and Romantic poetry in "Byron" illustrate both the vague quality of his earlier criticism and his tendency to see literary questions through analogies rather than to consider them in themselves: the change of taste in the latter eighteenth century is compared to a political revolution, for example, and Macaulay describes Byron as "the representative not of either party [Augustans or Romantics], but of both at once, and of their conflict, and of the victory by which that conflict was terminated" (409). Macaulay here says "victory" because he prefers "the magnificent imagery and the varied music of Coleridge and Shelley" (401) to Pope's poetry, a judgment which appears to conflict with the primitivistic theory of "Milton." The critical commentary in this review is somewhat more specific than in "Milton"; Macaulay points out, for example, that Byron's

dialogues tend to become soliloquies. But although he considers Byron excellent in description and meditation, he says little about individual works. Macaulay's love of paradox is evident when he writes that Scott and Wordsworth are more "correct" than Augustan poets. Following Johnson's precept that "there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature," he argues that nineteenth-century poets give faithful imitations of nature and are therefore "correct" in a broad sense. Macaulay does not state in this review which of Byron's works he liked best, but many years later he wrote in his journal (August 3, 1849) that he considered the first two cantos of Don Juan to be Byron's masterpiece (Trevelyan, II, 262).<sup>30</sup>

"Samuel Johnson" (1831)

This work is discussed in chapter five. One of Macaulay's best-known essays, "Samuel Johnson"<sup>31</sup> is divided into three parts: an attack upon Croker's edition of Boswell's Life; a description of Boswell in which the "inspired idiot" paradox is elaborated; and a superficial analysis of Johnson's character and works. The first of these sections is usually omitted when the review is reprinted. Croker, Boswell, and Johnson were

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<sup>30</sup> John Wilson's characters in "Noctes Ambrosianae" No. LVII, Blackwood's, XXX (1831), 410-11, poke fun at Macaulay, but the essay on Byron receives grudging praise. Macaulay's view of poetry in "Byron is disputed in an article titled "Mr. Elwin's Pope," Quarterly Review, CXLIII (1877), 328-30.

<sup>31</sup> Works, V, 498-538.

Tories, a fact which partially accounts for the abusive tone of Macaulay's review. His considered opinion of Johnson's life and works is given in an essay he wrote twenty-five years later for the Encyclopedia Britannica.<sup>32</sup>

"Mirabeau" (1832)

Mirabeau is mentioned only at the end of this review,<sup>33</sup> a fact which indicates that Macaulay's purpose is not to describe the career of one statesman. His real aim is to defend the French Revolution and indirectly to defend the Reform Bill, which had just been passed in England, for bringing change without bloodshed. "In the whole history of England there is no prouder circumstance than this," he declared, "that a change which could not in any other age or in any other country have been effected without physical violence should here have been effected by the force of reason and under the forms of law" (V, 624). In this article, Macaulay reviews Dumont's edition of Mirabeau's Memoirs. After praising the editor for his efforts to make Bentham's philosophy better known, Macaulay argues that Dumont stresses the evils of the French Revolution because he

<sup>32</sup>A rebuttal to this essay is J. G. Lockhart's Answers to Macaulay's Criticism of Croker's Boswell (London, 1856). In his biography of John Wilson Croker, Myron Brightfield discusses Macaulay's review (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1940), pp. 299-303. For a more recent discussion see Francis F. Hart, "Boswell and the Romantics," English Literary History, XXVII (March, 1960), 44-65. Hart treats reviews of Croker's edition by Macaulay, Carlyle, and Lockhart.

<sup>33</sup>Works, V, 612-37.

wrote in 1799, when the Revolution's "solid advantages" were not yet appreciated, as they should be by politicians in 1832.

Macaulay argues, in the first section of the essay, that the French Revolution was a good event because it abolished great abuses; the French in 1832 are better off than they were before the Revolution. A cyclic view of history is evident in this defense of the Revolution:

Demolition is undoubtedly a vulgar task; the highest glory of the statesman is to construct. But there is a time for everything--a time to set up, and a time to pull down. The talents of the Revolutionary leaders and those of the legislator have equally their use and their season. It is the natural, the almost universal law, that the age of insurrections and proscriptions shall precede the age of good government, of temperate liberty, and liberal order (620).

When he wishes to urge a point, Macaulay often uses language which echoes Biblical passages; in this case, he alludes to Eccles. 3: 1-4. The second part of "Mirabeau" describes the Revolution itself. The event is made to seem inevitable by comparisons to physical processes: ". . . the government, the aristocracy, and the Church. . . reaped that which they had sown" (625). Macaulay seems to be referring to English Tories when he claims that the French clergy and upper classes showed "that blindness to danger, that incapacity of believing that anything can be except what has been, which the long possession of power seldom fails to generate. . ." (633). At any rate, his speeches supporting the Reform Bill describe Tory opposition in similar terms. The contrast Macaulay draws between the French

Revolution and the English Revolution is less superficial than many contrasts in earlier works because, although he notes that Englishmen "have seldom troubled themselves with Utopian theories," he recognizes some limitations of the practical English character: "An Englishman too often reasons on politics in the spirit rather of a lawyer than of a philosopher. There is too often something narrow, something exclusive. . . in his love of freedom" (633). Thus Macaulay's patriotism is expressed more temperately in "Mirabeau" than in earlier works, and his critique of British pragmatism is a good qualification of the emphatically-expressed sentiments of "Bacon." Mirabeau himself is sketched briefly. Macaulay praises Dumont for portraying him as neither a god nor a demon, nor a "string of antitheses," but a real person, a "remarkable and eccentric being indeed, but perfectly conceivable" (636). Macaulay characterizes Mirabeau as a man "with great talents, with strong passions, depraved by bad education, surrounded by temptations of every kind; made desperate at one time by disgrace, and then intoxicated by fame" (636).<sup>34</sup>

"Bacon" (1837)

Written while Macaulay was in India, "Bacon" is his longest review: it filled 104 pages of the Edinburgh Review

<sup>34</sup>Philip Henry Stanhope (Lord Mahon) comments on this review in "Lord John Russell and Mr. Macaulay on the French Revolution," Historical Essays (London: John Murray, 1849), pp. 272-95. Mahon judges the essay on Mirabeau ". . . the ablest and most important work that has yet appeared on the first stages of the French Revolution" (p. 294).

for July, 1837.<sup>35</sup> The review is divided into two parts: Bacon's life and his works. In the latter half, three subjects are taken up: the end of Bacon's philosophy, as contrasted to that of ancient philosophy; Bacon's method; and, finally, Bacon's intellectual characteristics, which Macaulay describes in general terms and then illustrates through specific works. This judgment summarizes the biographical part of the review:

"Neither his principles nor his spirit were such as could be trusted, when strong temptations were to be resisted, and serious dangers to be braved" (VI, 203). Although Macaulay demeans Bacon's character to make the praise of his philosophy a striking contrast, his judgment reveals his typical preference for high-spirited and daring men. To defend Cromwell, for example, Macaulay had argued that executing Charles was wrong, but "it was not a cruel or perfidious measure. It had all those features which distinguish the errors of magnanimous and intrepid spirits from base and malignant crimes" ("Hallam," V, 217). Bacon's crimes are portrayed as base and malignant, especially his treatment of Essex. The most famous part of the review, however, is the section, often excerpted, in which Macaulay disparages Plato and eulogizes Baconian philosophy. As he was writing "Bacon," Macaulay predicted that it would be "very superficial in the philosophical part,"<sup>36</sup> and his candid

<sup>35</sup>Works, VI, 135-245.

<sup>36</sup>Letter to Napier from Calcutta, Jan. 1, 1836; Correspondence of Macvey Napier (London: Macmillan, 1879), p. 174.

appraisal seems exact, for his assault on Greek philosophy attacks philosophy itself. By faulting the ancients for ignoring "the key of the Baconian doctrine, Utility and Progress" (VI, 204), Macaulay violates one of his own principles, that historical developments should not be judged by the standards of later periods. While "Bacon" expresses a utilitarian creed in an especially crude form, some statements in the essay put Macaulay's values into a different perspective. Bacon's end, he says for example, was to "extend the power and supply the wants of man" (234), a description which implies that material goods are means to an end. Another remark is significant for understanding Macaulay's exaggerated defense of utility in this review:

If [Bacon] sometimes appeared to ascribe importance too exclusively to the arts which increase the outward comforts of our species, the reason is plain. Those arts had been most unduly depreciated. They had been represented as unworthy of the attention of a man of liberal education (224-25).

Bacon was not a materialist, for "he was far too wise a man not to know how much our well-being depends on the regulation of our minds" (224). The same may be said of Macaulay, although later essays show more clearly than "Bacon" the connections he saw between increasing prosperity and increasing civil and religious liberty.<sup>37</sup> The end of Bacon's philosophy is identified as

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<sup>37</sup>G. M. Trevelyan concludes his essay "Macaulay and the Sense of Optimism" by asserting, "Material progress is not to be despised. Not only does it make people more comfortable but it

"fruit"; his method, induction, was not his invention, but "he was the person who first turned the minds of speculative men, long occupied in verbal disputes, to the discovery of new and useful truth; and, by doing so, he at once gave the inductive method an importance and dignity which had never before belonged to it" (232-33). Finally, Bacon's mind is judged remarkable because "with great minuteness of observation, he had an amplitude of comprehension" (235), qualities best illustrated, Macaulay thinks, by the first book of the Novum Organum.

"Bacon" has detracted from Macaulay's reputation, partly because its weakest section has been widely anthologized, but also because of the oversimplifications which seriously weaken the review. Bacon's life is epitomized by a "creeping snake," his work by a "soaring angel." Bacon's good philosophy of "fruit" is diametrically opposed to Plato's bad philosophy of "thorns." Other sharp antitheses drive home this simple idea: works (Bacon) and words (Plato); authority (ancient philosophy) and freedom (modern); and such figurative paraphrases of the contrast as road/treadmill (to suggest Bacon's progressive philosophy and Plato's static philosophy) and the juxtaposition of land of milk and honey to sterile desert. "Bacon" is also marred by repetitions. Some have become famous, for example:

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gives freedom for a greater variety of intellectual life." Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, p. 52. If Macaulay had developed this idea more fully in "Bacon," the essays perhaps would not be read as a eulogy to the Philistine spirit.



"An acre in Middlesex is better than a Principality in Utopia. . . . The wise man of the Stoics would, no doubt, be a grander object than a steam-engine. But there are steam-engines. And the wise man of the Stoics is yet to be born" (VI, 220). Ironically, the utilitarian spirit which these vivid assertions reveal had been ridiculed several years earlier by Macaulay himself, when he argued that Bentham, Mill, and their followers reduced all human complexities to "lines and numbers."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Trevelyan wrote of Macaulay, "Whatever he might think of Plato's political and social ideals, he had a deep and abiding admiration for Plato himself" (Trevelyan, II, 434-35). Macaulay's opinions on Plato are given in The Marginal Notes of Lord Macaulay. Selected and arranged by Sir George Otto Trevelyan (London: Longmans, Green, 1907), pp. 55-65. The "Bacon" review provoked much discussion. Emerson's reaction is typical: "The brilliant Macaulay. . . explicitly teaches that good means good to eat, good to wear, material commodity; that the glory of modern philosophy is its direction on 'fruit'." (English Traits, Vol. V: Complete Works /Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1903/, p. 247.) Another contemporary of Macaulay who attacked the Bacon review was Peter Bayne, in Essays in Biography and Criticism (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1858), pp. 67-70. Although Edwin Abbott does not discuss Macaulay's review in his study Bacon and Essex (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1877), his view of Bacon's treatment of Essex is similar to Macaulay's. James Spedding attacked Macaulay's estimate of Bacon's character in Evenings with a Reviewer, or, Macaulay and Bacon (London: K. Paul, Trench, and Co., 1881). See also Edward J. Johnson, "Francis Bacon versus Lord Macaulay." Bulletin of the Baconian Society (London: Lopworth, 1949). In a sympathetic discussion of "Bacon," W. P. Ker argues that it is not typical of Macaulay's writing. See "Macaulay," English Prose, ed. Henry Craik (London: Macmillan, 1896), V, 415-417. More recently, Walter Houghton comments on the Bacon essay in The Victorian Frame of Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 39-41. See also p. 123. Margery Purver argues, in The Royal Society (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), that Macaulay misunderstood Bacon. She states that, judging from the Novum Organum, Bacon's main concern was the discovery of laws, "not proficiency in utilitarian skills" (p. 23). Purver believes that Macaulay was wrong to treat Bacon as a scientist and not as a philosopher. See The Royal Society, pp. 22-25.

"Gladstone on Church and State" (1839)

Macaulay's best argumentative essay,<sup>39</sup> this review attacks Gladstone's proposals for a closer union of Church and State. Macaulay argues that the basis of the State is secular, not religious. He believes that English history and common sense alike prove the dangers of a close alliance between Church and State, an alliance which he considers not only harmful to the State but to religious interests as well. But Macaulay favors reform rather than abolition of the Established Church and thus rejects the radical as well as the Tory position on religion. This essay is analyzed in chapter three.<sup>40</sup>

"Barère" (1844)

Although "Barère" is one of the last pieces Macaulay wrote for the Edinburgh Review,<sup>41</sup> it belongs with his early,

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<sup>39</sup>Works, VI, 326-80.

<sup>40</sup>One of Macaulay's best essays, "Gladstone," is not well-known, although Trevor-Roper includes it in his recent anthology, Critical and Historical Essays. Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay, to illustrate "Macaulay's political ideas and power of argument, undistorted by personalities." (p. 23) In the nineteenth century, Taine praised the Gladstone review, especially its secular view of the state, in his History of English Literature, trans. H. Van Laun (4 vols.; London: Chatto and Windus, 1880), IV, 237. Taine's contemporary Paul Oursel gave a favorable summary of "Gladstone" in his study Les Essais de Lord Macaulay (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1882), pp. 135-43. In his recent essay "Macaulay's Style," William Madden describes the Gladstone review to illustrate Macaulay's "judicious" style. See The Art of Victorian Prose, p. 137.

<sup>41</sup>Works, VII, 123-203.

argumentative essays because, although it describes the French Revolution, its tone is polemical. Macaulay sets out to prove that Bertrand Barère, a member of the Committee of Public Safety, "approached nearer than any person mentioned in history or fiction, whether man or devil, the idea of consummate and universal depravity" (VII, 123). The publication of Barère's Memoirs was the occasion of Macaulay's intemperate attack. As Macaulay describes Barère's career, he makes each act, including the betrayal of Robespierre, seem more vile than the preceding one. At the end, Barère seems especially wicked when he spies for Napoleon, becomes a double agent, and writes pamphlets bitterly attacking England. The language of Macaulay's concluding indictment is typical of the review as a whole: "Renegade, traitor, slave, coward, liar, slanderer, murderer, hack-writer, police-spy--the one small service which he could render to England was to hate her; and such as he was may all who hate her be!" (VII, 202). In "Barère," Macaulay gives a vivid account of the Reign of Terror which is sometimes reprinted separately. Macaulay admitted to Napier that this review did not please him. "It is a shade, unrelieved by a gleam of light" (Trevelyan, II, 150). In this respect, it is unique among Macaulay's late essays.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>The review is discussed by Oursel, pp. 318-34. He summarizes "Barere" justly by saying: "C'est moins un biographique qu'un réquisitoire un de ces actes d'accusation terribles dont l'histoire de l'éloquence politique ou judiciaire nous offre

## II. Narrative Essays: Survey Narratives

### "Hampden" (1831)

Macaulay wrote to Napier, the Edinburgh editor, that his article on Hampden<sup>43</sup> was "in part a narrative. This is a sort of composition which I have never yet attempted" (Trevelyan, I, 249). John Hampden, the Puritan leader, appealed to Macaulay as a soldier-statesman, the kind of character he would later draw in William III, the hero of The History of England from the Accession of James II. Although Macaulay sympathizes with the Puritan cause, his review describes Hampden's career, and is not, like "Hallam" and "Milton," a debate about past actions. "Hampden" is less interesting than Macaulay's later narratives, but it employs techniques used more effectively in "Lord Clive" and in the second essay on the Earl of Chatham. One is scene-painting: Hampden's death is described in vivid details: "In the first charge, Hampden was struck in the shoulder by two bullets, which broke the bone and lodged in his body. . . . Hampden, with his head drooping and his hands leaning on his horse's neck, moved feebly out of the battle" (V, 585). A

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des modèles, les Philippiques de Cicéron, par exemple." (p. 318.) Pieter Geyl puts the essay in its historical context: "Why this passionate onslaught against a not so very interesting member of the Committee of Public Safety during the French Terror half a century ago? Because the present generation of French radicals, in trying to whitewash this man, and, generally speaking, in reviving the glories of the Revolution, were appealing to the inveterate French resentment against England." (Debates with Historians, p. 28)

<sup>43</sup>Works, V, 539-86.

second device is repetition. Macaulay quotes a contemporary account of Hampden's death which ends "He hath left few his like behind," and begins the last paragraph of the essay by observing, "He had, indeed, left none his like behind him." Thirdly, the review gives examples of transitional passages used to heighten dramatic effect. To summarize the Long Parliament, Macaulay writes, "The situation of the Puritan leaders was now difficult and full of peril" (572), a comment which prepares for an action soon described: Charles' attempt to seize Hampden. In this early narrative, Macaulay's Whig bias is much more pronounced than in later works. He argues, as in "Hallam," that "the whole principle" of the government of Charles I was "resistance to public opinion" (550). Hampden seems a wooden figure compared to the central characters of later essays. Such antithetical descriptions as the following show the limitations of Macaulay's character drawing: "With the morals of a Puritan, he had the manners of an accomplished courtier" (542). Although "Hampden" is not a psychological study, a fact which illustrates Macaulay's theory that individuals have relatively little power to shape events, Macaulay hints at the end of the review that, had Hampden lived to direct the Puritans, English history might have taken a different, less violent course.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Oursel contrasts "Hampden" to earlier works by observing that its tone is less shrill. Les Essais de Lord Macaulay, p. 196.

"Burleigh and his Times" (1832)

Burleigh's personal history, like Hampden's, coincided with a memorable period of history, the English Reformation. This review<sup>45</sup> is divided into a sketch of Burleigh's career and a longer account of religious conflict under Elizabeth. Burleigh's character does not impress Macaulay: he was "of the willow, and not of the oak" (589). When Macaulay turns to the Reformation itself, he judges less superficially: the account he gives in this work is more detailed and objective than the account of Elizabeth's religious policies in "Hallam." Elizabeth is not portrayed as an instrument of religious repression, but as a shrewd and able ruler whose policy shows that "The government of the Tudors was, with a few occasional deviations, a popular government, under the forms of despotism" (597). While legal checks on Elizabeth may have been weak, natural checks were strong (600), an antithesis which seems more perceptive than many in earlier essays. But this review is clearly marked as an early work by Macaulay's chauvinism. He asserts, for example, that Englishmen prosper everywhere: ". . . they rise above the mass of those with whom they mix, as surely as oil rises to the top of water. . ." (599). Also, Macaulay seems to attribute his own indifference to religious disputes to the Englishmen of the sixteenth century, for he

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<sup>45</sup> Works, V, 587-611.

thinks that Elizabeth could have "united all conflicting sects under the shelter of the same impartial laws and the same paternal throne, and thus have placed the nation in the same situation, as far as the rights of conscience are concerned, in which we at last stand, after all the heart-burnings, the persecutions, the conspiracies, the seditions, the revolutions, the judicial murders, the civil wars, of ten generations" (609). Macaulay's abhorrence of religious fanaticism is clear from this statement, and, while the phrase "in which we at last stand" seems complacent, it should not be taken literally: Macaulay knew that religious toleration had not been entirely secured by his own day; he persistently criticized English policy in Ireland and fought for admission of Jews to Parliament.

"Burleigh" is a hasty sketch, which Macaulay described to Napier as a "strange rambling performance."<sup>46</sup> He also told Napier, "You will see that I have huddled it up at the end."<sup>47</sup> At the end, Macaulay alludes to many figures who might be discussed, "the dexterous Walsingham, the impetuous Oxford, the graceful Sackville, the all-accomplished Sidney. . . [and] the literature of that splendid period," but he pleads lack of space.

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<sup>46</sup>Letter to Napier, April 18, 1832. Correspondence of Macvey Napier, p. 127.

<sup>47</sup>Letter to Napier, April 12, 1832; Ibid.

"War of the Succession in Spain" (1833)

In this work<sup>48</sup> Macaulay reviews Lord Mahon's eight-volume History of the War of the Succession in Spain (1832). He begins by praising the work for its perspicuity and conciseness, qualities not found in modern historical writing, but he adds that the author's style is at times "unpleasantly stiff," a judgment which shows Macaulay's interest in the art of writing history. The review has three main sections: 1) a sketch of the events which led up to the war, which illustrates misgovernment in Spain; 2) a description of the war itself; and 3) a consideration of the Treaty of Utrecht, which Mahon censures but Macaulay defends. The most interesting part of the review is the portrait of Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough, the first commander of English forces in Spain, whom Macaulay terms "the last of the knights-errant." The comparison is extended when Peterborough takes Barcelona: "He had also the glory, not less dear to his chivalrous temper, of saving the life of the beautiful Duchess of Popoli, whom he met flying with dishevelled hair from the fury of the soldiers" (666). Macaulay's sketch of Peterborough and the siege of Barcelona illustrates the theory that the historian should use anecdotes and vivid details to illuminate past events. Peterborough's glamor and resourcefulness are emphasized by a foil, Lord

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<sup>48</sup>Works, V, 638-84.



Galway, "who thought it much more honorable to fail according to rule, than to succeed by innovation" (672). Macaulay's use of a foil to bring out the qualities of his main character is more subtle in "Lord Clive," a narrative essay in which numerous contrasts between Dupleix and Clive help to unify the story. "The War of the Succession in Spain" demonstrates more political objectivity than Macaulay's early essays: in the third part of the review, Macaulay supports the Treaty of Utrecht and thereby sides with the Tories. "Their motives may not have been high," he states, but "their decision was beneficial to the State" (684). The difference in emphasis between his polemical essays and narrative works is suggested by another passage near the end of the review. Speaking of the politician, Macaulay says, "A life of action, if it is to be useful, must be a life of compromise. But speculation admits of no compromise. . ." And therefore the historian must be especially careful to "point out the errors of those whose general conduct he admires" (679). Thus he does not use Mahon's book, as he used Croker's edition of Boswell, as an opportunity for blackening the reputations of Tories.<sup>49</sup>

#### "Horace Walpole" (1833)

Macaulay's chief interest in Horace Walpole's Letters, the work he ostensibly reviews,<sup>50</sup> is the light they shed on the

<sup>49</sup>C. T. Atkinson's edition of "The War of the Succession in Spain" was published by the Clarendon Press in 1913.

<sup>50</sup>Works, VI, 1-35.

elder Walpole's political career. Thus the first part of the essay, on Horace Walpole, is shorter than the second part, in which the era of Robert Walpole is described. Macaulay cannot appreciate Horace Walpole's love of the aristocracy, his affected writing, or his Gallic diction. Macaulay's narrow view of Walpole's letters is well illustrated by the following analogy: "As the pâté de foie gras owes its excellence to the diseases of the wretched animal which furnishes it. . . so none but an unhealthy and disorganized mind could have produced such literary luxuries as the works of Walpole" (VI, 1-2). In the second half of the review, Macaulay discusses the politics of Robert Walpole and briefly describes the ministers who succeeded him, Carteret, Pelham, and Newcastle. The review ends abruptly with a reference to the Seven Years' War. In the age of Walpole, Macaulay declares, political corruption was not only widespread but partly justified because "The Parliament had shaken off the control of the Royal prerogative. It had not yet fallen under the control of public opinion" (20). Macaulay censures Walpole for failing to accomplish reforms, the most important of which he thinks were the publishing of Parliamentary debates and abolition of the rotten boroughs. As in other early works, Macaulay here ascribes a ruling passion to his central figure: in Walpole's case, the governing principle is love of power. A sign of the development of Macaulay's essays is that characters in late works are not described in such simple terms.

In the 1843 article on Fanny Burney, Macaulay disputes the idea "that every man has one ruling passion, and that this clue, once known, unravels all the mysteries of his conduct. . ." (VII, 41). But in "Horace Walpole," no mysteries of conduct exist. On the other hand, Macaulay suggests that the Duke of Newcastle's character has been misinterpreted through one-sided descriptions; and he returns to a motif of the 1828 essay "History," the similarity of historical writing to fiction, when he writes: "We wonder that Sir Walter Scott never tried his hand on the Duke of Newcastle. An interview between his Grace and Jeanie Deans would have been delightful, and by no means unnatural" (34). The Walpoles are not sensitively portrayed by Macaulay; but later narratives reveal greater descriptive power; and they illustrate the theory, set forth in the 1828 essay on history, that "A truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated" (V, 158).

"The Earl of Chatham" (1834)

Macaulay compares the life of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, to a drama, "a rude though striking piece. . . without any unity of plan. . . redeemed by some noble passages. . ." (VI, 37). Ten years later, he wrote a second essay on Chatham in which he imposed a dramatic unity on the public life of the "Great Commoner" but, in this early essay,<sup>51</sup> one finds no clear

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<sup>51</sup>Works, VI, 36-75.

plan. The review gives the highlights of English history in the mid-eighteenth century and briefly summarizes Pitt's role. Since much of the narrative concerns political intrigue and inter-party bickering, the reader gains no real insight into Pitt's motives or conduct. The accounts of Walpole and Henry Fox are vivid but only superficially connected to the story of Pitt. The succession of English victories over the French between 1758-1760 made Pitt famous, but Macaulay adds, "It must be owned that some of our conquests were rather splendid than useful. It must be owned that the expense of the war never entered into Pitt's consideration" (73). Yet Pitt is one of the bold figures of English history whom Macaulay admired, and thus he concludes with an exaggerated summary of the politician's fame in 1760: "The situation which Pitt occupied at the close of the reign of George the Second was the most enviable ever occupied by any public man in English history. . . . He was the first Englishman of his time; and he had made England the first country in the world" (74). Ten years later, Macaulay gave a more analytical account of Pitt's statesmanship, when he described the latter part of his career.

"Sir James Mackintosh" (1835)

Macaulay devotes nearly sixty pages to a review<sup>52</sup> of Mackintosh's History of the Revolution in England, in 1688. The

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<sup>52</sup>Works, VI, 76-134.

review may be outlined as follows:

## I. Introduction

- A. Mackintosh: his merits as an historian
- B. The editor (William Wallace): his deficiencies; his view of history.

## II. Body

- A. The periods between the Restoration and the Revolution
  - 1. 1660-1678
  - 2. 1678-1681
  - 3. 1681-1688
- B. Spirit and tendency of the Revolution
  - 1. Changes in laws
    - a) Toleration Act
    - b) Establishment of Presbyterianism in Scotland
    - c) Change in method of granting revenue to the Sovereign
    - d) "Purification of the method of administration of justice in political cases"
    - e) "Full establishment of the liberty of unlicensed printing"
  - 2. Changes in public mind: spirit of liberty strengthened.

Macaulay praises Mackintosh, a Member of Parliament whom he greatly respected, for uniting Hallam's thoroughness and judgment "to the vivacity and coloring of Southey." He continues, "A history of England, written throughout in this manner, would be the most fascinating book in the language. It would be more in request at the circulating libraries than the last novel" (VI, 83). Macaulay later attempted to write the history which he describes in this passage. His interpretation of English history is given more fully in "Mackintosh" than in "Hallam" (1828), and the later work, on the whole, is less partial to the Whigs. Macaulay argues that historians must not look contemptuously on the past:

The history of England is emphatically the history of progress. It is the history of a constant movement of the public mind, of a constant change in the institutions of a great society. . . . The history of England is the history of this great change in the moral, intellectual, and physical state of the inhabitants of our island. There is much amusing and instructive episodal matter; but this is the main action (95-96).

Within shorter periods, Macaulay continues, progress is not always discernible; the movement is rather one of action and reaction. He considers the 1688 Revolution progressive, "a reform which has been the fruitful parent of reforms. . ." (96). The vigor of the essay on Mackintosh shows Macaulay's enthusiasm for the period he describes. Several characteristic features of the narrative essays appear in this work: 1) the use of metaphors of natural process to express the idea of progress: truth shall grow, Macaulay declares, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (93), or "Each successive wave rushes forward, breaks, and pulls back; but the great flood is steadily coming in" (97); 2) the development of a single idea in a paragraph, through statement, amplification, and restatement: "Every sect clamours for toleration when it is down" (113-14), for example, is the subject of one paragraph in "Mackintosh"; and 3) the habit of beginning paragraphs with summaries which maintain interest in the narrative:

The game which the Jesuits were playing was no new game. But James was stopped at the outset.  
It was natural that there should be a panic.

Then were again seen in the streets faces which called up strange and terrible recollections of the days when the saints, with the high praises of God in their mouths, and a two-edged sword in their hands, had bound kings with chains, and nobles with links of iron (106).

By such summaries, Macaulay tried to convey a sense of the drama of past events. "Mackintosh" shows more clearly than earlier works Macaulay's comprehensive view of the past and his ability to make "noiseless revolutions" seem exciting.<sup>53</sup>

"Ranke's History of the Popes" (1840)

In this review,<sup>54</sup> Macaulay does not evaluate Leopold Ranke's Ecclesiastical and Political History of the Popes during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, but gives instead a sketch of the period which the German historian covers. More clearly divided than some of Macaulay's survey narratives, "Ranke" has four main parts, which correspond to four historical developments which threatened the Church: 1) the Albigensian heresy; 2) the "great schism of the West," and, in England, the influence of Wickliffe; 3) the Reformation itself; and 4) the attacks of Voltaire and the French Revolution. Although these movements are rapidly sketched, "Ranke" seems more substantial

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<sup>53</sup>Firth suggests that this review is the best introduction to Macaulay's History. (A Commentary on Macaulay's History of England, p. 4.) For his own history, Macaulay was able to use many transcripts and extracts gathered by Mackintosh. See Firth, pp. 56-59.

<sup>54</sup>Works, VI, 454-89.

than other narrative essays because Macaulay's treatment of the Church reveals some sense of complexity. His attitude is somewhat ambivalent, for he respects the institution for surviving, but its practices and teachings are abhorrent to him. As in few other essays, Macaulay here demonstrates a readiness to describe what he considers the good qualities of an institution he basically dislikes. Fond of meditating upon the grand spectacles of the past, he notes that the Church has outlived many governments, and continues, in a famous description,

She may still exist in undiminished vigor when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's (VI, 455).

This passage out of context does not illustrate Macaulay's exact attitude toward the Church, however, for his descriptions of Jesuitical intrigues and of the success with which Rome manipulated such zealots as Ignatius and St. Teresa clearly reflect the characteristic Victorian suspicion of Roman Catholicism.<sup>55</sup> A significant aspect of this review is

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<sup>55</sup>Macaulay treated the Catholic Church more impartially than the reviewer for Fraser's, who argued that Ranke, tainted by religious indifference, should have shown more dramatically the wickedness of the Popes. (Fraser's, XXII [August, 1840], pp. 127-142. The Westminster Review, however, agreed with Macaulay that the survival of the Church was an interesting question and deplored, as he did, the effects of religious wars. But the Westminster did not join Macaulay in setting Protestantism above Catholicism. On the other hand, Macaulay's attempt to see the Church as an interesting historical phenomenon disturbed some readers. James Stephen complained to Napier: "I cannot but cherish the good old Protestant feelings of our ancestors, and am a little unhappy that there is exultation at



Macaulay's argument that theology is not a progressive science, an argument introduced to shed light on this question: if the world is becoming more enlightened, and if this "enlightening must be favorable to Protestantism, and unfavorable to Catholicism," why has Protestantism failed to grow stronger in each generation? To support his thesis that theology is not progressive, Macaulay distinguishes between inductive sciences, in which new truth is constantly being discovered, and the disciplines of philosophy and theology. When Macaulay declares that "all the great enigmas which perplex the natural theologian are the same in all ages" (457), and states further that "we have no security for the future against the prevalence of any theological error that has ever prevailed in time past among Christian men" (458), he qualifies the doctrine of progress enunciated in such early reviews as "Southey," in which non-material values are ignored. He also seems to limit progress to material progress in "Ranke," whereas in "Mackintosh" he had asserted that England's history shows moral progress (VI, 96). Macaulay concludes the review by suggesting that some future historian "as able and as temperate as Professor Ranke"<sup>56</sup> will describe "the Catholic revival of the nineteenth century" (487).

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Rome (for such I hear is the fact) over a paper published in the city of John Knox by a member of the British cabinet."  
(Correspondence of Macvey Napier, p. 344.) Macaulay in 1840 was Secretary-at-War in Melbourne's cabinet.

<sup>56</sup>Geyl contrasts Macaulay and Ranke in Debates with Historians, p. 27.

"*Ranke's History of the Popes*" ends with an acknowledgement of mystery not common in Macaulay's essays:

. . . we think it a most remarkable fact, that no Christian nation, which did not adopt the principles of the Reformation before the end of the sixteenth century, should ever have adopted them. Catholic communities have, since that time, become infidel and become Catholic again; but none has become Protestant (489).

For Macaulay, the survival of Roman Catholicism was an intriguing, if somewhat unsettling, phenomenon.<sup>57</sup>

"Comic Dramatists of the Restoration" (1841)

The occasion of this review<sup>58</sup> was the publication of Leigh Hunt's *The Dramatic Works of Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh and Farquhar*. Macaulay's criticism here is not as obtuse as in early reviews, but his judgments, though moderate, are less discriminating than those he later made about eighteenth-century writing, for which he had a life-long enthusiasm. The review is divided into a general estimate of Restoration drama and a critique of Wycherley and Congreve. Macaulay begins by

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<sup>57</sup>"*Ranke*" is discussed by Oursel, pp. 282-291. Oursel considers the review one of Macaulay's most objective studies. Although this essay is not well known, the passage describing the *New Zealander* has become famous. It is discussed by Amy Loveman in "Macaulay on the Church," *Saturday Review of Literature*, X (September 9, 1933), 101. A passage in the preface to Peter Bell is compared to the *New Zealander* passage of "Ranke" in an article titled "Shelley and Macaulay," *English*, I (1937), 576-77. See also "Crabb Robinson, Mrs. Barbauld, Macaulay and Horace Walpole," *Notes and Queries*, December 18, 1943, p. 374.

<sup>58</sup>*Works*, VI, 490-532.

attacking those who wish to suppress the comedies of the later seventeenth century:

The whole liberal education of our countrymen is conducted on the principle that no book which is valuable, either by reason of the excellence of its style, or by reason of the light which it throws on the history, polity, and manners of nations, should be withheld from the student on account of its impurity (VI, 491).

Macaulay believes, however, that the plays are "a disgrace to our language and our national character," but he objects less to their indecency than to what he calls their "singularly inhuman spirit": the plays make vice attractive. To refute Lamb's contention that the moral values of the real world do not apply to drama, Macaulay argues from a rather literal view of art as imitation: "If comedy be an imitation, under whatever conventions, of real life, how is it possible that it can have no reference to the great rule which directs life, and to feelings which are called forth by every incident of life?" (497). But when he turns to a second topic in the general survey of Restoration plays, the milieu which produced them, Macaulay is more detached. He argues that Puritan excesses and hypocrisy led naturally to the disparagement of all virtue. He values the plays for giving "distilled and condensed, the essential spirit of the fashionable world during the Anti-puritan reaction" (502). But his concern is not solely with the works as documents, for he clearly states that reading plays "enlarges and enriches the mind" (491). In the second half of the review,

Macaulay surveys the works of Wycherley and Congreve. He judges Collier's attack on the drama more effective than Congreve's response, and he praises Collier by stating that "A great and rapid reform in all the departments of our lighter literature was the effect of his labors" (527).<sup>59</sup> What Macaulay says about Wycherley's plays illustrates his thesis that their author possessed a "depraved moral taste," but Congreve, a foil to Wycherley, is treated more sympathetically. The Way of the World, for example, is judged "the most deeply meditated, and the most brilliantly written" of Congreve's works (527). But the review as a whole is oversimplified, as its ending clearly demonstrates: Congreve had more wit than Wycherley, more poetic talent, more decorum, and more learning. "Nor did Congreve, like Wycherley, exhibit to the world the deplorable spectacle of a licentious dotage. Congreve died in the enjoyment of high consideration; Wycherley, forgotten or despised" (532). The essay on Restoration drama shows the truth of the judgment that the worst and best of Macaulay often appear together.<sup>60</sup> While Macaulay's attack on censorship shows his liberal beliefs and

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<sup>59</sup>Joseph Wood Krutch cites this passage to show the attitude toward Collier which was unquestioned in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 151.

<sup>60</sup>Trevor-Roper, p. 22.

his emphasis on freedom, his unsympathetic judgments of Restoration drama attest to his limitations as a critic.<sup>61</sup>

## II. Narratives: Historical Essays

### "Temple" (1838)

In these narrative works, emphasis on a central figure is more pronounced than in earlier essays, and Macaulay generally treats a shorter historical period, using it as a setting for the main character. "Temple"<sup>62</sup> describes a representative politician of the post-Revolution era, a product of his age. But Macaulay refines his theory that the times shape the man by this description of the typical man of the age: "This character [lack of political passion; inconsistency] is susceptible of innumerable modifications, according to the innumerable varieties of intellect and temper in which it may be found" (VI, 253). The publication of Temple's letters gives Macaulay an opportunity to discuss false notions of the dignity of history; he argues that the historian must use a variety of

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<sup>61</sup> John Palmer disputes the opinions set forth in this review in "Critical Preliminaries," the first chapter of his study The Comedy of Manners (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1913), pp. 1-29. Willoughby gives a brief summary of the review in "Lord Macaulay," The Great Victorians, ed. H. J. Massingham and Hugh Massingham (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1932), pp. 274-75. The view of censorship expressed in this essay is discussed by David Lowenthal in "Macaulay and the Freedom of the Press," American Political Science Review, LVII (1963), 661-64.

<sup>62</sup> Works, VI, 246-325.

social documents, and he contends that the letters of Temple's wife are historically important:

The mutual relations of the two sexes seem to us to be at least as important as the mutual relations of any two governments in the world; and a series of letters written by a virtuous, amiable, and sensible girl, and intended for the eye of her lover alone, can scarcely fail to throw some light on the relations of the sexes; whereas it is perfectly possible, as all who have made any historical researches can attest, to read bale after bale of despatches and protocols without catching one glimpse of light about the relations of governments (261).

"Temple" reveals more complexity than is found in earlier narratives; political questions such as the Triple Alliance are thoughtfully discussed. Macaulay's tone is detached when he describes Temple's diplomatic career. He admits that Temple is "not a man to our taste" because he seems to lack "warmth and elevation of sentiment" (248); yet, Macaulay portrays him sympathetically and implies that, had his plan for making the Privy Council a check on the Crown been successful, it might have averted the crisis which led to the Revolution of 1688. Usually impatient with theories of all kinds, especially political theories--English reformers are praised in "Mackintosh" because they "asserted the rights, not of men, but of Englishmen" (VI, 99)--Macaulay judges Temple's plan "the work of an observant, ingenious, and fertile mind" (300). The essay on Temple also reveals a growth in Macaulay's narrative skill, for the work presents more specific information about Temple and the characteristics of his age than is given about men and

periods in essays written during the early 1830's. Many events illustrate Temple's caution, giving the work a certain thematic unity. Transitions between Temple's public life and his periods of retirement are smoothly made. Temple is kept before the reader's attention, and the historical sketches remain in the background. Finally, the ending shows a development in Macaulay's descriptive power, for in earlier works he breaks off his story abruptly, whereas in "Temple" he gradually moves to the conclusion, making Temple's final retirement seem as interesting as his political life by recounting his part in the Ancients vs. Moderns controversy and also by giving a few anecdotes about Temple's secretary, Jonathan Swift.<sup>63</sup>

#### "Lord Clive" (1840)

The individual's influence on history receives more emphasis in "Temple" than in the early Edinburgh articles, and this emphasis is especially prominent in the study of a more heroic and dynamic man, Lord Clive.<sup>64</sup> Macaulay describes Clive's career to illustrate the British conquest of India. This long review has three parts, corresponding to Clive's three trips to India. In the first part, the obscure young Clive becomes a hero by defending Arcot; a more dramatic scene, in the second part, is his great victory at Plassey; finally, Macaulay

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<sup>63</sup>Notes to the essay on Temple are given in an edition by E. Cripps (London: Griffith and Farran, 1891).

<sup>64</sup>Works, VI, 381-453.

tells how Clive reformed British rule in India and how he defended his actions before the House of Commons. Macaulay's theory of the historical essay is related to "Lord Clive" in chapter four.<sup>65</sup>

"Warren Hastings" (1841)

Macaulay's longest periodical work except for "Bacon," the Hastings essay<sup>66</sup> is the last Edinburgh work which appears in the three-volume collection of 1843, Critical and Historical Essays Contributed to the Edinburgh Review. Although the essay on Hastings is diffuse compared to "Lord Clive," it ranks with the earlier essay as one of Macaulay's best-known works.

"Warren Hastings" is not as carefully patterned as "Clive," but

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<sup>65</sup>The Clive essay was edited for the Longman's British Classics series by A. M. Williams (London: Longmans, 1900). Alphonso Newcomer's edition includes an introduction, glossary, notes, and study questions. (Macaulay's Essays on Clive and Hastings [Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1921/.]) Harrold and Templeman reprint "Clive" with an introductory note and a list giving definitions and pronunciations of Indian terms in the essay. (English Prose of the Victorian Era [New York: Oxford University Press, 1938/, pp. 1596-97.) In the biography Lord Clive, The Foundation of British India (New York: Longmans, Green, 1899), Sir Alexander John Arbuthnot argues that Macaulay gives a fair estimate of Clive's character (pp. 222-23) and that his description of British corruption in India is not exaggerated in "Lord Clive" (pp. 138-39). One of the best general discussions of Macaulay's narrative essays and of the relationship between his life and his work is John Clive's article "Macaulay's Historical Imagination," Review of English Literature, I (October, 1960), 20-28.

<sup>66</sup>Works, VI, 543-644.



it displays the "bold, dashing, scene-painting manner" which Macaulay judged best for periodical articles. A letter to Napier suggests that the review has two main parts, dealing with Hastings' exploits in India and with his subsequent life in England.<sup>67</sup> In a long transition between these settings, Macaulay evaluates Hastings' administration (1772-1785) and summarizes his character traits. The review's climax, the trial of Hastings, is a famous passage which is often quoted to show Macaulay's descriptive power. The essay ends on a subdued note, with an account of Hastings' last years in retirement at Daylesford, the home which his ancestors had been forced to sell. At the beginning of the essay, Macaulay describes Hastings' boyhood ambition of buying the home, and thus foreshadows his dramatic successes. Macaulay neither praises nor condemns the public conduct of Hastings, who was the first and most famous governor-general of India. Hastings had been attacked for lending troops to Surajah Dowlah and thus helping to subjugate the Rohillas; for extorting money from the natives; and for allegedly conspiring with the judges who had Nuncomar (a wealthy Calcutta merchant) executed for forgery. Although Hastings was acquitted, the trial ruined him financially and stained his reputation. Macaulay argues that, while many of Hastings' acts were unprincipled and indefensible on moral

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<sup>67</sup>January 11, 1841; Correspondence of Napier, p. 342.

grounds, his crimes were motivated by "ill-regulated public spirit." Macaulay's detachment is reflected by his observation that one should learn to "look without wonder or disgust on the weaknesses which are found in the strongest minds" (641-42), an attitude very different from that of his early reviews, in which judgments about conduct are freely, and often very severely, passed. But the drama of Hastings' life rather than his motives or principles interested Macaulay, and thus the trial scene is the memorable part of the essay. In early works he invokes the glories of Britain's past, and in the Hastings essay describes the "pageant," as he calls it, of the trial. After setting the scene, Macaulay introduces the main character:

The Serjeants made proclamation. Hastings advanced to the bar, and bent his knee. . . . He had ruled an extensive and populous country, had made laws and treaties, had sent forth armies, had set up and pulled down princes. . . . A person small and emaciated, yet deriving dignity from a carriage which, while it indicated deference to the court, indicated also habitual self-possession and self-respect, a high and intellectual forehead. . . a face pale and worn, such as was the aspect with which the great Proconsul presented himself to his judges (630).

The trial lasted eight years. Macaulay's reflections about life and human nature are more somber in "Hastings" than in the exuberant passages of his early works in which he describes progress: a spectator at Hastings' trial, Macaulay writes, would have thought of "the instability of all human things, of the instability of power and fame and life, and of the more lamentable instability of friendship" (636). Here Macaulay's

balance and repetition do not create the strained effect common in his argumentative essays. Macaulay's talents seem better suited to describing the rise and fall of a great man than to dissecting Utilitarian philosophy or to writing sensitively about the poetry of Milton and Dryden.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Concerning the essay on Hastings, Macaulay wrote to Napier, "The central figure is in the highest degree striking and majestic. I think Hastings, though far from faultless, one of the greatest men that England ever produced." (Correspondence of Napier, p. 342.) In the introduction to his edition of "Hastings," J. V. Denny gives this account of Macaulay's contribution to the historical essay: "The historical essay, as he conceived it, and with the prompt inspiration of a real discoverer immediately put into practical shape was as good as unknown before him. To take a bright period or personage of history, to frame it in a firm outline, to conceive it at once in article size, and then to fill in this limited canvas with sparkling anecdote, telling bits of color, and facts all fused together by a real genius for narrative, was the sort of genre-painting which Macaulay applied to history." (Macaulay's Essay on Warren Hastings [Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1907], p. 5.) Denny's edition includes an introduction, notes, and bibliography. Macaulay's essay was attacked by the son of a man he castigated in "Hastings," Elijah Impey. In 1846 Elijah Barwell Impey published Memoirs of Sir Elijah Impey (London: Simpkin, Marshall). Part of the subtitle reads "in refutation of the calumnies of the Right Hon. Thomas Babington Macaulay." Impey argues that Macaulay's attack on his father, the English judge who sentenced Nuncomar to death, was motivated by party spirit (p. xx), and he offers the opinion that Macaulay's style "has in no degree improved since the writer was a student at Trinity College, Cambridge. . ." (p. xii). For other objections to "Hastings" see Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, The Story of Nuncomar and the Impeachment of Sir Elijah Impey (2 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1885). Stephen disputes Macaulay's view of Nuncomar's character, for example, Vol. I, 41-45. Macaulay's account in "Hastings" of the Rohilla war (the Rohillas were an Afghan race which had settled in India) is challenged by John Strachey in Hastings and the Rohilla War (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1892), pp. 25-27 and p. 175. Strachey argues that Mill's History of India (1818), which he considers unreliable, is the source of Macaulay's facts about Hastings (Preface, vii.) The author of an article titled "Macaulay and

"Frederic the Great" (1842)

The first part of Frederic's reign is the subject of this essay,<sup>69</sup> which has three main parts: 1) Frederic's early life and military training (VI, 645-65); 2) his character and administration (665-84); and 3) the Seven Years' War (684-714). A pattern of soldier-statesman-soldier is thus imposed on the narrative. In the first part of the essay, Macaulay describes the cruelties and eccentricities of Frederic William, father of Frederic the Great. In the second section, which includes a lively account of Voltaire's adventures and misfortunes at Frederic's court, Macaulay summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the Prussian ruler's administration: he praises Frederic for allowing great freedom of expression and looking "with a wise disdain" on censorship. But Macaulay's distrust of strong rulers is clear from his remarks about Frederic's domination of public affairs: this control showed "a spirit of meddling" (671) and a "passion for directing and regulating," qualities not easy for a British liberal to appreciate. The most dramatic part of the review focuses upon the Seven Years' war. By stressing the obstacles Frederic faced and his early reverses in the war, Macaulay makes his subsequent victories

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Hastings," Edinburgh Review, CCXLIII (1925), 339-49, believes that Hastings owes his fame to Macaulay's essay. Another article on the essay is George Sampson's "Gibbon and Macaulay," Times Literary Supplement, December 22, 1932, p. 977.

<sup>69</sup>works, VI, 645-714.

seem all the more impressive. The excitement of military conquest is conveyed in the battle scenes, but Macaulay also describes Prussia after the war: "A sixth of the males capable of bearing arms had actually perished on the field of battle. . . the whole social system was deranged. For, during that convulsive struggle, every thing that was not military violence was anarchy" (713). The sharp antithesis in the last clause which implies a condemnation of the two extremes points to Macaulay's moderation. And his reference to "the whole social system" illustrates his belief that historical importance lies not only in battles and other dramatic events but also in ordinary events, which often reveal "noiseless revolutions."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>After completing the essay, Macaulay wrote to Napier, "I hope that the public will like it better than I do. I was never so little pleased with a performance of my own." (April 1, 1842; Correspondence of Napier, p. 381.) "Frederic the Great," however, is one of Macaulay's most popular works, and ranks with "Lord Clive" and "Warren Hastings" as a vivid portrait of a great man. Macaulay candidly observed, however, that "it does not go deep"; and "Frederic the Great" is rather superficial compared to the later essay on Pitt. Macaulay, of course, was more widely read in English history than in German, a fact which Herman Grimm stresses in an attack upon this essay, "Frederic the Great and Macaulay," Literature (Boston: Cupples, Upham, and Co., 1886), pp. 131-68. Grimm denies that Frederic had any of the faults Macaulay ascribes to him: Grimm argues, for example, that leaders must not be "swayed by sympathy and pity" (p. 158). Macaulay had commented that Frederic was "perhaps too inclined to consider the common soldier as a mere machine" (VI, 701). Grimm concludes with this judgment of Macaulay: "Had he been a German, he would have written very differently" (p. 168).

"The Earl of Chatham" (1844)

Macaulay's last contribution to the Edinburgh Review, this eighty-page essay<sup>71</sup> carries forward the story of William Pitt's career which was begun in the 1834 essay "The Earl of Chatham." The later review describes Pitt's public life during the first ten years of George the Third's reign, a shorter period than is covered in Macaulay's other essays. The two essays on Chatham illustrate Macaulay's development, for the first is a hasty sketch, while the second is a carefully constructed narrative, showing a great knowledge of English history and political life. In the years following 1834, Macaulay had been legal adviser to the Supreme Council in India, had drafted a penal code for India, and had served as Secretary-at-War in Melbourne's cabinet. The later essay on Chatham differs from the 1834 in its characterization and in its use of dramatic techniques. Pitt is more fully described in 1844: his feelings, motives, domestic life, illnesses, and the attitudes of others toward him are all explained in the 1844 study. Pitt is characterized partly by his speeches, which Macaulay quotes more extensively in 1844 than in 1834. But the character of Pitt is made especially clear from the description of his actions; scenes replace the summary passages of the 1834 work. Pitt's rise is the underlying theme of the first essay and in the later work, his fall is dramatized. The following passage

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<sup>71</sup>Works, VII, 204-79.

in the second essay embodies this theme metaphorically:

The House of Commons heard Pitt for the last time and Burke for the first time on the Stamp Tax debate, and was in doubt to which of them the palm of eloquence should be assigned. It was indeed a splendid sunset and a splendid dawn (VII, 259-60).

This passage marks a turning point in the essay, for until now the dominance of Pitt has not been seriously challenged, but from this point to the end of the essay, his decline is traced. Parallel scenes unite the work. For example, the scene which describes the 1762 session of Parliament and the scene at the end of the essay are structurally balanced. In 1762, Pitt tells his enemies in the House of Commons to put national welfare ahead of factions and rivalries: ". . . be one people; forget everything but the public. I set you the example. Harassed by slanderers, sinking under pain and disease, for the public I forget both my wrongs and my infirmities!" (226-27). The theme of a great man's fall, foreshadowed here and also by the downfall of Newcastle, recurs in the last and most dramatic scene: Pitt attacks the proposed treaty between England and America and suffers an apoplectic fit. Ironically, he sides against the public good (in Macaulay's view), after having been an outspoken opponent of the war. By several references to his "distempered mind," Macaulay hints that at last Pitt's wrongs and his infirmities overcame his judgment. This 1844 work shows a dramatic structure not apparent in the first Chatham essay. Everything is easily explained in the 1834 article, but in 1844

Macaulay shows a greater sense of complexity, for example, when he writes of the alliance between Pitt and Newcastle: "The more carefully the structure of this celebrated ministry is examined, the more shall we see reason to marvel at the skill or the luck which had combined in one harmonious whole such various and, as it seemed, incompatible elements of force" (208). The somber tone of the ending, which describes Pitt's funeral, also marks the development of the essays. Referring to Pitt's son at his father's funeral, Macaulay observes, "After the lapse of more than twenty-seven years, in a season as dark and perilous, his own shattered frame and broken heart were laid, with the same pomp, in the same consecrated mould" (270). At the end of his own life, Macaulay wrote an article on the younger Pitt for the Encyclopedia Britannica.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>"Never was a paper produced with so much difficulty," Macaulay wrote to Napier concerning his second essay on Chatham. "I have now found it necessary," he continues, "to write the whole over again a third time. I think, however, that the article will at last be very curious and interesting, not from the skill of the workman, but from the rarity and value of the materials." (August 27, 1844; Correspondence of Napier, p. 470.) Yet the "skill of the workman" is well illustrated by this essay. In his brief survey of Macaulay's Edinburgh works, R. C. Beatty praises the tone of the work as "remarkably judicious," and he adds that the 1844 "Chatham" lacks "the controversial spirit that Macaulay had allowed so often in the past to mar his labors." (Lord Macaulay. Victorian Liberal, pp. 266-67.)



## II. Narratives: Biographical Essays in the Edinburgh Review

"Lord Holland" (1841)

This essay<sup>73</sup> differs from other Edinburgh works in several respects: as Macaulay says at the outset, it is not an evaluation of Holland's public life but rather a tribute to the Whig statesman; it is very short; and, finally, it treats a subject Macaulay knew intimately from his personal experience rather than from study, the Whig circle of Holland House.<sup>74</sup> The subdued tone of the essay reflects Macaulay's closeness to his subject, Lord Holland. Characteristically, Macaulay looks to the past to illuminate the present: to emphasize the virtues of Lord Holland, he briefly describes his ancestors and argues that the third Lord Holland, whom he commemorates, was superior to his grandfather, Henry Fox, and to his uncle, Charles James Fox. The introduction of these famous ancestors illustrates the

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<sup>73</sup>Works, VI, 533-42.

<sup>74</sup>Holland, Henry Richard Vassal Fox, 3rd baron (1773-1840), was the nephew of Charles James Fox and a leader of the Whig party in the early nineteenth century. Holland House was the center of Whig society. Macaulay's connection to Holland House is described by Beatty, pp. 90-106. For a brief description of Holland House in Macaulay's time see Trevor-Roper, pp. 11-12. The "blindness to social problems" attributed to Macaulay by Trevor-Roper in this passage is characteristic of Macaulay's early writings, but his later essays and particularly his Parliamentary speeches during the 1840's demonstrate the unfairness of Trevor-Roper's judgment. Macaulay strongly supported factory legislation, for example, as well as state-supported education. He attacked discriminatory laws against Catholics in Ireland and against Jews in England.

principle of epideictic rhetoric that if you make your subject seem better than worthy men, you will ennoble him. (Aristotle, Rhetoric, I. 9.) "Whatever the quality an audience esteems," Aristotle suggests, "the speaker must attribute that quality to the object of his praise."<sup>75</sup> Macaulay stresses Lord Holland's love of freedom. He appeals to British pragmatism through the following praise: Holland had a subtle, discriminating intellect, but "in him the dialectician was always subordinate to the statesman" (VI, 540). At the end of the review, Macaulay describes the gatherings of famous writers and statesmen at Holland House and extols the personal qualities of Lord Holland, a man who was "not less distinguished by the inflexible uprightness of his political conduct than by his loving disposition and his winning manners" (542). While this language is appropriate to a eulogy, it apparently expressed Macaulay's genuine feelings about Lord Holland, for he had written to his sister, after becoming a regular visitor to Holland House, "I admire him more, I think, than any man whom I know."<sup>76</sup>

"Madame D'Arblay" (1843)

The essay on Madame D'Arblay (Fanny Burney),<sup>77</sup> is Macaulay's only study of fiction and is one of the few Edinburgh

<sup>75</sup>The Rhetoric of Aristotle, trans. Lane Cooper (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1932), p. 51.

<sup>76</sup>Trevelyan, I, 274. Macaulay's first experiences at Holland House are described in letters written to his sister Hannah in 1831. See Trevelyan, I, 207-08 and 211-14.

<sup>77</sup>Works, VII, 1-51.

works which show his warmth and benevolence, qualities revealed by Trevelyan's biography.<sup>78</sup> An avid novel reader, Macaulay praises the genre--"a most useful and delightful species of composition," "a fair and noble province of letters"--at a time when many readers still considered novel reading pernicious. Macaulay believes that Fanny Burney contributed to the novel in two ways: she proved that women could write good literature; but, more importantly, she understood the notion that fiction was wicked by her skillful portraits and showed that novels could be taken seriously as art. Before Evelina appeared, Macaulay writes, Sir Anthony Absolute, a character in Sheridan's play The Rivals "spoke the sense of the great body of sober fathers and husbands, when he pronounced the circulating library an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge" (VII, 51). Another sober husband and father, Zachary Macaulay, compared novel

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<sup>78</sup> Perhaps a reason for the warmth is that he corresponded with Fanny Burney's niece before writing this essay. See Joyce Hemlow, The History of Fanny Burney (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1958), pp. 459-60. In a review of the Memoirs of Dr. Burney, Croker had accused Fanny Burney of lying about her age. In 1839, shortly before her death, her niece asked Macaulay to publish a defense of the novelist. In his reply, he expressed admiration for the author of Evelina, but politely refused to champion her, citing Johnson's refusal to answer scurrilous attacks, and assuring the family that the novelist's reputation was secure: "Her place in public estimation will be fixed, not by what other people may write about her, but by what she has written herself." (Hemlow, p. 460.) In 1859, Macaulay used almost the same words to praise Johnson for ignoring his detractors. When Fanny Burney's Diary and Letters were published after he death, Macaulay had an opportunity to express publicly his "warm and sincere though not blind admiration for her talents. . ." (VII, 2).

reading to "drinking drams in the morning" (Trevelyan, I, 30). The first part of Macaulay's essay on Fanny Burney describes her early life, and the second section evaluates her novels; but the parts are not sharply opposed, as in "Bacon," for the novels are briefly described in the biographical part of the review, and the second section includes facts about the author's life as well as critical summaries. The perceptive critical judgments of "Madame D'Arblay" distinguish the 1843 review from early works. Macaulay quotes and explicates several passages to illustrate his generalization that the clarity and simplicity of Evelina gave way in subsequent novels to "broken Johnsonese." In Macaulay's early reviews, critical opinions are merely asserted, but here they are supported by evidence from the works themselves. Although Macaulay dislikes the "flowers of rhetoric" in the author's later novels, he praises the variety of her humor characters, the skill with which her "admirably framed" plots exhibit these characters, and the liveliness of her comic scenes. The most interesting part of this review, however, is the discussion of character-drawing which extends to Shakespeare and Jane Austen. "Admirable as he was in all parts of his art," Macaulay writes of Shakespeare, "we most admire him for this, that while he has left us a greater number of striking portraits than all other dramatists put together, he has scarcely left us a single caricature" (42). The imitation of humor character (Fanny Burney's forte) is a secondary

achievement. But another novelist, Jane Austen, is comparable to Shakespeare in subtle characterization. All her clergymen are ordinary men, Macaulay declares, but they are "perfectly discriminated from one another. . . by touches so delicate, that they elude analysis. . ." (42-43). Here Macaulay's criticism is more penetrating than in his early reviews. Jane Austen was one of his favorite authors, but she was not widely read when he praised her in "Madame D'Arbly." In this essay, therefore, he performs the task Arnold set for the critic in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time": to "propagate the best that is known and thought in the world."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Alice D. Greenwood's edition of "Madame D'Arbly," published by Macmillan in 1919, includes an introduction, notes, and extracts from Fanny Burney's novels. Austin Dobson, who wrote a life of Fanny Burney for the English Men of Letters series (London: Macmillan, 1903), states, "To Lord Macaulay's essay, indeed, and to its periodical reproduction in fresh editions of his works, is probably due most of Madame D'Arbly's existing reputation as a novelist." (p. 202.) See also pp. 201-05. More recently, Warren P. Mild has credited Macaulay with being the first critic to recognize Fanny Burney's talent and to class her among the humor writers. ("Macaulay as a Critic of Eighteenth Century Literature," /unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1951/, pp. 317-22.) Emily Hahn believes that Macaulay exaggerated the novelist's sufferings at the court of George III, and she regards the theory that imitating Johnson's style spoiled Fanny Burney's natural style as an oversimplification. See A Degree of Prudery. A Biography of Fanny Burney (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1950), pp. 220-21. Wimsatt's agreement is implied by this comment in his study of Samuel Johnson's style: "All the world knows that by far the most deplorable effect of Johnson's style was upon that young member of the Streatham set, Fanny Burney. The change from the maiden graces of Evelina to the mature pretensions of Cecilia, Camilla, the Wanderer, and the Memoirs of Dr. Burney has become through Macaulay a notorious event in the history of the English language." (The Prose Style of Samuel Johnson /New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941/, p. 138.)

"Life and Writings of Addison" (1843)

The publication of Lucy Aiken's biography of Addison was the occasion of this review,<sup>80</sup> which illustrates Macaulay's great knowledge of eighteenth-century literary history. Macaulay admired both Addison's character and his works, and he admits, "To Addison himself we are bound by a sentiment as much like affection as any sentiment can be which is inspired by one who has been sleeping a hundred and twenty years in Westminster Abbey" (VII, 53). This statement sets the tone of the review: Macaulay does not bring Addison to a "literary tribunal," but rather gives a sympathetic account of his life and writings. Macaulay's ability to condense facts is shown by the accounts of Addison's European travels, in which are included details about the trip itself, comments on the historical importance of cities Addison visited, the traveller's reactions to what he saw, allusions to later writings which record his impressions, and, occasionally, Macaulay's commentary on these writings. The tendency away from a sharp division into life and works which "Madame D'Arblay" reveals is more clearly apparent in this work, for biographical and critical statements are interwoven in the seventy-page essay on Addison. Two natural divisions are made between Addison's life up to 1709, when he began to write for the Tatler, and his later life. The beginning of a third period is marked by his marriage to Lady Warwick in 1716 and his

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<sup>80</sup>Works, VII, 52-122.

elevation to the post of Secretary of State in 1717. Macaulay believes that Addison, a "firm, though a moderate Whig," was the first commoner to attain this high post by literary ability rather than by oratorical power. Macaulay's criticism in "Addison" is not theoretical, as in "Milton" and "Dryden," but concerns specific works. The success of the angel simile in The Campaign (a work which celebrated Marlborough's victory at Blenheim), Macaulay takes as "a remarkable instance of the advantage which, in rhetoric and poetry, the particular has over the general" (78). The figurative language often used in early reviews to make opponents seem foolish is used in Addison to clarify questions. Macaulay says, for example, that Addison possessed a "vast mine rich with a hundred ores," but that until he wrote for the Tatler, he did not find his "vein of richest gold" (89). The essays are praised for their diction, character sketches, and humor: Macaulay praises Addison for "drawing mirth from incidents which occur every day, and from little peculiarities of temper and manner such as may be found in every man" (90). But, while Macaulay admires the essays for their intrinsic value, he calls Addison a "moral satirist," a writer who shows that no necessary connection exists between vice and cleverness (93). Addison's humor is distinguished not only by grace, nobility, and compassion, but also by "moral purity." Yet the attitude toward literature implicit here is not narrowly didactic, for Macaulay praises Addison as the

forerunner of the great English novelists, and suggests that the Tory foxhunter in the Freeholder was Fielding's model for Squire Western. To describe Addison's character, Macaulay uses foils less obviously than in his early essays. Pope, Swift, and Steele are all sketched, and all show, by contrast, the virtues of Addison, but Macaulay gives so much information about the writers that they seem interesting in themselves. Unlike some narrative essays which come to an abrupt ending, "The Life and Writings of Addison" ends gradually, with many details about Addison's last illness and death. Finally, Macaulay gives an impression of Addison's greatness by details selected for the funeral scene:

Bishop Atterbury, one of those Tories who had loved and honored the most accomplished of the Whigs, met the corpse, and led the procession by torchlight, round the shrine of St. Edward and the graves of the Plantagenets, to the Chapel of Henry the Seventh (121).

Ten years later, Macaulay described the same scene in his short life of Atterbury.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>For notes to "Addison" see R. F. Winch's edition, published by Macmillan in 1898. The essay has also been edited by G. E. Hadow (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1910). The style of the Addison essay is "warm," compared to the "cold" style of earlier Edinburgh works, in the opinion of Peter Bayne. (Essays in Biography and Criticism /Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1858/, p. 55.) Macaulay's essay is judged "masterly and entertaining" by Addison's editor, Henry G. Bohn. See The Works of the Rt. Hon. Joseph Addison (6 vols.; London: George Bell and Sons, 1885), I, ix. On the other hand, the reaction against the Victorian period is illustrated by Bonamy Dobrée's contemptuous treatment of Macaulay's essay on Addison. (Essays in Biography 1686-1726 /London: Humphrey Milford, 1925/, pp. 205 and 208.) In the section of this work titled "The First Victorian (Joseph



II. Narratives: Encyclopedia Britannica works <sup>82</sup>

"Francis Atterbury" (1853)

This essay <sup>83</sup> is a short biography of Francis Atterbury (1663-1732), English bishop and polemical writer. Macaulay is Addison), "Dobrée accuses Macaulay of seeing Addison as a Victorian moralist and claims that Addison's treatment of Steele was much worse than Macaulay made it seem. Macaulay defended Addison "with his schoolboy enthusiasm and lack of subtlety, with his black is black and Whig is probably white. . ." (p. 208). At the beginning of her essay on Addison, Virginia Woolf defends Macaulay's review as artistic, if not entirely accurate. (The Common Reader. First and Second Series /New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1948/, pp. 137-38.) For an account of the writing of "The Campaign" which differs from Macaulay's see R. D. Horn, "Addison's 'Campaign' and Macaulay," PMLA, LXIII (1948), 886-902. More recently, Macaulay's essay has been praised by Peter Smithers in his Life of Joseph Addison (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1954), Preface, p. v. Smithers believes that Macaulay did not exaggerate Addison's influence on the conduct of his contemporaries. (p. 455). Macaulay's study of Addison is also favorably evaluated by D. F. Bond in his edition of the Spectator (5 vols.; Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1965). In the introduction, Bond says of the Victorians' picture of Addison: "The most eloquent statement comes from Macaulay, whose own tastes and abilities made him an able advocate of all that the Spectator stood for." Consequently, Macaulay's essay on Addison, "resounding in tone and splendidly final in judgment, is the voice of the nineteenth century as surely as Johnson's Life of Addison had been that of the eighteenth" (p. ciii).

<sup>82</sup> These works of Macaulay are seldom mentioned by critics, but Mark Thomson, who wrote a short study of Macaulay published in 1959, his centenary, justly observed that in these late works, "Macaulay's aim was to make these lives character studies as well as summaries." (Macaulay /London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959/, p. 12.) Thomson goes on to say that the difference between Macaulay's periodical writings and his last essays is that "the contributions to the Encyclopedia Britannica were the product of long familiarity with their subjects. Hence they have a quality, a sureness of touch that most of the essays lack, except that on Addison, which closely resembles the lives."

<sup>83</sup> Works, VII, 283-96.

often accused of Whig bias, and in some of his argumentative essays Tories are blackened, but in this essay a zealous Tory fares better than more famous Tories, such as Johnson and Southey, who appear in Edinburgh Review articles. Atterbury wrote most of Boyle's defense of the epistles of Phalaris, which Bentley contended were spurious. This controversy is described also in "Temple." Macaulay suggests in this essay that, in a Tory reign, Atterbury might have become Archbishop of Canterbury, but the accession of George the First in 1714 frustrated his ambitions. In 1722, after the South Sea panic created much unrest in London, a Jacobite plot against George was discovered. For his complicity, Atterbury was confined to the Tower of London and then banished. Macaulay balances his description of the scheming bishop by details about his private life: he was a gentle father and an intimate of Pope and Swift. He admired Milton, whom other Tories despised. Macaulay puts Atterbury in a sympathetic light when he notes that those who attended Addison's funeral thought "that Atterbury read the funeral service with a peculiar tenderness and solemnity" (VII, 291). After his banishment, Atterbury joined James (the old Pretender) in Paris, but he was not kindly treated and withdrew. At the end of his life he wrote a letter to James in which he contrasted his fate to that of Clarendon. In the letter, Macaulay states, Atterbury points out that he and Clarendon

were the only two English subjects that had ever been banished from their country and debarred from all communication with their friends by an act of Parliament. But here the resemblance ended. One of the exiles had been so happy as to bear a chief part in the restoration of the Royal House. All that the other could now do was to die asserting the rights of that House to the last. A few weeks after this letter was written Atterbury died. He had just completed his seventieth year (296).

This passage exemplifies Macaulay's habit, in his late works, of using natural comparisons and contrasts to express themes. The rise and fall of a prominent figure, traced in this essay, is dramatized by the reference to Clarendon, taken from Atterbury's letter rather than imposed upon the subject, which suggests that Atterbury's fate might have been different. At the end of a touching scene in which Macaulay tells of the death of Atterbury's beloved daughter, the bishop is described as he resumes his work with great vigor, "for grief, which disposes gentle natures to retirement, to inaction, and to meditation, only makes restless spirits more restless" (295). Atterbury's restless energy is mentioned throughout the work, so that the contrast described here seems appropriate for the context. In the Encyclopedia articles, Macaulay uses figurative language more sparingly than in early works, but metaphors in his last essays are more suggestive than those found in his first Edinburgh articles. For example, to characterize Atterbury as a polemicist, Macaulay states "He had little gold; but he beat that little out to the very thinnest leaf. . ." (287), an idea

which recurs in this essay when Macaulay praises Atterbury's graceful prose style.

"John Bunyan" (1854)

Macaulay's two articles on Bunyan are among his shortest works; each is twelve pages. In the first work, written for the Edinburgh in 1830, Macaulay elaborates the superficial statement that "Bunyan is almost the only writer who ever gave to the abstract the interest of the concrete" (V, 449). Macaulay's later work<sup>84</sup> has "the interest of the concrete," which the first essay lacks, for Bunyan's life is described. Religious persecution was especially hateful to Macaulay, who gives a vivid account of Bunyan's thirteen-year imprisonment, not only to tell about Bunyan himself but also to illustrate the cruelty with which Dissenters were treated. While in prison, Bunyan began to write. At first, his works were coarse; but Macaulay states that they showed "a keen mother wit, a great command of the homely mother tongue, an intimate knowledge of the English Bible, and a vast and dearly bought spiritual experience" (VII, 303). This judgment illustrates the specific quality of the critical summaries in the Encyclopedia articles, as well as Macaulay's talent for condensation. The phrase quoted above, "vast and dearly bought spiritual experience," not only characterizes Bunyan's writings, but reminds the reader of his

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<sup>84</sup>Works, VII, 297-309.

tormented conscience and his sufferings in prison. Bunyan's fanaticism is made less prominent in 1854 than in 1830, and Macaulay stresses instead the writer's goodness:

Bunyan did not live to see the Revolution. In the summer of 1688 he undertook to plead the cause of a son with an angry father, and at length prevailed on the old man not to disinherit the young one. This good work cost the benevolent intercessor his life. He had to ride through heavy rain. He came drenched to his lodgings on Snow Hill, and was seized with a violent fever, and died in a few days (VII, 308).

At the end of the essay, Macaulay describes unsuccessful attempts to imitate or revise *Pilgrim's Progress*, and thus alludes to the uniqueness of the work. He scorns a Tractarian version in which the House Beautiful symbolizes the Eucharist, noting that, since Faithful in Bunyan's version does not stop at the House Beautiful, the "Anglo-Catholic divine" inadvertently teaches through his allegory that "the Eucharist may safely be neglected" (309). Bunyan's work has been "mutilated," by writers who fail to take "a comprehensive view of the whole" (309). Although it would be an exaggeration to say that Macaulay's essays have similarly been "mutilated," by texts and anthologies which reprint short excerpts from them, it is true that critics often base their evaluation of the essays upon a few well-known works such as "Southey" and "Bacon," only two of the forty-one essays, and consequently fail to take a comprehensive view of the whole of Macaulay's essays.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup>In the 1854 article on Bunyan, Macaulay is somewhat gentler to Southey, who edited *Pilgrim's Progress*, than he had

"Oliver Goldsmith" (1856)

"In truth," Macaulay says of Goldsmith, "there was in his character much to love but very little to respect" (VII, 320). This judgment shows the author's development, for in his early essays, he judges men by rather narrow standards; he cannot see the appealing qualities in unstable or impractical men. In 1856, however, he gives fair accounts of two men very different from himself, Samuel Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith.<sup>86</sup> In the 1831 essay on Johnson, Macaulay dismisses Goldsmith as a man "very justly described by one of his contemporaries as an inspired idiot" (V, 515); but, by 1856, he sees more complexity in Goldsmith, a writer who did not husband his talents and a spendthrift, but a man in whom his friends found "much to love." Criticism in early essays is usually brought in to strengthen arguments, but in his last essays Macaulay shows that literary works themselves interest him. Since he was especially well-read in eighteenth-century literature and history, he was able to give in his Encyclopedia articles on Johnson and Goldsmith informative descriptions of their major works.

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been in 1830. Insignificant in itself, this fact supports the generalization that Macaulay became more tolerant of other writers as he grew older. In 1830 he faulted Southey for calling Bunyan a "blackguard" before his conversion. In both essays, Macaulay argues that Bunyan exaggerated his wickedness, using the language common to dissenters of his time. In 1854 he adds, however, that Southey is the only biographer of Bunyan who was not misled on this point by taking literally Bunyan's "strong language" of self-condemnation.

<sup>86</sup> Works, VII, 310-23.

Macaulay thinks that The Vicar of Wakefield is marred by an improbable plot, but his love of the work is clear from his remark that it shows both "the sweetness of pastoral poetry" and the "vivacity of comedy" (316). Although Macaulay's literary judgments are more specific and more perceptive in these late essays than in his earlier works, the essay on Goldsmith and his criticism as a whole reflects eighteenth-century tastes: he sees works in terms of their beauties and faults, and he uses the term "imitation" in a pre-Romantic sense, to mean a copy which in some way reproduces the actual world. For example, discussing "The Deserted Village," he states that the village in its happy state resembles an English village, but is like an Irish village when it decays. And he concludes:

A poet may easily be pardoned for reasoning ill;  
but he cannot be pardoned for describing ill,  
for observing the world in which he lives so  
carelessly that his portraits bear no resemblance  
to the originals. . . (317).

Since Macaulay wishes the copy to reflect the original, he would not agree with Shelley that poetry "strips the veil of familiarity from the world. . . [and] makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos."<sup>87</sup>

Goldsmith's lesser-known works are also considered in this article. Macaulay finds merit in the texts Goldsmith edited for schools:

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<sup>87</sup>"A Defense of Poetry," Selected Poems, Essays, and Letters. ed. Ellsworth Barnard (New York: Odyssey Press, 1944), p. 564.

He was a great, perhaps an unequaled, master of the arts of selection and condensation. In this respect his histories of Rome and of England, and still more his own abridgements of these histories, well deserve to be studied (319).

After many years of historical research and writing, Macaulay appreciated these arts of selection and condensation: as a young man he had scorned Goldsmith's abridgements, calling them "miserable performances" (Trevelyan, I, 408). Macaulay's article on Goldsmith ends with a tribute to Johnson which also indirectly praises his contemporary: "A life of Goldsmith would have been an inestimable addition to the Lives of the Poets. No man appreciated Goldsmith's writings more justly than Johnson: no man was better acquainted with Goldsmith's character and habits. . ." (323). Johnson's portrait would have been delineated "with truth and spirit." The emphatic "no man" would seem exaggerated in another context, but the phrase seems appropriate when used to refer to Samuel Johnson. Macaulay's argumentative essays often end with harsh judgments--of Mill, Southey, Montgomery, Sadler--but his Encyclopedia articles show him in a gentler mood. At the end of "Goldsmith," he pays tribute to two writers whom he greatly admired.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>H. B. Cutterill's edition of this essay (London: Macmillan, 1904) includes an introduction, notes, and chronological summaries. Another annotated edition is that of C. B. Wheeler, published by the Clarendon Press in 1914.



"The Life of Samuel Johnson" (1856)

Written twenty-five years after Macaulay's Edinburgh essay on Johnson, the Encyclopedia article<sup>89</sup> illustrates the development of his style, for it differs in several ways from the argumentative essay of 1831: the 1856 essay shows 1) a more favorable view of Johnson; 2) matured critical opinions; and 3) a more subtle prose style. The cocksure tone of the first essay is illustrated by the judgment that the mind of Johnson united "great powers and low prejudices." In 1856, Macaulay describes Johnson's Tory beliefs in a much more tolerant way. Macaulay characterizes Johnson as both "a great and a good man" (VII, 356). Unlike the caricature of 1831, the 1856 portrait makes Johnson seem a complex person. In 1831, a low opinion of Johnson's writings is expressed, but Macaulay as an older man takes a more favorable view; he gives special praise to the Lives of the Poets, which he ranks first among Johnson's works: "The narratives are as entertaining as any novel. The remarks on life and human nature are eminently shrewd and profound. The criticisms are excellent. . ." (353). The prose style of this essay is subdued, compared to the style of Edinburgh works. The contrasts are muted and the sentences smoother than in earlier works. Macaulay writes, for example, that Johnson had in spite of much mental and much bodily affliction, clung vehemently to life. The feeling described in that fine but gloomy paper which

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<sup>89</sup>Works, VII, 324-56.

closes the series of his Idlers seemed to grow stronger in him as his last hour draw near. He fancied that he should be able to draw his breath more easily in a southern climate, and would probably have set out for Rome and Naples, but for his fear of the expense of the journey (355).

Unfortunately for Macaulay's reputation, the study of Johnson written in his maturity is not well known: his biased and emphatically written work of 1831 is cited to show his opinion of Johnson. The superiority of the 1856 "Life," however, is as apparent today as it was ninety years ago to Matthew Arnold, who chose this work as an introduction to his edition of Johnson's Lives.<sup>90</sup> Macaulay's 1856 essay on Johnson is discussed in chapter five.<sup>91</sup>

"William Pitt" (1859)

The subjects discussed in Macaulay's longest Encyclopedia article (fifty-five pages)<sup>92</sup> and the author's view of them are well summarized by the last paragraph of the essay:

The memory of Pitt has been assailed, times innumerable, often justly, often unjustly. . . . History will vindicate the real man. . . and will exhibit him as what he was, a minister of great talents, honest intentions, and liberal opinions, pre-eminently qualified, intellectually

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<sup>90</sup>The Six Chief Lives from Johnson's "Lives of the Poets" with Macaulay's "Life of Johnson" (London: Macmillan, 1879).

<sup>91</sup>Good notes and introductions to the 1856 article are provided by two editors of the work: Huber Gray Buehler, Macaulay's Life of Samuel Johnson (New York: Longmans, 1896) and Clinton W. Lucas, Macaulay's Life of Samuel Johnson (New York: American Book Co., 1910).

<sup>92</sup>Works, VII, 357-412.

and morally, for the part of a parliamentary leader, and capable of administering, with prudence and moderation, the government of a prosperous and tranquil country, but unequal to surprising and terrible emergencies, and liable, in such emergencies, to err grievously, both on the side of weakness and on the side of violence (VII, 412).

Each phrase in this summary is elaborated in the article. One emergency was the rise of English Jacobinism which followed the French Revolution; and Pitt's response was suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. Through figurative language, Macaulay implies that repressive laws lead to violence when he writes that such laws, which moderate governments "suffered to rust, were now furbished up and sharpened anew" (397). The "side of weakness" alluded to in the conclusion refers to Pitt's failure to stop Napoleon by a vigorous and resolute war policy. For Macaulay, the year 1792 marks a turning point in the Prime Minister's career: the last part of the essay describes his physical decline and gradual loss of power after this date, which divides his first administration into two parts. Macaulay characterizes Pitt's actions and his speeches by recurring allusions to what he calls the statesman's "intrepid haughtiness" and, in another place, his "majestic self-possession." He compares Pitt to the "magnanimous man so finely described by Aristotle in the Ethics . . . who thinks himself worthy of great things, being in truth worthy" (382). Macaulay's own political beliefs are manifested by attitudes he commends in Pitt: zeal for civil and religious liberty, eagerness to redress Irish

grievances, and support for Parliamentary reform. The charge that Macaulay espoused Utilitarian values is easily refuted by this essay, in which he argues that Pitt wrongly ignored the state of arts and letters during his Ministry: "Not a single fine public building was erected during his long administration" (385). In his last essay, Macaulay seems to take a more comprehensive view of public welfare than in the 1834 essay on the elder Pitt, a work devoted mainly to sketches of shifting political alliances. Attention is focused on the main character more skillfully in 1859 than in 1834, and the character of William Pitt is more fully portrayed than the character of his father. In general, the style of this essay and of other Encyclopedia articles is simpler than that of Edinburgh works. These qualities of simplicity and condensation can be illustrated by two passages describing the same scene: William Pitt at his father's funeral. In his second essay on Chatham (1844), Macaulay wrote:

The chief mourner was young William Pitt. After the lapse of more than twenty-seven years, in a season as dark and perilous /when Napoleon was winning dramatic victories/, his own shattered frame and broken heart were laid, with the same pomp, in the same consecrated mould (VII, 279).

Fifteen years later Macaulay wrote:

The favorite child and namesake of the deceased statesman followed the coffin as chief mourner, and saw it deposited in the transept where his own was destined to lie (VII, 363).

Although not as florid as passages in "Milton," the funeral description of 1844 has a heightened quality--two adjectives, "dark" and "perilous," follow the noun "season"; "shattered frame" balances "broken heart"; and repetition emphasizes another balanced phrase, "with the same pomp, in the same consecrated mould"--which is not found in the second and later passage. Thus the critical judgment that Macaulay's style shows no trace of growth or development can be challenged by careful readings of the essays he wrote between the years 1825 and 1859.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Oursel discusses Macaulay's last work in Les Essais de Lord Macaulay, pp. 232-40. See also Philip Henry Stanhope, Life of the Right Honourable William Pitt (4 vols.; London: John Murray, 1861), II, 186-92. On the whole, Stanhope believes, Macaulay's life of Pitt is "distinguished by candour and judgment as much as by eloquence and genius." (p. 186.) But Stanhope disputes two points in the essay concerning the latter part of Pitt's first administration: Macaulay's judgments that Pitt's domestic policy was unduly harsh and that he showed too little vigor in his war policy.

## APPENDIX II

### MACAULAY'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNIGHT'S QUARTERLY (1823-1824)<sup>1</sup>

While Macaulay was at Cambridge, he wrote several essays and poems which appeared in Knights Quarterly in 1823 and 1824. Macaulay's articles were signed "Tristram Merton." Ten prose works are reprinted in the Ellis edition of his miscellaneous writings (2 vols.; London, 1860) and in the standard edition of his Works (VII, 561-703). Most of these essays are sketches or fragments which have little intrinsic interest and which may be summarized briefly. "Fragments of a Roman Tale" (June 1823) concerns Caesar's part in the Cataline conspiracy. Caesar is portrayed as a young dandy, but he talks

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<sup>1</sup>Macaulay's connection to Knights Quarterly is described in Trevelyan, I, 112-116. See also Beatty, p. 57 and Frederick Arnold, The Public Life of Lord Macaulay (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1882), p. 38. Trevelyan writes that in 1823, many promising young men from Eton, including Derwent Coleridge, were together at Cambridge. "Mr. Charles Knight," Trevelyan continues, "too enterprising a publisher to let such a quantity of youthful talent run to waste, started a periodical, which was largely supported by undergraduates and Bachelors of Arts, among whom the veterans of the Eton press formed a brilliant, and, as he vainly hoped, a reliable nucleus of contributors" (Trevelyan, I, 113). Knight, who published and edited the periodical, was able to bring out only a few issues, between June 1823 and November 1824. He explains in the preface to the last number that contributors failed to complete their articles, and he hints that the early enthusiasm of the Cambridge men for the periodical vanished quickly when deadlines had to be met (Knights Quarterly, III [November 1824], viii).

in the style of Macaulay's Parliamentary speeches: "The yoke of oligarchical tyranny," he declares for example, "unites in itself the worst evils of every other system, and combines more than Athenian turbulence with more Persian despotism" (VII, 566). In Macaulay's sketch, Caesar is warned by a servant girl who loves him that Cataline plans to betray him.

"On the Royal Society of Literature" (June 1823) presents Macaulay's argument that the Society will not promote good writing. Using the French Academy as an analogy, he claims that the Academy ignored Corneille and Voltaire. Macaulay's attack on the idea of a literary tribunal is interesting, in view of his later practice in the Edinburgh Review. "The editorial we," he asserts in this essay, "has often been fatal to rising genius: though all the world knows that it is only a form of speech, very often employed by a single needy blockhead" (VII, 576). The sketch concludes with a parable which emphasizes the idea that a Society of Literature will not foster good writing: the parable describes a Babylonian king who tries to improve the quality of wine in his realm by starting a competition. The result is that growers of good wine ignore his contest and only producers of bad wine send in samples of their product.

"Scenes from 'Athenian Revels'" (January 1824) begins with a dramatic situation comparable to that of The Clouds: a young man influenced by the sophists fights with his father, who

must pay his debts and who considers his son decadent. The next scene shows the son feasting with Alcibiades. In a note, Macaulay says that he bases this scene on the sixth book of Thucydides' Peloponnesian War, in which Thucydides writes that Alcibiades was thought to have taken part in sacrilegious rites. Macaulay's sketch ends as Alcibiades and his friends prepare for these mysterious rituals.

"St. Dennis and St. George in the Water" (April 1824) is a roughly-sketched allegory in which St. Dennis represents France at the time of the Revolution and St. George stands for England. Macaulay's purpose seems to be to poke fun at fears that the masses in England would rise up in imitation of their French counterparts. The steward of the parish of St. George, named "Bottomless Pit," maintains order by keeping inactive Sir Habeas Corpus. Many years later, in an essay on William Pitt, Macaulay argued that Pitt was wrong to suspend the Habeas Corpus act and that he overestimated the danger of revolution in England.

("William Pitt," Works, VII, 396-97.)

"On the Athenian Orators," (August, 1824), as Macaulay admits at the end of his short essay, consists of "prolegomena and digressions" and offers no specific commentary on the orators or their characteristics. His generalizations about the art of oratory and its importance in Greece are commonplace. In the light of Macaulay's Bacon essay, however, this brief earlier work is interesting because it expresses a view of Greek culture



which calls into question the theory of progress. "I may be allowed to doubt," Macaulay writes in praise of the Greeks, "whether the changes on which the admirers of modern institutions delight to dwell have improved our condition so much in reality as in appearance" (VII, 665-66).

"A Prophetic Account of a Grand National Epic Poem, to be Entitled 'The Wellingtoniad,' and to be Published A.D. 2824" appeared in November, 1824. Macaulay suggests that in 2824, "polished courts" will exist at Sydney and Capetown, and that the United States will have a "perpetual President" named Ebenezer Hogsflesh. Macaulay gives a synopsis of the epic poem he imagines. It is a mock-heroic in which classical trappings are prominent. Wellington and Napoleon fight a duel, for example, in which Napoleon's pistol misfires but Wellington's weapon, "formed by the hand of Vulcan, and primed by the Cyclops, wounds the Emperor in the thigh" (VII, 681).

Besides the fragmentary works mentioned above, Macaulay also contributed to Knight's Quarterly more serious pieces, which should be described more fully. These four works consist of an essay on Dante, an essay on Petrarch, an imaginary conversation about the English civil war between Milton and Cowley, and, finally, a review of Mitford's History of Greece. "Criticisms on the Principal Italian Writers: No. I. Dante" (January 1824)

Macaulay's essay on Dante has two main parts: a broad sketch of literature in Dante's time and an evaluation of

Dante's poetry. Macaulay elaborates the idea that three feelings which move men in all ages, religious zeal, chivalrous love and honor, and love of liberty, were especially strong in the time of Dante, who is called "the sublime enthusiast." Macaulay argues, as in "Milton," that the poet's intellectual and moral qualities are closely connected. When he turns to Dante's work, he identifies its characteristic feature as its "air of reality," which comes from the "strong belief with which the story seems to be told" (VII, 610). Dante's plan in the Divine Comedy required that he use many concrete details, Macaulay declares, adding that "This difficult task of representing supernatural beings to our minds, in a manner which shall be neither unintelligible nor wholly inconsistent with our ideas of their nature, has never been so well performed as by Dante" (611). One year later, however, Macaulay judges Milton the poet who delineated supernatural characters the most effectively ("Milton," Works, V, 16). Macaulay contrasts Dante's poetry to that of the early nineteenth century by saying that Dante's chief interest was man, not nature, and thus few descriptions of the external world are found in his poetry. "The feeling of the present age has taken a direction diametrically opposite. The magnificence of the physical world, and its influence upon the human mind, have been the favorite themes of our most eminent poets" (613). Macaulay's comment that man is more interesting than the physical world and his

praise of Dante imply a condescending attitude toward the poetry of his contemporaries, but in a later review, "Byron," he discusses Romantic poetry more sympathetically. An idea which Macaulay expounded in "Milton" and "Dryden," two early Edinburgh Review articles, is stated briefly in "Dante": the reviewer claims that ". . . a rude state of society is that in which great original works are most frequently produced . . ." (602). Although Macaulay at the end of the essay terms his critique of Dante "feeble and rambling," it is superior to some later reviews in which criticism is merely a vehicle used to advance a thesis.

"Criticisms on the Principal Italian Writers. No. II. Petrarch" (April 1824)

Macaulay's essay on Petrarch has two parts: a discussion of his literary reputation and an evaluation of his poetry. The Italian writer's reputation, Macaulay argues, depends in great part on his position in literary history: he was the first poet to become famous for celebrating romantic love.

Developing this idea through an analogy, Macaulay states that ". . . the claim of Petrarch to great fame was indeed somewhat like that of Amerigo Vespucci to the Continent which should have derived its appellation from Columbus. The Provençal poets were unquestionably the masters of the Florentine" (VII, 622). Interest in Petrarch's life also contributed to his literary reputation. In the commentary on Petrarch's works, Macaulay sets up a contrast between natural and affected writing which

appears frequently in his later essays. The letters of Walpole are judged bad (affected) and Johnson's Lives of the Poets good (natural) through this contrast. "His Muse," Macaulay says of Petrarch, "like the Roman lady in Livy, was tempted by gaudy ornaments to betray the fastnesses of her strength. . ." (625). Here, "strength" refers to the natural style which Macaulay feels Petrarch could have employed in his writings. The judgment shows Macaulay's fondness for allusions, and the archaic "fastnesses" indicates his preference for Anglo-Saxon diction. To support his generalization that Petrarch's talent is not of the first rank, Macaulay argues that Petrarch can be imitated more easily than Dante and that Petrarch's work lacks good quality characteristic of Italian writing, graphic description, "the art of strongly presenting sensible objects to the imagination" (625). In "Dante," Macaulay states that this art is especially peculiar to Dante's poetry.

"A Conversation between Mr. Abraham Cowley and Mr. John Milton" (August 1824)<sup>2</sup>

This imaginary conversation about the English Civil War takes place in 1665. Assuming the role of a friend of Milton and Cowley, Macaulay records their dialogue. His sympathies are clear from the fact that Milton dominates the conversation and speaks more forcefully than Cowley, who attempts to defend

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<sup>2</sup>Trevelyan states that this article was Macaulay's favorite Knight's Quarterly work (I, 115).

Charles I. In this dialogue, Macaulay uses several arguments defending the Revolution which reappear in "Milton," his first essay for the Edinburgh Review. Milton tells Cowley, for example, that Charles was a "false and wicked king" (VII, 648), that the evil of tyranny is greater than the evil of civil war, that the private virtues of Charles did not excuse his public crimes, and that Cromwell, though not faultless, was a great statesman. Of the assassination, Milton says, ". . . I think that the death of King Charles hath more hindered than advanced the liberties of England" (651).<sup>3</sup> "A Conversation between Mr. Abraham Cowley and Mr. John Milton" shows Macaulay's admiration for Milton, a feeling even more apparent in the famous essay on Milton written in the following year, 1825.

"On Mitford's History of Greece" (November 1824)<sup>4</sup>

In this work, Macaulay reveals the mean-between-extremes attitude characteristic of his later work. He argues that, while earlier historians overpraised popular government in Athens, Mitford wrongly attacked Athenian institutions, which he considered inferior to those of Sparta. Macaulay attacks Mitford's interpretation, arguing that pure oligarchy is the

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<sup>3</sup>Cf. the essay on Milton, in which Macaulay declares that the execution of Charles "was the most injurious to the cause of freedom" (Works, V, 33).

<sup>4</sup>William Mitford (1744-1827) published the first volume of his History of Greece in 1784, but the work was not completed until 1810. A reprint of the popular work in 1822 probably occasioned Macaulay's review.

worst form of government.<sup>5</sup> The reviewer's attitude toward theories of government is clear from his assertion that ". . . a good government, like a good coat, is that which fits the body for which it is designed" (VII, 687).<sup>6</sup> Several years later, Macaulay argued that James Mill's Essay on Government failed to prove that aristocracy is a bad form of government. The Mitford review foreshadows several other Edinburgh articles. Macaulay begins his discussion of Mitford's History by saying that his purpose is "to reduce an overpraised writer to his proper level" (VII, 683), a statement comparable to his introductory remarks in "Montgomery," which concern the puffing of books and the duty of the critic to attack bad writing. The idea of the "noiseless revolution," which Macaulay elaborates in the 1828 article "History," is suggested in the Mitford review when he states that "The happiness of the many commonly depends on causes independent of victories or defeats, of revolutions or

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<sup>5</sup>In 1828, Macaulay gave the same assessment of Mitford's work. See "History," Works, V, 153-154. Byron alludes to Mitford in Don Juan, canto XII, stanza xix. In a note, Byron says that Mitford's "great pleasure consists in praising tyrants," but he adds the opinion that Mitford's work is the best modern history of Greece. (Don Juan and Other Satirical Poems, ed. Louis I. Bredvold [New York: The Odyssey Press, 1935], p. 574).

<sup>6</sup>T. F. Ellis, who edited The Miscellaneous Writings of Lord Macaulay (2 vols.; London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), wrote in the preface to this edition that Macaulay's view of Parliamentary representation was first expressed in this article and was never changed. (p. ix.) Macaulay favored a gradual extension of the vote, but he opposed universal suffrage.

restorations,--causes which can be regulated by no laws, and which are recorded in no archives" (701).<sup>7</sup> Macaulay concludes his review with an eloquent tribute to Athens: "Her intellectual empire is imperishable," he asserts, and emphasizes the point with a description similar to the famous New Zealander passage of "Ranke." The literature of Athens will be read when an imaginary traveller "shall hear savage hymns chaunted to some misshaped idol over the ruined dome of our proudest temple. . . ." (703). The emphatically-expressed praise of Athenian culture in this review is probably a truer reflection of Macaulay's attitude than the much more famous disparagement of the Greeks in "Bacon."

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<sup>7</sup>Macaulay's phrasing is very similar in the article "History." See Works, V, 156.

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### C. Criticism of the Essays

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Oursel, Paul. Les Essais de Lord Macaulay. Étude Critique. Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1882. (the only full-length study of Macaulay's essays; includes biographical introduction and bibliography.)

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2. Twentieth Century
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#### D. Miscellaneous

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Bandy, W. T. "Macaulay and his Italian Translator, Paolo Emiliani Guidici," Italica, XXV (June, 1948), 129-130. (A note on the translator's career; reprints a letter to him from Macaulay.)

Bassett, Edward L. "Silius Italicus in England," Classical Philology, XLVIII (1953), 155-68. (From Silvius' poem, Punica, Macaulay may have borrowed some proper names for his Lays of Ancient Rome.)

- Betts, C. H. "Macaulay's Criticism of Democracy and Garfield's Reply," Open Court, XXXII (1918), 273-79. (In a presidential campaign speech, Garfield read Macaulay's letter to Randall and replied with a defense of American Democracy.)
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- Jarrett, H. S. "The influence of Lucian on Macaulay," Living Age, XXXVI (March 12, 1898), 735-45.
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- Nolan, Edward. "Lord Macaulay's Schoolboy: a Biography," Macmillan's Magazine, XXII (1870), 196-200.
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- Rolfe, J. C. "Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome." Classical Journal, XXIX (1934), 567-581.
- Skelton, John. "Contemporary Orators," Fraser's, XXXIII (1846).  
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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Margaret L. Cruikshank has been read and approved by members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

June 16, 1969  
Date

Math J. Sraglie  
Signature of Advisor