ROSE MACAULAY: A CRITICAL STUDY

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ROSE MACAULAY: A CRITICAL STUDY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Dame Rose Macaulay, an English novelist, poetess, and essayist who enjoyed an immense amount of popularity during her prolific writing career, began publishing in 1911 at the age of thirty. Her first novel was titled _The Valley Captives._ Over a period of forty-five years she published seventeen novels, numerous poems, and a great many essays on religious themes in English literature. In 1912 she wrote her second and third novels, _Views and Vagabonds_ and _The Lee Shore_. It was not until 1920 that she published another. From 1920 until 1924 she published a novel a year; from 1924 until 1934, one every other year; from 1934 until 1940, one every three years. There was a ten-year gap before she published _The World Is My Wilderness,_ followed by a six-year period before her last novel, _The Towers of Trebizond,_ came out.

The daughter of G. C. Macaulay, a don in English literature at Cambridge, Rose Macaulay spent her childhood in Italy with her mother, who had been sent there for her health. Miss Macaulay's life there did little to prepare her for the rigors of schooling in England. She attended Oxford, although her father was connected with Cambridge. Her

resentment at having to conform to the social conventions at Oxford stayed with her throughout her life, and cropped out in several of her novels. She was always reticent about her private life, and it is thus difficult to pinpoint any element in her novels as autobiographical. It is obvious that she drew heavily on her childhood experiences and her later travels for the geography and plot lines of her novels. She was an inveterate traveler, covering most of the world at some time in her wanderings, and seemed to prefer living on the continent to living in England.[1] Since her recent death in 1958, there has been no creditable biography published; therefore, what little is known about her life comes from the few happenings in her novels that seem to reflect her personal life and feelings. Potterism is the only novel that seems to reflect much specifically about her, and then only because what it shows is re-inforced by repetition of her theories, philosophy, and thinking in her subsequent novels.

Her novels were generally well received by the book-buying public. In 1951 she received an honorary Doctor of Letters from Cambridge, and as the culmination of a long career of entertaining the public, she was knighted in 1958, the year of her death.[2]

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[1] Twentieth Century Authors, edited by Howard Haycroft and Stanley Kunitz (New York, 1942), pp. 865-866.

[2] Christopher Hollis, "Rose Macaulay," Spectator, CLXXVII (November 7, 1958), 603.

Miss Macaulay served an apprenticeship before her first real success. Her first attempt, The Valley Captives, was not very well received. Reviewers called it amateurish and crude.[3] Her second and third novels, Views and Vagabonds and Lee Shore, were slight works also, but fairly well received by the critics, who must have been in a generous mood. Her wide recognition came with her fourth novel, Potterism, which is a "sort of a British analogy and predecessor of Sinclair Lewis' Babbitt."[4] In the period after the devastation of the war, she was "one of a group of women novelists who wrote about contemporary life with a technical virtuosity not available to their less emancipated predecessors, but who still added nothing essentially fresh."[5]

At this point in her career, most of her reviewers were kind, saying things such as this: "Miss Macaulay is disarming by means of cleverness and wit . . . has coolness, confidence and determination to say what she intends to say,"[6] or "far beyond anything of its kind

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[3]Saturday Review, CXII (July 29, 1911), 147.

[4]Twentieth Century Authors, pp. 865-866.

[5]Lionel Stevenson, The English Novel (Boston, 1960), p. 479.

[6]Athenaeum, VIII (June 4, 1920), 736.

by contemporaries." Perhaps the reviewers did not all understand what Miss Macaulay attempted to do in Potterism, or perhaps some felt they should be kind in spite of understanding, but could not think of what to say without committing themselves. The critic just quoted went on to say: "For all its clever caricature and exhilarating interest, the story is downright English."[7] What could he possibly have meant by that?

There was always the other side of the coin, however, and others had more caustic things to say. One critic said of Potterism and its criticism of snobbery, second-rate journalism, cant, mediocrity, muddle, and self-interest: "as a solution of the problem that it sets before us, it is a failure, chiefly because in the author's philosophy there is no solution."[8] This attitude on the part of critics came with increasing frequency as time elapsed and new books came out. All had the same themes: the injustices borne by women, the inadequacies of the church and the men who serve in it, the mediocrity of the press, and the sorriness of men in general.

Another critic said of Miss Macaulay's use of farce and satire to pinpoint human failings: "Miss Macaulay is so competent in reaching her aim that one is forced to wonder why she didn't make the book a

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[7]Boston Transcript (November 27, 1920), p. 1.

[8]Catholic World, CXII (February, 1921), 694.

little smoother and more varied in style."[9] The public bought her books, but the press remained reserved, for the most part, in its reaction. Almost all of her reviewers did agree on one thing, however--that she was satirical and entertaining. The wide breach between favorable and unfavorable opinions of her works grew even wider toward the end of her career, when the critics became more aware of her shifting her emphasis from wit to characterization in her novels.[10] When Miss Macaulay was content to satirize lightly and just for fun, the reviewers were not very critical. When she began to use bitter satire, lashing out at wrongs as she saw them and trying to develop her caricatures into real characters, however, the reviewers began to be less kind. Miss Macaulay was unable to draw real and believable characters because the faults of her people became exaggerated all out of proportion in her sight, blocking out all warm and human qualities.

Reviewers began in the nineteen-twenties to point out several qualities of Miss Macaulay's works which were repeated in nearly every novel. She tended to flatten out her characters so that they were paper-doll-like and two-dimensional. She then used these puppets as the vehicles for little outbursts against the injustices borne by women, the futility of the Church, or the posturings and "second rate sentimentalism

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[9] New Republic, XXIV (November 10, 1920), 280.

[10] New Republic, LIV (May 9, 1928), 358.

and cheap short-cuts and the mediocrity"[11] of the people. She sacrificed "emotion for cleverness" so that she sometimes seemed superficial and heartless.[12]

Because Miss Macaulay's output was large, the critics had plenty of grist for their mills. She complacently ignored her critics for the most part, seeming content to limit her notice of them to an occasional slur put into the mouth of one of her numerous characters. She put what must have been her feelings about criticism in the first chapter of Staying with Relations, a book with a woman novelist as the central character, when she said, "If one would desire to know whether or not she wrote well, I can but reply that her novels pleased some tastes and not others, and that it is impossible to say more than this of any writings, since philosophers have unfortunately failed, down the ages, to arrive at any fixed standard of merit in art."[13]

Even in her last novels she repeated some of the themes, characters (under new names), and ideas that she had used in earlier novels. She returned to the "Denham" type from Crewe Train (1926) for the girl Barbary in The World Is My Wilderness (1950), and to Potterism (1920) for a repetition of the religious views evident in all her books,

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[11]Rose Macaulay, Potterism (London, 1920), p. 80.

[12]Twentieth Century Authors, p. 865.

[13]Rose Macaulay, Staying with Relations (New York, 1930), p. 9.

but expanded and extended in The Towers of Trebizond (1956) to a hopeless, disbelieving, groping quest. Had criticism troubled her over much, she would hardly have gone on throughout her career repeating the very things that caused her to be criticized--and repeating things was her habit. In fact, one reviewer said that she even joked to a formula. She had two types of jokes: one was the joke of absurdity--the ridiculous things that go on happening to people--and the other was the joke in mockery of the misuse of reason.[14]

The reviewers of Miss Macaulay's novels generally found them satirical farces with thin caricatures and two-dimensional beings used as puppets. Sometimes the critics rejected Miss Macaulay's novels as not even having any value for the moment, much less having any sound or lasting value. It is the purpose of this thesis to examine the greater part of her output of novels, to identify the recurring ideas and themes, and to examine the views of the critics. The thesis does not weigh these themes against those of contemporaries or try to give a complete account of the philosophy of Rose Macaulay, although it will be necessary to examine it in essence. It is further the intention of this thesis to discover a probable reason for the popular appeal of her novels, and to discover why she did not change her writing habits in response to harsh and repeated criticism.

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[14] Christopher Hollis, op. cit., p. 603.

Her knighting might lead one to assume that Miss Macaulay has a relatively high status among twentieth-century British novelists. An author whose works prove to be lasting usually employs memorable characters who, because they represent people as they really are, do not become outdated by a change in customs or costumes but have a universal and lasting appeal. It is one of the objects of this thesis to discover whether Miss Macaulay depicted such memorable characters or whether her use of social satire and caricature robbed her characters of the illusion of reality. A kindred aim of this thesis is to examine the extent of topicality in the novels and determine to what degree they are merely entertaining satire--that is, whether by their banality they are outdated and unlikely to be of continuing interest. The following novels are therefore examined in detail in these respects: _Lee Shore_, _Potterism_, _Orphan Island_, _Crewe Train_, _Daisy and Daphne_, _Staying with Relations_, _They Were Defeated_, _Going Abroad_, _I Would Be Private_, _And No Man's Wit_, _The World Is My Wilderness_, and _The Towers of Trebizond_.[15] One last purpose of this thesis is to discover whether there is any solid substratum of conviction or basic philosophical position underlying the writings of Rose Macaulay, and if so, to discover what it is.

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[15]It was not favoritism or discrimination that determined the slighting of the other five novels, but their unavailability.

Through these investigations, a guess may be hazarded as to whether posterity will confirm the judgments of Miss Macaulay's contemporaries or not.

CHAPTER II

FIRST ATTEMPTS

The plot element in Miss Macaulay's first three novels was largely inconsequential; these novels were not even mentioned by the publishers and critics of her later novels. They were not regularly listed in the known works of Miss Macaulay.[1] These three novels were written in less than three years, and have very similar themes and plots. The theme is that snobbishness is ridiculous, but they do not have quite the "preachy" tone of her later novels. The first three novels were full of flaws and were obvious training ground, although some of the early critics hailed the author as a genius. None of them brought her much recognition, however.

Valley Captives (1911) was the title of the first of these three novels. Apparently Miss Macaulay believed from the very first that men novelists had a better chance at success than women did, for she signed the first two as R. Macaulay, and the reviewers of the first novel spoke of Mr. Macaulay in their criticisms. Valley Captives is a pastoral novel. One reviewer said of it, ". . . galling chains of daily routine and class prejudice and sectarian dislike keep the Welch

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[1] Twentieth Century Authors, p. 856.

people in Valley Captives from seeing what happens outside their valley."[2] The central character, Teddy Vallon, wants something better than the world has to give him. In rebelling against his surroundings, he does not even reach the level of an ordinary man. The story depicts village life well, and shows the deadly monotony of living constantly under the eyes of neighbors and being ruled by the unreasoning laws of custom. Teddy rebels because he is a dreamer. However, he is also a coward. His war against himself and his valley makes the basis for the story.

The reviewer for the Saturday Review said that the characters were often no more than types, with rather crudely drawn lines. He said, "There is no need to give them names. They could be identified at once by such names as 'the brute,' 'the mere girl,' or 'the strong woman.'" He did his worst for the novel in his review by saying, ". . . It is difficult to say why the book is not really good."[3]

The critic for the Nation had this to say:

> The pair of children, Tudor [Teddy] and John [a girl], are victims of habit, deadly familiar routines of repetition. Tudor sinks to poltroonery, she is brave; he dissolves in self-pity, she is firm as a rock. Borgers stands for malign forces that harass and even ruin domestic life when unfortified by affection. This tale is not for the sensitive reader--it is

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[2]Saturday Review, CXII (July 29, 1911), 147.

[3]Ibid.

hardly worth telling because of the "squalor of body and soul" mentioned in the novel.[4]

The second and third of this group of novels were published in 1912. These two novels were very much alike. Views and Vagabonds was probably the second novel Miss Macaulay wrote. In it she first treated politics as a major theme, although the topic had been mentioned in her previous novel. Her satire also extended to economics for the first time, and she hit out in various other directions in the manner that would become characteristic throughout her career.

The novel is also an invective against snobbery, like so many of the rest of Miss Macaulay's works. The hero of the plot, if he can be so called, is a man of good family who defies the mores of his class to become a blacksmith, just because he believes that everyone should work. He marries a girl of the working classes. She feels no concern over social questions whatsoever, but is capable of the deepest affection. Occasionally the hero runs across an irresponsible set of twins who have no care in life except to enjoy everything as they go their way, but who are spontaneously generous in an immature way. The other characters present the conventional side of society.

Views and Vagabonds is, perhaps, one of Miss Macaulay's least widely known novels, but the only one which seems to have met with

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[4] Nation, XCII (June 29, 1911), 650.

approval from all those critics who reviewed it. The Athenaeum and the Outlook were the only two magazines to carry reviews that were not wholeheartedly complimentary, and even these two were partially approving. The Athenaeum said, ". . . any novel of Miss Macaulay's is sure to be sincere, interesting, and worthy of careful attention," but qualified that statement by saying, ". . . Views and Vagabonds is not so good as its predecessor; it lacks the atmosphere, the poignancy, and the almost uncanny charm, and it lapses into caricature."[5] The Outlook noted, "The book is in an extremely quiet way entertaining, but it does not leave a strong impression of purpose."[6]

While the reviewers of Views and Vagabonds had some reservations about the book, or perhaps felt some lack in the book, fewer of them blamed than praised the book. The New York Times averred that in this novel Miss Macaulay introduced us to a ". . . whole-souled and delightful world, and the views of its inhabitants are treated with a gentle irony and subtle humor not without charm."[7] The Spectator stated in its review that the novel was ". . . a curious, clever book in which the one simple and sincere nature, that of Louie, the mill hand, and the

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[5] Athenaeum, I (February 17, 1912), 188.

[6] Outlook, CI (May 18, 1912), 132.

[7] New York Times, XVII (April 14, 1912), 232.

indolent, irresponsible Crevequers show to the greatest advantage against a company of shrewd and amiable worldings, faddists, and social experiments."[8] The Saturday Review said that the manner of the book was charming, the plot interesting, and that the only fault of the novel was its burlesquing.[9]

The third of this group, published in the latter part of 1912, was Lee Shore. The plot concerns Peter Margerison, an aristocrat by birth and a vagabond by nature; Urquhart, whose admiration Peter wanted more than anything else in the world; Lucy, whom Peter loved; Lord Evelyn, uncle to Urquhart; Hilary, Peter's worthless half-brother; and Peggy, good-natured wife of Hilary. The background of these people is all bound together because Peter's mother, before she became the wife of Peter's father and had Peter, had been for a short time married to Urquhart's father. Urquhart was old enough at the time to remember her, but not very well. After Urquhart's father was killed, Sylvia Urquhart married a quiet minister who was to become the father of Peter, the hero of the novel.

The action starts with Peter and Urquhart in school, follows the young men through school, their careers, and their young adulthood. Peter, who was a friend of Lord Evelyn and his household because of

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[8] Spectator, CVIII (March 2, 1912), 354.

[9] Saturday Review, CXIII (April 20, 1912), 498.

their regard for his mother, discovers that his brother has fraudulently sold some objets d'art to Lord Evelyn, but through a sense of loyalty, says nothing. When Hilary is exposed, Lord Evelyn and Urquhart suppose Peter to be in on the fraud. Peter has to give up his job in disgrace. Rather than try to make a go of anything else, he takes his infant son (his wife has by this time deserted him) and wanders about Europe selling bits of embroidery.

Although Peter is unable to face the possibility of another failure and reduces himself and his son to the roving life of a gypsy, the Boston Transcript's reviewer said that Peter ". . . wins the supreme victory of living--the ability to laugh after losing everything," apparently unaware that one might have the ability to laugh even in the midst of resignation, not just in victory. The same review goes on to say that ". . . the novel is distinguished among novels of its class,"[10] but does not elucidate on what this class is. Another reviewer said that the novel was a study of renunciation by the people involved, and that the characters were really symbols, the situations only clearly marked steps in the hero's progress. The reviewer said further that the novel was ". . . written in admirable English, and will be appreciated by discriminating readers,"[11] appearing to imply that most of the novels

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[10] Boston Transcript (February 15, 1913), p. 6.

[11] New York Sun (February 8, 1913), p. 4.

of the season were written in poor English, and furthermore, those readers who did not appreciate the novel were not discriminating.

The passage from hopelessness to acceptance in this novel is shown by Peter's reaction to the events that happen to him. When Hilary (or his wife Peggy) try to operate a boarding house, Peter feels that he should live there and contribute what little he has to their support. After his wife leaves him, he says to Peggy that her leaving was his fault. Ignoring the fact that she had married him on the rebound and then run away with the only one she could care about, he said that he'd thought he was making her happy, but that he had failed. At this point in the novel, bathos drips. He tells his infant son to take his milk more slowly, or ". . . you'll choke and die, and then you'll be gone too. Everything I touch breaks; everything I try fails."[12] The finances of the group go from bad to worse, and Hilary and Peggy send begging letters to Lucy and Lord Evelyn for help, thereby embarrassing Peter terribly. He proudly rejects the help of the two, then takes Thomas, the child, and begins his rambles. At the end of the novel, as Peter walks through the countryside, he thinks:

> There is no grabbing here; a man may share the overflowing sun not with one, but with all. The down-at-the-heels, limping, broken army of Have-nots are not denied such beauty and peace as this, if they will but take it and

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[12] Rose Macaulay, The Lee Shore, p. 214.

> be glad. The lust to possess here finds no fulfillment; having nothing, yet possessing all these things, the empty-handed legions laugh along their way. The last, the gayest, the most hilarious laughter begins when, utterly destitute, the wrecked pick up colored shells upon the lee shore. For there are shells enough, and to spare for all; there is no grasping here.[13]

This theme of resigning oneself to the very worst and accepting life as a table full of crumbs recurs in many of Miss Macaulay's works. One must be "in" on her symbolism, however, or find oneself contemplating a group of demented souls wandering aimlessly along a sea shore, babbling and laughing over pretty shells.

When this novel was published, the opinion of most of the critics was that this was a book worth reading, or, having read it, wished a like fate for others. The review in the *American Library Association Booklist* noted that this was ". . . an exceptionally interesting study of a group of well-drawn characters, which, like the author's *Views and Vagabonds*, the reader will appreciate."[14] The *Spectator* stated in the same vein that ". . . it is delightful to read."[15] The *Boston Transcript* said that the book was full of charm, and that the charm lay

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[13] *Ibid.*, p. 307.

[14] *The American Library Association Booklist*, IX (March, 1913), 299.

[15] *Spectator*, CIX (October 26, 1912), 652.

in the delightful character work and its beauty of poetic description, although in the plot Miss Macaulay too obviously forced the incidents to give better exposition of her idea.[16]

On the other side of the issue, the Saturday Review stated that there were many other books of its class that were better, that the story was charming rather than good, and that it was sympathetic rather than provocative. Furthermore, according to this reviewer, the story was unfinished,[17] leaving the problems of the participants unsolved and not attempting to solve them.

Miss Macaulay's first three attempts were not as successful as some of her later novels in terms of sales and recognition, yet these novels have one thing to recommend them that none of her later attempts had. They are practically devoid of the invective present in all her subsequent novels. The theme of hopelessness and the fatalistic uselessness of fighting one's fate is present, but the gall and wormwood taste that would come to pervade the writings of Miss Macaulay is mercifully absent. It is as if she had already resigned herself to a life of unhappiness without any visible cause when she wrote her first novels, but showed in her later novels that the causeless suffering and emptiness of life as she saw it had begun to embitter her.

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[16] Boston Transcript (February 15, 1913), p. 6.

[17] Saturday Review, CXIV (November 16, 1912), 617.

The fact that all the early critics of Miss Macaulay found and mentioned all the faults and foibles that they would tear at and find Miss Macaulay guilty of throughout her career makes it astounding that they seemed on the surface to approve of her writings. Some of the things that they said were sly and subtle, and could be interpreted as being merely unenthusiastic, but few were outright insulting, as they would be in the latter part of her career. Surely those critics found, as did the later ones, that Miss Macaulay's writings were full of hopelessness and forever unsolved dilemmas.

Whatever the critics really felt about these novels can only be judged by their reviews, though, and their reviews were for the most part favorable. That they changed at a later date can possibly be attributable to a change in the public temperament that Miss Macaulay did not deem it necessary to follow. At any rate, since she had found a very profitable horse to ride, perhaps she merely thought it expedient to ignore the clamor of the critics as she made her regular trips to the bank.

CHAPTER III

POPULAR AND CRITICAL SUCCESS

Potterism, the novel that won Miss Macaulay her success, was published in 1920. Miss Macaulay called it a tragifarcical tract, and in her dedication said, "To the unsentimental precisians in thought, who have, on this confused, inaccurate, and emotional planet, no fit habitation." She devoted an entire sheet in the front of the novel to quotations from such authors as Francis Bacon and Samuel Johnson deploring loose talk, cant, false evaluations, and conventions.

The title of the novel was taken from a couple named Potter. Mr. Potter was a successful newspaper publisher who gave the sensationalists what they wanted. His wife published bad, squashy novels which sold quite profitably under the name Liela York. This pair stood for second-rate sentimentalism, cheap short-cuts, mediocrity, muddle, cant, self-interest, and worship of success. The term Potterism stood for these things in Miss Macaulay's novel.[1] Potterism was an appeal

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[1]Rose Macaulay, Potterism (London, 1920), p. 65.

to sentiment over the head of reason. Its base was fear, ignorance, vulgarity, mental laziness, sentimentality, and greed.[2]

The plot--or rather, what plot there is--concerns the Potters, their insipid daughter Clare, who symbolizes chiefly the intellectual defects of Potterism; their oldest son, Frank, who is a weak curate; Jane and John, the twins who are impelled by their education to rebel against Potterism, but use Potterite tools to do so; and Gideon, editor of a rival newspaper whose father is a Jew and who reverts to Judaism; plus other people who have very small parts. This is a novel of ideas rather than characterization or incident, with only two significant happenings. One is that Oliver, Jane's husband, falls down some stairs and is killed. Gideon, because of his being a Jew and the editor of a rival paper, is suspected of murdering Oliver. The second is that Gideon, who has gone off to Russia to help persecuted Jews, is killed by a mob.

This novel expresses better than any other of Miss Macaulay's works what her personal ideas, prejudices, and feelings were. In this novel she stated her ideal of what a novel writer should be when she described Liela York.

Miss Macaulay's own dedication to her art and her convictions that she was a prophet of "True Life" leaps out of the following

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[2] Ibid., p. 27.

succinctly worded passage containing her own aims and objectives as she saw them. She is in this passage satirizing the writing of Mrs. Potter, who actually stood for everything that Miss Macaulay despised. Yet the novels of Mrs. Potter were in reality everything that those of Miss Macaulay were, except that they were sticky-sweet rather than bilious and sardonic, as were those of Miss Macaulay.

It is safe to hazard a guess that in satirizing Mrs. Potter she was unintentionally satirizing herself. The passage in *Staying with Relations* concerning writers (Chapter I, p. 4) substantiates this premise. She said in that passage that since the philosophers had failed to set any standards for judging writing, success was as good a yardstick as any. The following passage must show how she saw her own writing:

> . . . Gently and surprisingly, she wrote of life and love as she believed these two things to be, and found a home in the hearts of many fellow-believers. She bored no one who read her, because she could be relied on to give them what they hoped to find--and of how few of us, alas, can this be said! And--she used to say it was because she was a mother--her books were safe for the youngest *jeune fille*, and in these days of loose morality and frank realism, how important this is.[3]

Further support for the theory that in the above passage she unknowingly satirized herself lies in the fact that she, too, wrote books "safe for the youngest *jeune fille*," although she wrote from the viewpoint of the maiden aunt, not mother.

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

And about herself as a novelist she has this to say,

> . . . I am almost too frank sometimes; I give offence, and hurt people's egotism and vanity by speaking out; but it is the way I have to write; I cannot soften down facts to please. Just as I cannot restrain my sense of the ridiculous, even though it may offend those who take themselves solemnly; I am afraid I am naughty about such people, and often give offence; it is one of the penalties attached to the gift of humor.[4]

She describes her feelings on "this sex business" in this novel, and what she says in her novels thereafter confirms these views.

> . . . but Jane knew that, though she was one up on Johnny as regards Oxford, owing to a slightly superior brain power, he was one up on her, as regards Life, owing to that awful business sex. Women were handicapped; they had to fight much harder to achieve equal results. People didn't give them jobs in the same way. Young men possessed the earth; young women had to wrest what they wanted out of it piecemeal. Johnny might end a cabinet minister, a notorious journalist, a Labor leader, anything. . . . Women's jobs were, as a rule, so dowdy and unimportant. Jane was bored to death with this sex business; it wasn't fair. But Jane was determined to live it down. She wouldn't be put off with second-rate jobs; she wouldn't be dowdy and unimportant, like her mother and the other fools; she would have the best that was going.[5]

Expressing her views on sex and marriage, Miss Macaulay includes a discussion between Jane and Gideon. Gideon starts the conversation:

> "Men usually have, as a rule, more sex feelings than women, that's all. Naturally. They need more, to carry them through all the business of making marriage proposals and keeping up homes, and so on. Women often have very

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[4] Potterism, pp. 107-108. [5] Ibid., p. 13.

little. That's why they're often better at friendship than men are. A woman can be a man's friend all their lives, but a man, in nine cases out of ten, will either get tired of it or want more. Women have a tremendous gift for friendship. Their friendships with other women are usually more devoted and more faithful than a man's with another man. Most men, though of course not all, want sex in their lives at some time or other. Some women are quite happy without it. They can be nearly sexless. Very few men are that."

Jane said, "There are plenty of women like Clare, whom one can't think of apart from sex. No friendship would ever satisfy her. If she isn't a wife and mother she'll be starved. She'll marry, of course."

"Yes," Gideon agreed. "There are plenty of women like that. And when a woman is like that, she's much more dependent on love and marriage than a man is, because she usually has fewer other things in her life. But there are also women like Katherine."

"Oh, Katherine. Katherine isn't even dependent on friendship. She only wants her work. Katherine isn't typical."[6]

The novel Potterism is Miss Macaulay's credo to the extent that every page is filled with her beliefs. One page sometimes contains her convictions on three or four subjects. For example, on one page she covers religion, the press, and "people." That she dealt in vast generalities did not seem to occur to her.

On religion she says, "Religion is like love; it plays the devil with clear thinking." Her views of the press on the same page are equally virulent. She says, "Nearly the whole press is the same, dealing in emotions and stunts, unable to face facts squarely, and in a calm spirit." Of people she has this to say: "The heart of the people

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[6] Ibid., pp. 216-217.

may usually be in the right place (though, personally I doubt this, for the heart of man is usually corrupt) but their head can, in most cases, be relied on to be in the wrong one."[7]

As in most Rose Macaulay novels, there is an indictment against the church.

> The Christian Church--sometimes one feels that it is a fantasy--the flaming ideal one has for it. One thinks it is a flaming fire, a sword, an army with banners bright marching against dragons; one doesn't see how such power can be withstood, be the dragons ever so strong. And then one looks around and sees it instead as a frail organization of the satisfied, the bourgeois, the conventionally genteel, a helpless organization of the ignorant, the half-witted, the stupid; an organization full to the brim of cant, humbug, timid orthodoxy, unreality, self-content, and all kinds of Potterism--and one doesn't see how it can overcome anything whatever.[8]

In the four decades that separated the publishing of Potterism, 1920, and The Towers of Trebizond, 1956, Miss Macaulay never changed these estimates except to make them more severe.

The critics' opinions of this novel range from raves of adulation through lukewarm acceptance to outright rejection and disapproval. The New Republic defines Potterism to mean a bromide, and then goes on to say that the novel seems to have suffered from a Potterish hurry for effect. "The novel is breathlessly up to date, and assumes that the readers have read all the papers and kept up."[9]

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[7]Ibid., pp. 62-63.

[8]Ibid., p. 199

[9]New Republic, XXIV (November 10, 1920), p. 280.

Another critic said that the whole book was correctly named a "tragi-farce," that the alternations between farce and tragedy are too extreme, and that the introduction of farce into the novel only produces confusion in tone. He goes on to say that the underlying pessimism of the novel admits the invulnerability of Potterism to ridicule and satire.[10]

On the other side of the scale, Miss Macaulay was called clever and witty by another critic who noted that she possessed also coolness, confidence, and determination.[11] Another said that she looked at her day and its state of mind much as Cervantes looked at his, and her result in fiction "in kind degree" is much the same, and far beyond anything of its kind by contemporaries.[12] Still another said that as a sophisticated picture of modern life, the book is exceedingly well done; as a solution to the problems mentioned in it, it is a failure, chiefly because the author had no answer in her philosophy.[13]

Whatever view of Potterism critics took, from the time of its publication until the death of Miss Macaulay in 1958, her books were

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[10] Spectator, CXXIV (June 19, 1920), 833.

[11] Athenaeum, VIII (June 4, 1920), 736.

[12] Boston Transcript (November 27, 1920), p. 1N.

[13] Catholic World, CXII (February, 1921), 694.

popular, and the advent of a new Macaulay novel was cause for popular acclaim from her own particular reading public. She gave them what they wanted. In spite of the fact that her novels were bilious and in spite of the adverse reviews from the critics who read discerningly, this public bought Miss Macaulay's novels.

CHAPTER IV

THE POSTWAR ERA

After publishing a popular novel, Rose Macaulay set out to enjoy the fruits of her popularity by publishing a novel a year for four years. None of these novels were of great impact. The first, Dangerous Ages, published in 1921, deals with three generations of women and the danger period in each woman's life. The main characters are an unwanted grand-mother with nothing to do, a mother with grown children who feels that her mind has lost its grip, and the grand-daughter, who has radical theories.

This novel was written too soon after Potterism and is generally judged to show too little thought and effort on the part of the author for it to have been an unqualified success. Even so, it found some few admirers among the critics of its day. The New York Times took the stand that the characters were of flesh and blood, and that they lived and breathed in the mind of the reader long after he had closed the page.[1] The London Times Literary Supplement encouraged further publication on her part by praising her "skillful characterizations," and her de-piction of the "tragic struggle with self that rages in every bosom,"[2]

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[1] New York Times (October 2, 1921), p. 12.

[2] London Times Literary Supplement (June 2, 1921), p. 352.

while the Outlook stated approvingly that the chapter "in which this disturbed family takes a course in group analysis is enough to make the most owlish devotee of Freudism laugh and grow sensible."[3]

Her not-so-ardent admirers' comments were less flattering. One said, "The people are a shade too brilliant to be real. They live in a world where there are no dishes to wash."[4] Another stated along the same line that she gave the "effect of being notably brilliant about nothing in particular."[5] Still another had this scathing comment to make: "It would be superfluous to ask Miss Macaulay for a well-built plot or centralized situation." However, the same critic qualified his remark slightly by adding this: "One is content to enjoy the give or take of her clever dialogue and indulgently satirical comment."[6]

Her half-enthusiastic, half-dampening reception daunted Miss Macaulay not a bit. With hardly a pause to draw breath, she published in 1922 the novel Mystery at Geneva. Called a "gentle satire" on the book jacket, this novel made hardly a ripple in the literary world. The Boston Transcript took scant notice of it, saying that it was an unsatisying

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[3]Outlook, CXXX (January 4, 1922), 33.

[4]Heywood Broun, Booklist, XVIII (November, 1921), 51.

[5]Wilson Follett, Literary Digest, LI (October 8, 1921), 67.

[6]Outlook, CXXX (January 4, 1922), 33.

story, ended farcically, and "never stirs us to any high degree of interest."[7] The New York Times also treated it contemptuously, saying however, that although Miss Macaulay was too reasonable and had too good a sense of humor to be a mystery writer, it still held the readers in suspense.[8] The most unkind review was in the New York Herald Tribune, stating that she was completely off her reservation in trying to write a mystery novel, and the loss to posterity "would have been inconsiderable had she never attempted it."[9]

Such an unkind reception might have upset a more sensitive writer, but Miss Macaulay continued unruffled. In 1923 she published Told By An Idiot. The theme is that life is a tale told by an idiot--a theory in which she might find many fellow-believers--and that there is nothing new under the sun; life is constantly repeating itself, and the younger generation is in constant revolt against the older. It is another social satire, this time on the Victorian age.

The reviewer for the Boston Transcript had this to say: "She is witty and she is wise, but she is profoundly hopeless . . . with that attitude that declares that it is not worthwhile to hope. Her scalpel

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[7] Boston Transcript (February 7, 1923), p. 4.

[8] New York Times (January 28, 1923), p. 22.

[9] New York Tribune (February 18, 1923), p. 23.

cuts very deeply, and it leaves the impression not merely of agnosticism but the conviction that there is nothing in which to believe. Here is a brilliant but dangerous creed."[10] R.M. Lovett, for Nation and Athenaeum, said of Miss Macaulay that she was "witty and clever in faint satirization of our fathers, ourselves, and our children . . . but do not, I implore you, be inveigled by Miss Macaulay into accepting her thesis."[11]

Raymond Mortimer for New Statesman was not at all complimentary.

> The book is full of stupid things that leaders, writers, deans, and similar responsible persons feel called upon to say, with appropriate interjections from Miss Macaulay. Never was there such remorseless flogging of dead horses, such fearless tilting at dead windmills . . . There is no subject on which she is not ready to have her say, and she finds the novel a commodious vehicle for her comments.[12]

There were those who approved her novel, although they were in the minority. One said that the novel was "conceived entirely in the vein of pure comedy" and that she had "absolute command of her equipment and command of her art."[13]

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[10]Boston Transcript (February 6, 1924), p. 6.

[11]R.M. Lovett, Nation and Athenaeum, XXXIV (December 8, 1923), 403.

[12]Raymond Mortimer, New Statesman, XXII (November 10, 1923), 146.

[13]International Book Review, LXXXI (April, 1924), 345.

Orphan Island, published in 1924, was the last of the series of novels published a year apart. It, like Told By An Idiot, was a social satire on the Victorian age; this time her novel satirized the social and moral values of the times. The plot of this novel concerns Miss Smith, a ship's doctor, and forty orphans who have been shipwrecked on an island, plus all the descendants of these people, and their would-be rescuers. In 1855, so the tale goes, Miss Charlotte Smith is escorting forty orphans from England to San Francisco. Miss Smith is unmarried, as is her Calvinistic Scottish maid. When they are shipwrecked off course and with little hope of rescue, Miss Smith and the ship's doctor go about the business of making themselves as comfortable as possible, and teaching the survivors culture and morals, as interpreted by themselves. Years and years later, a Cambridge don comes across the confession of his grandfather that he had deserted the group on the island, and, with the other sailors, had taken the ship's boat and provisions. The don and his family decide to make restitution by rescuing the group.

When they get to the island, they find Miss Smith the queen in an autocracy, with nearly two thousand people under her tyrannical rule. The aristocracy in the society come from her marriage to the doctor, but the descendants call themselves Smith. All of the faults present in Victorian England are present in this setting, but exaggerated and intensified. Miss Macaulay lets no chance go by to lampoon

any of her usual prey. She speaks out on everything. She renounces snobbery by such little passages as these:

> ". . . she wouldn't let the Reverend marry papa and mama. You see, mamma was Smith, and papa was very low born. Papa's work is to spear fish and to sell them. That is not Smith. So mamma mightn't marry him, so she and papa did without."

At one point she had this conversation take place between the Cambridge don and one of the sons of Miss Smith about the daughter of the don:

> "Parental surveillance went out long before the twentieth century came in. Rosamond chooses her own friends, as I choose mine."
>
> "Odd! Are you not afraid that she may get--er--undesirably entangled?"
>
> "Entangled, sir? I presume she is entangled. We all are. Life is entangled. Who is to help that?"[14]

On the silliness of customs she takes note of the fact that English milkmen are unable to pronounce "Milk," but utter "Miow" instead, even if they, like these orphans, have been cut off from England since infancy, and have never heard an English milkman in England.[15]

She puts in her bit about the unreasonableness of the younger generation by having one of the young people on the island describe

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[14]Rose Macaulay, Orphan Island (New York, 1925), p. 90.

[15]Ibid., p. 140.

the island as "cramped, narrow, old-fashioned; ruled by old people who haven't marched with the times."[16]

Miss Macaulay had the Smiths refer to Darwin as "an excellent person, who wrote admirable treatises on the lower forms of creation," but wonders what these people would have thought of him if The Origin of Species had been published at the time they left England.[17]

Her comment about love is that it causes more hurt than happiness.[18] She describes the people who attend the church services on the island as being like those in England. "They were stolid and Anglican, and did not appear to be listening much."[19] On the different sectarian interpretations of the Bible she says that Miss Smith's not having a Bible all these years allowed her convenient latitude in quoting the scriptures, proving a rich treasure house in formulation of counsels and strictures on the behavior of the orphans.[20]

A Rose Macaulay novel without the usual sarcastic jab at the lack of male respect for women would be a novelty indeed. In this novel she has one of the men say emphatically that fortunately women don't count on the island when they are considering anything as important as voting

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[16] Ibid., p. 144.

[17] Ibid., p. 151.

[18] Ibid., p. 157.

[19] Ibid., p. 162.

[20] Ibid., p. 163.

for legislation.[21] Legislation itself did not escape a scalping. She had a group of men who were discussing it talk about the absurdity of legislators' attempting to regulate the lives of people to the extent of telling them what they could drink, chew, or eat, or telling them whom they could marry.[22]

The reception of this novel by the critics was not as varied as that of some of her other novels. One critic said that it was a sociological document that would have made Thomas Carlyle laugh, and that it showed a large deposit of fact.[23] The Boston Transcript said that England was sweepingly satirized in Miss Macaulay's novel.[24] Yet most of the critics were uncomplimentary. One said that her novel was casual and formless because the author did not imagine the picture as a whole, because, after all, it was unimaginable, and that wit could do nothing against the primary failure of construction.[25] The New Statesman said that this was a study of arrested development; that her squeezing fun out of the situation was too elaborate, and that it was a

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[21] Ibid., p. 225.

[22] Ibid., p. 224.

[23] Literary Digest, LXXXIV (January 31, 1925), 3.

[24] Boston Transcript (February 14, 1925), p. 4.

[25] Nation and Athenaeum, XXXVI (December 13, 1924), 418.

shame to watch so much intelligence so trivially employed. This review went on to say, "I hope Miss Macaulay will not rest long at this stage of her development. This novel is a compromise with her problems, where the position can only be maintained by forcing liveliness until it degenerates into pertness."[26]

Nearly all of the criticisms were similar. One said that the invention of the theme was more remarkable for quantity than quality.[27] The Springfield Republican caustically said that this novel contained satire for its own sake--illuminatingly or capriciously superior, and that the novel was whimsically intellectual in its detachment and unconcern.[28] The London Times Literary Supplement said that she let her contempt for the culture of the Victorian age spoil an otherwise entertaining fable, and that her portrait of Miss Smith was bitter and unlovely.[29]

Orphan Island was the last of the one-a-year novels of Rose Macaulay. She waited two years before publishing Crewe Train, and

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[26] J. Franklin, New Statesman, XXIV (December 6, 1924), 269.

[27] Andrew Carey, "Where Is Fancy Bred?" Spectator, CXXXIII (November 22, 1924), 788.

[28] Springfield Republican (March 1, 1925), p. 7A.

[29] London Times Literary Supplement (November 27, 1924), 794.

her subsequent novels all have a deeper note of defeat, and the hope-
lessness of the characters caught in the web of her plots shows up more
clearly.

CHAPTER V

THE TURNING POINT : 1926

Crewe Train, written in 1926, received rather unkind treatment from the critics. This novel is another social satire, directed largely at conventionalism in getting engaged and married, motherhood and householding, and at conformity to accepted ideas in all areas of living. The main character, Denham, is a young girl who might be called either a savage or a product of neglect, depending upon the charity of the person describing her. Both names indicate her character, that of a young girl brought up in out-of-the-way places by a father who wishes to shun the world simply because he is unsociable.

The father, Mr. Dobie, is a clergyman who gives up his job because he is tired of it--tired "of being so sociable, so conversational, of attending parish meetings, of sitting on committees, calling on parishioners and asking them how they did--an inquiry the answer to which he was wholly indifferent"[1]--takes what money his lately-dead wife had left him, and his daughter to the island of Mallorca. Later he goes on to Andorra, in the eastern Pyrenees, when English tourists begin to infringe on his privacy. Once there, he takes a native for a wife, and

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[1]Rose Macaulay, Crewe Train (New York, 1926), p. 11.

both he and his new wife leave Denham largely to her own occupation, which is wandering around the country-side doing as she pleases--unschooled, untutored in manners, and uncaring as to the civilities of life. When Mr. Dobie dies, relatives of Denham's mother "rescue" her and take her to London to be "in the center" of things, although Denham is wholly indifferent to being rescued and almost rebellious against it.

In London, Denham's indifference does stiffen into rebellion on several occasions, although she tries to go along with her relatives. Invariably she says the wrong thing, does the wrong thing, and, furthermore, can see no reason for not doing as she does. Miss Macaulay gets off the best of her satire in Denham's reactions to what people are expected to do or not to do. For example, on one occasion, Denham's cousin, Humphrey, comes in to see the family on his arrival home from the Pyrenees after an extended visit with a young woman of Denham's former village. Since it is his habit to bring young ladies of his fancy home to London with him, the entire family has wondered what has been his conduct on this occasion, but Denham, when she comes in, asks outright: "Did you bring Paquita to London?" The entire family is thunderstruck, Humphrey is enraged, and Denham is embarrassed by the family's reaction to what had been to her a perfectly natural inquiry. After everyone enlightens her as to the proper behavior

of civilized people in these circumstances, Humphrey's mother says, ". . . as Denham _did_ ask Humphrey that, I wish he had answered her. Now we're no wiser than we were about it,"[2] showing hypocrisy in the face of her lecture on manners.

When Denham is told by the relatives of her father--who resemble him not in the least, in that they "chattered away, saw people, consumed meals in the houses of others, gave others to eat and drink in their house," contrary to the hopes and expectations of Denham--that there is a nice reading circle that she may join, she asks very matter-of-factly, "Why?" When she is answered, "So that people can all read a book together, meet, and talk about it," she asks: "What for?"[3]

This is a question that people think, not ask. Miss Macaulay describes the reception that Denham gets from her relatives. This would probably be the same reception anyone would get were he to ask this type of question about any number of boring activities people are forced by propriety to endure.

Another time, Denham wants to stay all night in a restored lighthouse that she has bought on the shore, but her city-bred, comfort-loving, and social-minded husband, Arnold, does not want to. When he tells her that he will worry about her, she thinks that it has been her experience that people are always being anxious about others for no cause,

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[2] _Ibid._, pp. 65, 66.

[3] _Ibid._, pp. 126-127.

and further protests. Denham thought, "It is such rot, doing things we don't like doing because someone else does them."[4] The author comments here that Denham completely disintegrates and shatters the stilted, conventional people around her by living this philosophy.

Miss Macaulay cannot leave religious questions alone. Denham is supposedly an Anglican, since her father had been a clergyman, but she agrees to become a Catholic, since that is the church of her fiance, Arnold Chapel. Her struggle to learn the doctrines and Catechism of the Catholic Church provides Miss Macaulay with infinite material for sarcasm. When Denham begins to look over the books that a priest has given her, she finds the entire business, which bores her, entirely too complicated, and, to her, a bit silly. The Catechism shoots at her a running fire of questions that to her seem absurd: "Who made you?" "Why did God make you?" There are many of the leading variety that appear even more extraordinary to her: "Is it a great evil to fall into mortal sin?" "Do those pray well who at their prayers think neither of God nor of what they pray?" She thinks that God could not have made everyone in his likeness, since there are so many varieties of people, and that the leading questions cannot have any answers that could be thought out beforehand. She wonders if Arnold believes all that stuff, or why one should bother about anything so embarrassing or dull. It

[4] Ibid., pp. 204-205.

would definitely be a waste of time to bother about anything she had already made up her mind to do, especially since it is so extraordinarily dull.[5]

The *Outlook* found this to be a novel of adjustment, but found also that it came very near the edge of farce. H. W. Boynton says that the central figure should have got more subtle treatment. As a child of nature, a free being, untidy, aimless, a little greedy, and idle, Denham is trapped by love into subjugation to convention. This critic went on to say that this is an ancient and inexhaustible theme, but that Miss Macaulay's treatment of it fails, chiefly because her characters are so roughly sketched. He found Evelyn Gresham, Dunham's aunt, in particular to be a bore and a caricature, and her method of interfering with Arnold and her own daughter preposterous. Arnold's tame acceptance of this interference he found cloying, and said that it destroyed any interest one might have had left in "that commonplace young man,"[6] Arnold Chapel.

Another critic said that Denham was not wholly convincing, that she seemed to have been invented solely for the purpose of sermonizing, and that she was too vividly contrasted with the vicious people among

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[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 122-125.

[6] H. W. Boynton, *Outlook*, CXLIV (October 13, 1926), 214.

whom she was thrown.[7] Yet another critic said that the book was bright, but brittle, with nothing to hold it together.[8] The reviewer for the New York Times said that the book was "rather disappointing. As a satire it was too limited to permit it to appeal save to a very bookish circle; as a novel, it fails to provide sufficient preparation in character and motive for the action that resolves the whole into its bitter coda."[9]

The author's habit of using characters as puppets or talking dolls was brought under fire by still another critic who said of Crewe Train that, "as a novel, it is scarcely to be judged at all. The story, professedly real, is fantastic in lack of plausibility, and its characters are mere facets of mental states which offer targets for the author's sallies."[10]

It appears that the critics were beginning to think that Miss Macaulay, after producing so many novels in such a short period of time, had begun to be written out. After sympathetically receiving The Lee Shore, Views and Vagabonds, and Potterism, her second, third, and fourth novels, the majority of the critics had not been congratulatory

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[7] International Book Review, LXXXVI (October, 1926), 714.

[8] New York Herald-Tribune (October 3, 1926), p. 6.

[9] F. P. Adams, New York Times (September 19, 1926), p. 9.

[10] Springfield Republican (September 26, 1926), p. 7F.

about her post-war novels. Crewe Train was different from its four immediate predecessors in that they were obviously meant to be entertaining only, but the novelist here reverted to the social satire of Potterism, perhaps because Potterism had been more successful with the critics. Crewe Train also picked up the hopeless "all is vanity" theme from Potterism and brought it up to date, and it was this theme that was to permeate all of the rest of the books she would write.

This novel was also a turning point in that, so far as she was able, Miss Macaulay had listened to the criticisms of her last four novels. Never would any of her novels be so completely panned again after this novel, but it was not until the publication of The World Is My Wilderness, another try at the same theme as Crewe Train, that she won back a majority of the critics and vindicated Denham.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEPRESSION YEARS

With the publication of Daisy and Daphne (published in England under the title Keeping Up Appearances) Rose Macaulay began a different period in her writing. From 1928 until 1940 she wrote six novels, and five of these six had a hopeless tone that fit the prevailing mood of the depression years.

The plot of Daisy and Daphne concerns a young woman with three identities: one is Daisy, an insecure, scared, cowardly, east-end young woman of thirty; one is Daphne, a brittle, witty, brave, charming, vivacious, west-end young lady of twenty-five; and one is Miss Wynne, journalist, novelist, writer for the ladies' page of a popular newspaper. She is completely psychopathic, because all the identities are aware of the existence of the others, and are often in operation simultaneously.

Daisy is completely dependent on Daphne, and has a job writing for newspapers under the pen name Miss Wynne. Daisy and Daphne both have a job as governess-secretary for Mr. and Mrs. Folyot, and Daisy is completely in love with Raymond Folyot, the son of her employers. Daisy and Daphne both get themselves into messes by lying and trying to keep certain parts of their lives divorced from others.

The deception is carried on through half the novel, and, when Daisy-Daphne is exposed in front of everyone, she loses Raymond. On board ship to America, she becomes Miss Wynne when some tourist makes flattering remarks.

The real action in the plot is the attempt of Daisy-Daphne to find her true identity, with a few physical actions included, such as Daphne's saving one of the Folyot children from drowning, and later Daisy's standing helplessly by watching the same children being attacked by a wild boar; the contretemps when Daisy is confronted by her mother and aunt in the home of Mrs. Folyot, who acts the complete snob; and the big farewell scene between Daisy and Raymond.

Mrs. Folyot is a woman revolutionist and prefers, over any family activity, discussing and assisting in planning revolutions and aiding fleeing dissenters.[1]

Miss Macaulay was seldom without a few supporters, and the critics were a little more sympathetic with this novel than they had been with any of her attempts since Potterism. One critic said, ". . . this novel leaves us in the saddest contemplation of the terrific inferiority complex, which, as psychology advances, is shown more and more to be the source of all our crazy and inexplicable posturings."[2] Another

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[1]Rose Macaulay, Daisy and Daphne (New York, 1928), p. 22.

[2]New York Herald-Tribune (April 1, 1928), p. 1.

said that Miss Macaulay joyously renews her attack on the follies of her day in this novel, and that her dexterity is unfailing, her impatience with fads, cranks, and poses is ". . . as brilliant as it is salutary."[3]

One critic was so complimentary as to say that the mother of Daisy-Daphne, Mrs. Arthur, was hardly whisked into the realm of caricature.[4] Most of the critics were patronizingly kind in an off-hand way, and often over trifles. For example, the Christian Century called the novel thin and trivial, yet the same review stated that the novel was cleverly told, and that the author could handle details with exceptional skill, even though she did not marshall them into the whole story.[5]

There were those who were not so lenient in their criticism, of course, and barely made any qualifying remarks. One critic called the novel a stunt novel, and complained that the writer deliberately misled the reader by writing of Daisy and Daphne as two separate identities, then calmly assumed that the reader had been aware of their unity all the time. He said that this was another satire of contemporary society, and that she used mechanism in this one that was a little run-down

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[3]R.A. Taylor, Spectator, CXL (March 24, 1928), 477.

[4]London Times Literary Supplement (March 29, 1928), p. 241.

[5]Christian Century, XLV (June 28, 1928), 828.

except for the stunt, and that only a few of the incidents came off properly.[6]

Another said that

> . . . this is not the first time that Miss Macaulay has made us wonder why anyone with extraordinary brains, great verbal skill, a keen eye for character, and a sharp ironic sympathy could be satisfied with pot boiling. She putters, scratches, wanders about--quickly tires of the continuous labor of creation--stops to toss off gay little footnotes about the life we live. Daisy and Daphne are products of the private book of rubber stamps.[7]

Concerning Miss Macaulay's habit of harping on the same themes, one critic said, "How I should enjoy Miss Macaulay's next novel if she should give her pet subject a rest. Popular journalism and loose phraseology may be irritating, but it is hardly worthwhile to let them become an obsession."[8]

This novel manifests the groping and hopelessness of all the subsequent novels of Miss Macaulay. She attempts to gloss over as farce or comedy insecurity and searching for beliefs in this and other novels by introducing comedy into the middle of serious discussions or happenings. The critics who approved of this novel ignored the deeper and

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[6]<u>Dial,</u> LXXXV (July, 1928), 72.

[7]<u>New Republic,</u> LIV (May 9, 1928), 358.

[8]<u>Nation and Athenaeum,</u> XLIII (April 7, 1928), 18.

darker implications of it and praised Miss Macaulay for amusing the reader in the midst of terrible times.

Two years after Daisy and Daphne, the Rose Macaulay assembly line produced Staying with Relations, the story of a young woman novelist who went to visit her aunt's family in Guatemala. This visit with a motley set of relatives in the edge of the steaming South American jungle has as its theme the fact that nothing is as it seems,[9] and that it is a great mistake to try to "type" everything and everybody. This novel is more a comedy than the other novels, falling into the general pattern of Miss Macaulay's novels of the depression years. It is a novel of action more than ideas, although, to be sure, Miss Macaulay plants her usual seeds lest the public forget that she is really an evangelist sent to preach repentance: she lashes against religion, for woman's rights, and at churches' laxity. This novel was a success with the public, and went into several printings.

One of the distinguishing facets of this novel was its passages describing the jungle in vivid detail, as the following excerpt illustrates:

> The forest was alive with puffings, plungings, scufflings, and excitements; monkeys cried, and the frogs, jaguars, and the whip-poor-wills; crickets chirped, armadillos rattled, peccaries crashed, while from the river came sounds of tapirs snouting among the rushes, and alligators that gnashed their teeth.

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[9] Booklist, XXVII (December 3, 1930), 625.

> Presently the path began to climb; it wound up the barranca's steep, forested flank, and the air cooled and lightened, as if into the green soup someone was pouring gently trickling ice water. Sometimes the forest opened a little, revealing a panorama of mountains and gorges, and sometimes they passed a clearing, patches of corn or coffee, and a few huts. Still they mounted, and the evening was sharp with the smell of pines; suddenly they rounded a bend, and the forest ran back to right and left like drawn curtains, discovering them on a rocky mountain side, with a range of violet peaks in front against a clear green sky, and at their feet the rose-flushed lake.[10]

Miss Macaulay felt free, as always, to toss in a little gem of an aphorism whenever the opportunity arose. Right in the middle of a descriptive passage such as the one above, she inserted this little observation: "Nature is very just, for she has made us all food. Not a creature but is to the palate of another creature. Even the skunk has his devotees. A world of edibles, a great round spinning table, at which we all are the diners and victuals."[11]

The old stalking horse, feminine rights, was present in this novel also:

> . . . He, being masculine, could assert himself more firmly on the world, approaching it with more confidence, seating himself in its saddle and seizing its reins with the triumphant control of the male rider whose steed it has always (if one comes to think about it) been. Feminine creatures too often appear to feel unseated, alien, and a little lost, as if they

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[10]Rose Macaulay, Staying with Relations (New York, 1930), p. 25.

[11]Ibid., p. 29.

> knew no way of coming to terms with a world too strong, swift, and overpowering for them.[12]

She must also have her usual dig at the church or priests. In this novel she depicts the parish priest in the jungle as a drunkard, stupid and dishonest. With such a character for a priest, she is able to get in many clever little thrusts. To be fair to both sexes, she even puts in a little aside satire on the wives of English clergymen. "Can't you just see her, coming here to call, with the parish magazine under her arm, and a revolting piece of hare or rabbit fur around her neck?"[13]

Of herself she said through Catherine, the novelist, "I do write about people, and about their characters. They interest me more than anything else."[14]

As a justifying theme for this novel, Miss Macaulay stated her thesis: "There are no types, and no groups. Only a haphazard crowd of eccentrics, each odder than the rest. We can't even classify or understand ourselves and our own reactions, let alone any one else's."[15]

More critics approved of this novel than approved of her post-war fiction, but it was not so well liked as Daisy and Daphne. Of the justifying theme, one critic said, ". . . of course, this is not the stuff of which great novels are made. Its pattern becomes a little tiresome.

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[12] Ibid., p. 42.

[13] Ibid., p. 44.

[14] Ibid., p. 176.

[15] Ibid., p. 344.

It would be unbearable if Miss Macaulay were not present at her autopsies to convulse her audience with her comments." Of her personal philosophy the same critic said:

> She is a wit, she will have her laugh or smile, but underneath her jesting lies a profound pessimism. Her characters dismiss restrictions of time and space, family obligations, demands on friendship with a laugh or a shrug because they believe these things have no permanent influence on human spirit, which will go its own stupid, or idle way, according to some caprice imposed within or without.[16]

Of the novel, another reviewer said that it was a novel for novelists, more a criticism of life as it is written about than as it is lived, but that novelists of inferior skill or ability would have found the task of writing the book impossible.[17]

Of her characterizations, one critic said that they were superficial and that the entire value of the novel lay in the vivid descriptions of the jungle,[18] and another said that none of the characters carried any conviction, and that there was too much sense of effort and strain throughout the story.[19]

While some reviewers lauded the wit in Staying with Relations, another took exception to that very element, saying that the characters

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[16] Nation, CXXXI (December 3, 1930), 625.

[17] New York Times (November 9, 1930), p. 6.

[18] Saturday Review, CL (September 27, 1930), 375.

[19] London Times Literary Supplement (September 25, 1930), p. 754.

in her novel declaim that this is a world without order, meaning, or sense, so they laugh at it and invite the reader to laugh with them; and they imply that although the world is stupid, while the laughter lasts, it does not matter.[20] This attitude is carried over from her post-war novels that had the frivolity of the flapper era, but even though Miss Macaulay professes her intention of amusing the public, her underlying pessimism denies her that goal. Her attitudes fit perfectly into the depression years, and it is surprising that more critics did not see through her thin veneer of wit.

Of all her novels, They Were Defeated (1932), published in England under the title The Shadow Flies, caused the greatest amount of comment among the critics. A historical novel, it was set in the seventeenth century and centered around the great men in English literature of that period. The plot, or what plot there was, concerns the family of Conybeares--the doctor, his son, and his daughter--Robert Herrick, John Cleveland, Crowley, Milton, Crashaw, Sir Kenelm Digby, Sir John Suckling, and a motley crowd of less important characters. The action revolves around the Conybeares and their friend Herrick and their trip to Cambridge.

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[20] Nation, CXXXI (December 3, 1930), 625.

Doctor Conybeare has a son at Cambridge. When he starts some unpleasant talk by keeping the villagers from burning a witch, he takes his daughter Julian, invites his friend Herrick and the daughter of the local landed gentry, and goes to Cambridge to see his son. Robert Herrick wants to see about getting some poetry of his published, but the others just go for the trip and study.

When they get to Cambridge, they are thrown in with the literary crowd, and enthusiastically enter into the debates and controversy. Julian enjoys the study much more than her brother Kit. She becomes the student of her brother's tutor, John Cleveland, at the request of the tutor. Cleveland teaches Julian the art of love, and derides Julian's scholarly attempts. Julian is tragically killed in a brawl that her brother and Cleveland have when Kit finds that Cleveland has trifled with Julian's affections. Robert is denuded of his parish by the Presbyterians, and in his last pathetic sermon, delivers the Evening Service from the Book of Common Prayer to a handful of people.

Even in a book so fraught with historical events, political upheaval, and literary bits, Miss Macaulay found time to include and expound on some of her favorite themes. The injustices toward women never escaped getting into a novel of hers, and in this one she found a marvelous vehicle for showing that men always get the best of things. She has Julian tell her brother that men and women are both human creatures,

and that God made both, regardless of the prevailing attitude of men. Later in the same conversation, she said, "Well, 'tis ill fortune to be a woman and despised."[21] Another time Miss Macaulay puts similar sentiments into the mouth of a man, just to show that some men were astute enough to recognize the capabilities of women: "I ever maintain that women have parts such as men have, if not so robust and well formed, and should be instructed young, as have many of our learned ladies been, both else and presently, but the generality of maidens, not."[22] If the heavy period language can be pared away, the Macaulay theme is there proclaiming women the equal of men.

One note that might have tended to the autobiographical is this: "I don't intend to marry and breed, and mind a man's house and children, godamercy."[23] This passage sounds bellicose, yet in other novels, such as Daisy and Daphne and especially The Towers of Trebizond, the tone of Miss Macaulay's heroines toward matrimony is wistful.

The opinion of the critics was almost evenly divided on the subject of whether or not Miss Macaulay's historical novel was a worthy effort. Christopher Morley, for the Saturday Review of Literature, practically went into raptures over the novel. He said:

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[21] Rose Macaulay, They Were Defeated (London, 1932), p. 279.

[22] Ibid., p. 270. [23] Ibid., p. 280.

> This long and rather special book is reserved for those to whom it will give exquisite pleasure . . . Her brilliant versatility, which has ranged from social satires to detective stories to fantasies and studies of religious poetry, has never been more finely shown than here. She undertook the almost impossible task of introducing such real figures as Milton, Crowley, Crashaw, John Cleveland, Sir Kenelm Digby, and John Suckling and making them move and talk in vivid reality. Such savory dialogue could have come only from one who is a skilled novelist and diligent student of seventeenth century history and literature. To the hurried or uninstructed reader, some of the conversations, particularly those dealing with religion and the political controversy at Cambridge, will seem overlong, but I venture to say the Sucklings and Clevelands themselves would recognize its flavor. She uses only words, phrases and idioms that were demonstrably used at the time in which they lived. Many a student has been doctored for a thesis with far less loving ken and understanding of that period.
>
> This book will give great joy to its own kind of reader.[24]

It is always interesting to note that a critic will couch his opinion in such terminology as to imply that the reader who does not agree with it is not special, or intelligent, or discriminating, or whatever he fancies himself to be, whether he is or not.

To further support the argument that the novel was worthy, the reviewer in the Boston Transcript said:

> Her real feat is the way she uses language of the seventeenth century, introducing so many words now obsolete and so many words which have in the course of three centuries acquired a very different flavor and meaning. Her dialogue has a racy individuality which is refreshingly different.[25]

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[24] Christopher Morley, Saturday Review of Literature, IX (October 29, 1932), 205.

[25] Boston Transcript (November 9, 1932), p. 2.

Further support for the novel and its author appeared in the New York Evening Post.

> Everybody grants that Herrick, Suckling, or Crowley must have been superb company. But to create and put into their mouths conversation that proves why they were such good company, why they were so lovable, affected, vain or simple--that, brethren, is a noble endeavor. And that is why Miss Macaulay's achievement in this book is so much to be envied.[26]

One of the other camp was vehement in his claim that Miss Macaulay had accomplished a "tour de force" because of her grouping of the characters and her use of archaic language.

> Rose Macaulay, who wrote with such delightful irony in contemporary English, has chosen to masquerade here as the author of the seventeenth century novel. Masquerading is more than the mere matter of costume. Rose Macaulay uses quick twentieth century tempo in the living and dialogue. The masquerading is the more irritating for the reason that, without it, Miss Macaulay might have produced something new and satisfactory in the historical novel. She was more interested in the controversies of the period than in the people who made them. There were long stretches of argument possibly arid to many readers between the incidents which hold the plot together. Though shaky, the plot framework itself is delicately beautiful.
>
> To find ghosts too persistently claiming their bodies is exasperating to the careful reader. When the reader finds that he must also face a swarm of "pretty boys," "by my faith, young mistress," "plaguey bad times," and other now colorless or misleading phrases, the effect is destructive to enjoyment.[27]

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[26] New York Evening Post (October 22, 1932), p. 7.

[27] Bookman, LXXV (December, 1932), 872.

A number of critics apparently felt that the book had some merit, but were uncertain as to exactly what it was, and were disappointed that the novel did not fulfill their anticipations. They found parts of it interesting, parts of it irritating. Said the Atlantic Bookshelf:

> It is a book to fascinate the bookish, because the author has steeped herself in the atmosphere of this period. I wish she had been a little less conscientious in her effort to imitate the speech of the time, because, although I cannot prove that people never spoke as hers did, I have a feeling that they did not. But it is ungrateful to pass strictures on a book so full of humor, picturesqueness, and instruction.[28]

The London Times Literary Supplement found that the novel was artificial in that the great men in it are so closely grouped. This review stated that memoirs of any era show that the public figures of any era rarely meet, except for small groups.[29]

After this one attempt at the historical novel, Miss Macaulay reverted to the farcical comedy again, though still maintaining the underlying defeatism that permeated They Were Defeated and all her other novels of this period. Her writing ran in cycles throughout her career, with the more serious novels spaced at intervals of every three or four books. After this serious attempt it was time again for the light touch.

The setting of Going Abroad, 1934, is a small summer resort hotel on the Spanish Basque coast. The main characters are a

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[28] Atlantic Bookshelf, CLXXIV (November, 1932), 648.

[29] London Times Literary Supplement (October 20, 1932), p. 756.

hodgepodge group. There is an English bishop, Mr. Aubrey, who spends all his time studying ancient heresies in primitive tribes. His wife spends all her time either worrying about where the Garden of Eden was located and about what plants grew in it or trying to learn the Basque language. Her attempts at the language give Miss Macaulay ample opportunity for burlesque. Mrs. Aubrey's brother is a retired ambassador who worries about nothing. Monsieur and Madame Josef own and operate a chain of quack beauty parlors. They are the mechanism used by Miss Macaulay to chastise those who make money by preying on the weaknesses of women. The nice English Buckleys are there with their sophisticated son and feather-headed daughter. There is a group of zealous young people from Oxford who go about trying to "change" people. They are used at length by Miss Macaulay for satire on religion, religious groups, and zealots. There is also Mrs. Dixon who has been injured by the Josefs and their beauty treatments. In addition to this long list of characters, there are various Basques.

With a cast as large as this, it is surprising that anything happens other than conversation, but in spite of huge quantities of that, action is supplied by Basque brigands, who capture the entire party as it motors through the mountains on a sight-seeing trip.

In this satirical novel, the faults of young people, old people, and middle-aged people are all given a good going over. Prejudices

are stalked, pounced upon, and thoroughly drubbed. Religion is spoofed, with elderly missionaries, "groupers" (college missionary groups), and priests alike all given a hiding. Beauty parlors and the people who patronize them are criticized. In fact, so many things are panned in book that it seems likely that Miss Macaulay has been carrying her note-book under her arm, taking notes on things to be included, like the elderly missionary she satirized in this novel.

In her dedication, Miss Macaulay mentions that this novel is to be one of "unredeemed levity." Several of her reviewers took exception to this, some rather violently. The London Times Literary Supplement said that by her own admission she set out to write a novel of "unre-deemed levity," and that the result is so light and unsubstantial as to be facetious.[30] George Stevens for Saturday Review of Literature followed the same vein. He mentioned her avowal to write a frivolous novel. He said that the license she took with the characters and their causes in her novel was more frivolous than witty, and in that sense, she had brought off a frivolous novel to perfection. However, he did add in a kinder vein that her characters might be someone we have met before, and that she invented an ingenious plot.[31]

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[30] London Times Literary Supplement (July 5, 1934), p. 474.

[31] George Stevens, Saturday Review of Literature, XI (August 25, 1934), 69.

One other critic mentioned her "unredeemed levity," and said that unredeemed levity, carried on too long, does not remain effective, and that this novel needed a little tartness or serious relief. He sarcastically added, moreover, that no doubt Miss Macaulay had a certain public to whom she purveyed the kind of novel that they expected, and that there was no doubt that this was a good novel "of its kind."[32]

Out of the activities of the people in her novel, Miss Macaulay does make some excellent jokes. Throughout the novel, she has Mrs. Aubrey, wife of the missionary, listen in shamelessly to any conversation carried on near her in Basque, with the excuse that she is trying to improve her own use of the language. Mrs. Aubrey tries to translate what she hears for the benefit of her companions, usually her husband or brother. Amusingly, she is always completely off track. At one point, when she had given a long translation to her brother on the conversation of some Basques talking in a cafe, the following conversation took place between her and her brother and husband:

> "Dear me, do you really get all that?" Sir Arthur asked.
> "Well, I think so," she cautiously replied. "Of course it is difficult. They speak so rapidly, and run their words together."
> "Like all foreigners. Extraordinary, how they like to mystify us."
> "And all those running, trilling r's . . . Still, one does get a little here and there. It has a definite resemblance to

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[32]Spectator, CLIII (July 6, 1934), 26.

some of the Iraqui dialects, don't you think so, Dick?"
"I'm afraid I don't know any of it, dear, so I can't say."
"They're all much alike, these languages one doesn't understand," Sir Arthur decided.[33]

At another point, Miss Macaulay has the same Mrs. Aubrey worrying about what kind of fruit tree the Tree of Knowledge was. In an Alice-in-Wonderland ramble, she mentions several theories, including breadfruit, pomegranate, banana, and coco-nut. She finds it difficult to see how it could have been a coco-nut into which Eve bit, however. "Though, no doubt, our ancestor's teeth were very different from ours."[34]

Miss Macaulay dealt scathingly with everyone connected with the church or religion. On the subject of the "bouncing missionaries of moral reform," designated as "Groupers" by Miss Macaulay, one critic said that Miss Macaulay in her best form exhibited perfect charity toward them, and that nothing could be more devastating.[35] She certainly deals with them and at too great length for the reader's comfort. After several pages of proselytizing on the part of the group leader, all of it so trite as to make the reader want to skip over it, she describes the group leader's feelings :

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[33]Rose Macaulay, Going Abroad (London, 1934), p. 23.

[34]Ibid., p. 8.

[35]New York Herald-Tribune (August 26, 1934), p. 9.

> So, with eloquence and practiced competence, with warm and eager persuasion, bold, because certain of his cause and faith, ardent not merely because she was beautiful, but because she was a soul in need, Edward Baines spoke to Hero Buckley, through the golden afternoon hour, of Plan, of Purpose, of Sublimation, of Divine Guidance, of Surrender, of tears swallowed up in joy, of courage to Face up to Circumstances and Prevail; in brief, of the Changed Life.[36]

The author makes fun of the "Groupers" for trying to "Change" people. She always puts "Change" in capital letters with heavy-handed sarcasm. Even when everyone is kidnapped, the Groupers stay gay and cheerful, and look forward to the opportunities for "Changing" people.

> "It's going to cost them something, this house-party," Ted Baines smilingly commented. A seizer of opportunities, he had already decided, with his colleagues, that this was to be a house-party indeed. This, beyond a doubt, was why they were here. Lives should be Changed, surrenders made, sins shared, reckless young brigands transformed into Group Members, aiming at absolute honesty, unselfishness, purity and love. Their prisoners, too: Hugh Denzil, Mrs. Aubrey, Mrs. Dixon, the very Buckleys, might be Changed. Trouble and danger often proved profitable ground for the sowing of the good seed. What a house-party! And what a story it would make, at witness meetings. The four members of the team felt that it was good for them to be there.[37]

Of religious meetings Miss Macaulay had this to say through the medium of Mrs. Aubrey:

> "I suppose [we have passed a good religious evening]. But most of us came out of it rather embarrassed. I am ashamed of my husband, who so forgot himself at the end as to exhaust us with a missionary discourse. The Buckleys are ashamed of their daughter. Their daughter is no doubt

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[36] Macaulay, Going Abroad, pp. 83-84.

[37] Ibid., pp. 182-183.

> by now ashamed of herself. The management is probably ashamed of having to read the riot act to us. I dare say, however, that most of the speakers are too hardened to feel embarrassed at the recollection of the peculiar things they said."[38]

Priests, Anglicans, and sectism came in for blasts, too. The only priest in the novel is an ignorant Basque with whom no one in the party can converse because he speaks only Basque, in spite of the fact that he thinks that he speaks Castilian Spanish and Latin. When he attempts to speak Castilian, he unknowingly slips into Basque, and the only Latin he knows is the Latin with which he conducts the services. Whenever someone tries to converse with him in the Latin phrases from the services, he thinks he is supposed to repeat the entire service in Latin, and he does. Needless to say, this does not get anyone very far in communicating. Not content with that, Miss Macaulay has him, like a priest in _And No Man's Wit_, eating onions and garlic, with a little aside to the effect that all Spanish priests seem to have just finished eating either onions or garlic.[39]

There is a long passage satirizing the Anglican Church:

> ". . . I must say," said Mrs. Aubrey, "I enjoy Anglicanism. Particularly the Anglicanism of our universities. It has such a scholarly touch. I find it easy and natural to study under, so to speak. It's a very difficult thing to transport to other lands, such as Xanadu. Tradition and heritage, no doubt. Christianity, yes; Christianity being oriental in origin and

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[38] _Ibid._, p. 131

[39] _Ibid._, pp. 216-221.

> Greek and Roman and African in development, can be sown in any part of the world and come up somehow; some kind of peculiar flower suitable to the soil will sprout from the seed, usually--in fact, invariably--most remarkably unlike whatever can have been intended, but still a sprout. But the Anglican sprout is hard to transport into hot and sandy deserts and the strange souls of Arabian men. To flourish properly, it needs Gothic churches and cathedrals, and college chapels, and antick pillars, massy roofs, and storied windows richly dight, casting a dim religious light, and the pealing organ blowing to the full-voiced quire below, and the service high and the anthems clear, and all that. Dear Milton; how much he enjoyed it all. But when I am in the Garden of Eden, I become, as he did, a lapsed Anglican and want no services at all."[40]

The conversation above is typical of whole pages of the novel, and it was this sort of passage that prompted one reviewer to say that the bore was the legitimate prey of the sarcastic writer, as of the serious one, but that the reader should not have to squirm with the fictitious victim or be tempted to glance over pages to see where the conversation ended. He went on to say that the novel was weighed down by the characters who were far too life-like in their tendency to talk on their pet topics, so that the book, intended to be light and airy, flops like a kite that refuses to take wind. "Is it," he asked, "that the kite is ill made, or is the person at the end of the string incompetent?"[41]

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[40] Macaulay, Going Abroad, pp. 312-313.

[41] E.B.C. Jones, New Statesman and Nation, VIII (July 14, 1934), 52.

One critic said that the trouble with the novel was that three Macaulays collaborated: the author of Staying with Relations, which is superficially of the same "genre," the brilliant author of Tale Told By An Idiot and Potterism, and the wise and pitiful person who wrote the life of Herrick in They Were Defeated. This was not, he said, a happy combination.[42]

Not contented with invective hurled at people and churches, Miss Macaulay turned on a vocation, with pages and pages devoted to the exposure of fraudulently operated beauty parlors. She takes in every facet of their trade--treatments, columns in newspapers, and false advertising. With Mrs. Dixon as the ruined and injured person in nearly every chapter of the novel, Miss Macaulay never lets their fraudulent activities out of the reader's sight.

One profession sure not to be spared, when professions were being discussed by Miss Macaulay, was that of the reviewer. Even though her usual pose was unconcern at the reviews she got, Miss Macaulay occasionally seemed unable to resist striking back. In this novel, contrary to her usual practice, she uses a male author to utter her contempt:

> I got some press notices this morning about my innocent, industrious little work on Dante, a poet I have always esteemed beyond measure and studied with pedantic and

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[42] New York Herald-Tribune (August 26, 1934), p. 9.

> devoted care. And what am I told by a solemn gentleman who hasn't, I feel sure, done more than read the Inferno and Paradiso in translation?--That I sneer at a great poet, that my book is a frenzied hymn of hate, that my quips shock and disgrace me.[43]

Despite her professed avowal of writing a book of "unredeemed levity," there is much included in this novel that apparently was not funny to the late Miss Macaulay.

The next novel written by Rose Macaulay came out in 1937. This was another in the comic vein, but Miss Macaulay did not make the mistake of mentioning the fact in her dedication. While this novel is another satire with still more caricatures, the out-right bitterness that flowed from every line of Going Abroad is not so prevalent in this novel, I Would Be Private. The plot concerns an English policeman and his wife Win, who unexpectedly presents him with quintuplets instead of the twins for whom they had prepared. There are several minor characters and relatives whose lives touch those of the quintuplets and their parents, but none of them are of much importance. When newsmen and curiosity-seekers invade the privacy of the family, they go to an island in the Caribbean. Of course, their attempt to escape notoriety is abortive.

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[43]Macaulay, Going Abroad, p. 140.

The only moral to the novel, according to the New York Times, is that people cannot avoid their destiny.[44] The characterizations of the people in this novel are entirely too superficial for these personages to arouse a sustaining interest in themselves, or their doings, one reviewer judged, although, he added, all of them have sparks of humorous interest, and the comedy of the novel is carried by their conversations.[45]

The birth of and the popular interest in the Dionne quintuplets were the only facts taken from the lives of Dr. Dafoe's charges, but because their birth preceded Miss Macaulay's novel, it seems apparent that she took her idea from them. One critic said that they offered a happy opportunity for a writer possessed, like Miss Macaulay, with a keen eye for situation and an ironic sense of appreciation for oddities of human behavior. Unfortunately, in his view, she muffed a chance to make a more than mildly pleasant book of her parody of the excitement surrounding the birth of the quintuplets. This same critic said that she wrote in a hilarious mood, but, true to her old fault, "lays about her valiantly belaboring the sensation-mongering public and its persistence

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[44] New York Times (March 28, 1937), p. 6.

[45] Springfield Republican (March 28, 1937), p. 7E.

in getting its wants, pseudo-literary aspirations, and a dozen and one foibles and fancies."[46]

If the author had found it possible to write burlesque or comedy without feeling it her purpose in life to expose all human failings to the bright light of day, her novels might have escaped the scalpel of the reviewers. The reviewer quoted above said of this novel that it made sufficiently diverting reading and was good enough fun for a while, but that it was entirely undistinguished, and that its satire, despite the fact that the blade was often keen, was too obvious to make it a novel of any consequence.[47]

Peter Burra, writing for the Spectator, said of the author's habit of lampooning everything and everybody that she "goes about her murderous business in wide-eyed, insatiable amazement at the progressive folly of human beings. 'So this is the latest,' and the latest must be quickly bumped off in a book. Experience has taught the authoress that there will be another carload waiting to be taken for a ride before the ink has dried on this."[48]

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[46] Saturday Review of Literature, XV (April 3, 1937), 40.

[47] Ibid., p. 40.

[48] Peter Burra, Spectator, CLVIII (February 19, 1937), 328.

Some critics were not troubled by Rose Macaulay's satire, which was often cruel. One such critic said that the novel was "mad and improbable, and one of the gayest and most entertaining of recent books,"[49] while another said that, while it was not a masterpiece, it was "fast, zany, inventive, and pure and unbridled farce."[50]

The action is fast. It starts with the resignation of the father from the force because a politician has escaped justice. Miss Macaulay suspends action here long enough to get in several thrusts at crooked courts, police systems, and politicians. This is followed by the flight of the entourage to the Caribbean. This in turn is followed by more island hopping by the parents in an attempt to avoid the public. Interspersed throughout the last three-fourths of the book are shorter jaunts by some Cambridge students who are attempting to evade a vicar's daughter, who is boy-crazy and dimwitted. The conversation is for the most part entertaining, and is much less sermonizing and less rambling than that in her novel published just prior to it, Going Abroad.

An example of the farcical spirit of this novel is a conversation between Ronald, the father, and his mother-in-law at the time of the birth of the quintuplets:

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[49] Boston Transcript (May 22, 1937), p. 5.

[50] New York Times (March 28, 1937), p. 6.

> "Another little boy! Win's got quins! Can you beat it? Oh my my my. Did anyone ever hear of the likes of it?"
>
> "Here. How do they stop it? Someone's got to. I must speak to that doctor. If I can't go in, he must come out. We can't go on this way all night!"[51]

Miss Macaulay's having the characters of the novel refer to the babies as "quins" every time they're mentioned is aggravating, and reminiscent of a school child's avoidance of a word he cannot spell.

Her representation of the conversation among the grandmother, the nurse, and the babies is clumsily cute.

> "Tra le la," the nurse said, and stuck her finger into the baby's mouth. "Suck a suck, then. Sucky suck a suck."
>
> "Cheepy cheep," Mrs. Grig observed. "Five icle dicky-birds all in a row. Was they, then, was they, yum, yum, yum."[52]

Granting that the conversations adults hold with infants are sometimes less than witty and sometimes approach the ridiculous, this twaddle is moronic and sickening. It is typical of the author's approach to the babies throughout the novel, making it fairly obvious that she herself had small experience and dealings with children. Whenever she did discuss children or family life in this novel, she seemed, as in all her other novels, an observer of family life, not a partaker. She spoke with detachment, leaving children and families in the realm of picture post-cards.

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[51]Rose Macaulay, I Would Be Private (New York, 1937), pp. 11-12.

[52]Ibid., p. 15.

Another example of the forced dialogue in this novel is a speech by Win's mother about the guide: "We musn't be too sharp on him. He acts accordin' to what he is, and that's what we all has to do. Human nature. That's what's the matter with all in this life."[53]

In spite of the fact that her claws are to a certain extent sheathed in this novel, Miss Macaulay does not entirely miss the opportunity to take digs at people, things, and institutions. She strikes a blow at newshounds by showing what she thinks they do to obtain their stories. When Ronald McBrown refuses to give them an interview, they quote him as saying all sorts of improbable things, anyway. These quotations range all the way from "I am the proudest officer in the force tonight," to "I do not know whether we shall be able to Do It Again or not."[54]

Miss Macaulay's habitual use of invective against any and all professions is apparent in this passage on the doctor who attended Win, and directed at all physicians: "Grumbling, the doctor went off, to pass on the mild influenza he had to another patient, who took it badly and died."[55] Beauty parlors came up in the lottery of condemnation again. Gert, Win's sister, says, "There's two things I might do with my money, see the world, or start a beauty parlor with it, and make a thousand or two more off mugs, before seeing life. I know a girl that

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[53] Ibid., p. 152.

[54] Ibid., pp. 26, 40.

[55] Ibid., p. 32.

writes Beauty Hints for the Girl's Corner in the newspaper, and she can make them buy anything, she says."[56]

Practically anything was fair game to Miss Macaulay, and any occasion a reason for a satire on whatever was handy. Right in the middle of telling of an automobile accident, she found another opportunity to get back at people and accident witnesses. She had this to say:

> Charles felt that in giving his name he was acting unselfishly, like a good citizen, and, for once, he was on the side of the law. Witness in a car accident case! How ridiculous; as if car accident cases could not get on perfectly well without his interference. The thing was that he rather liked the policeman, who had dealt so efficiently with the Oxford hearties that he must be right. Besides which, he had recognized the politician, who must, even more certainly, be wrong.[57]

Miss Macaulay says by implication here that people believe what they want to believe, and that the witnesses at an automobile accident usually believe what they are told to believe, since everything happens too quickly for them to really know exactly what did happen.

She makes fun of travel books, even though she herself has written such books, by having the adventurers in a novel within her novel satirized by falling into all sorts of misfortune, notwithstanding the fact that the characters in her book Staying with Relations have the very same type of experiences.[58]

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[56]Macaulay, I Would Be Private, p. 41.

[57]Ibid., p. 57.

[58]Ibid., pp. 61-64.

Groupers come in for heavy sarcasm again, when Gert, Win's sister, storms about the Quiet Time that the Groupers have, saying that there is all eternity in which to be quiet.[59] Miss Macaulay does a rather effective take-off on silly young girls and the reaction of young men to their silliness--in spite of the fact that her silly young girl is decidedly of slight intelligence. In one of her pursuits of the Cambridge men, when one rather thoroughly snubs her, she puts on an aggrieved air, cries, coughs, and then says,

> "It's not thought that I shall live very long."
> "Oh," said John, "I'm sorry."
> It occurred to him that, unless she left him immediately, those who so thought would be proved true prophets. Rage shook him. To be cried at, sighed at, shraked at, and now to be died at, all at the same time one was trying to get some small fragment of life's great putrefactions down in paint.[60]

Politics, tourists, with many other things, came into contact with her jibes, and there are places in which she simply fills pages with tourism. The reviewers found many things to criticize, even though some found that the novel was, in the main, diverting, comic, and light-hearted.

The last of the group of depression period novels, And No Man's Wit, was written in 1940. The setting was Spain. The time was June to September, 1939. The plot concerns an English woman doctor and

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[59] Ibid., p. 93.

[60] Ibid., p. 93.

two of her children. They are searching for her other son, Guy, who has disappeared in Spain while fighting with the International Brigade. The son with her is a Leftist, bored with politics. Her daughter, who reads and writes a great many novels, is even more bored with politics. Ellen, the fiancee of the disappeared Guy, is bored with everything except the sea. Their driver, who fought with Guy in Spain, is bored with everything except driving.

The good doctor is definitely not bored with politics, it would seem. She (or Rose Macaulay through her) bores everyone else, including the reader, with politics. The talk is sometimes good, sometimes boring, but the characters are, as usual, wooden, and in the words of one critic, ". . . it is of small recompense to the readers that the wood comes from the planks of political parties."[61] The novel is for the most part an argument against Fascism and Marxism, and for democracy. Pages and pages are devoted to doctrines and arguments. Most of the conversation is made up of political arguments, even when the persons arguing know absolutely nothing about the subject and are just spouting trite and inane anachronisms. Miss Macaulay is either defending or arguing against something throughout the novel. Just in case anyone thought that it was not the business of the International Brigaders

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[61] Christian Science Monitor (August 31, 1940), p. 11.

to fight for Spain, she has this to say: "Nonsense, what are you talking about? You were fighting Fascism to save democracy. That's everyone's war."[62]

Satirizing medieval attitudes toward freedom of the masses, still present in Spain at the time she wrote her novel, Miss Macaulay has a Marquesa they visited in quest of Guy say in favor of the old feudal system, "Slavery is a foolish name for the sistema feudal that tied our cultivators to their haciendados and their lands. It is much pity that it is over. Those days were happier for all."[63]

The older Marquesa, in arguing for despotism and against war and change, takes two and a half pages of fine print to prove that all the changes have been, if not for the worse, at least for conditions just as bad.[64]

Ramon, a Marquis who is on the Right or Conservative group, but who is helping search for Guy out of friendship to the family and because he is fascinated by the blonde beauty of Guy's fiancee, exposes his views (and supposedly those of others of his class) on the poor in the following conversation. He says in a rather ironic tone of voice that since the

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[62]Rose Macaulay, And No Man's Wit (Boston, 1940), p. 22.

[63]Ibid., p. 70.

[64]Ibid., pp. 96-98.

war was over, the poor must go to the cinema:

> "The poor things must have some amusements in the evenings, now that the house-to-house hunts can no longer be enjoyed."
>
> In a rather amusing retort, Dr. Marlowe says, "What one can't understand is how there can be so many Spaniards left, after all the things they do to each other all the time."[65]

Just to make sure that the reader thoroughly understands that the British are ever so much more enlightened than the Spanish people on the subject of the importance of fighting Marxism, Miss Macaulay satirically reinforces the speech made by Dr. Marlowe in defense of the International Brigaders by having Ramon, the Spanish nobleman, say this:

> "You take such interest in the fate of others, Guy. It is really a disease. You are an altruist, and rush about the world like Saint George looking for dragons. I prefer to cultivate my own gardens. I, as you saw, even took no part in the revolution in my own land. I said to myself, another revolution? Well, our fleet at Cadiz, or our generals, always see to our revolutions quite well, so I will leave it in their hands, and for my part, I will stay in France until there is less noise. But for you--you heard the noise from England, and you rushed across France, across the Pyrenees, all animated to assist to suppress the glorious Spanish revolution. You are a man of no frontiers, Guy, no nation.[66]

In all these political arguments, the sides opposing Dr. Marlowe and her son Guy come out a poor second. Miss Macaulay gives their arguments just a little twist to show the opposition up as incompetent, or ignorant, or bigoted. The reviewer for the New York Herald-Tribune said that he did not know how illuminating Miss Macaulay's version of

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[65] Ibid., p. 273.

[66] Ibid., p. 348.

the New Spain would be to her readers, but he thought that what was reported was spotty and like any traveler's observations, although she had strung together her notes in a quite amusing but unimportant novel, with bits of her scintillating wit gleaming here and there.[67]

The wit in the novel is typical of the dry, ironical wit present in a dialogue between Dr. Marlowe and the Marquesa. It humorously reflects efforts at conversation by two women with nothing in common who have been thrown together by circumstance. Both are trying to avoid politics, since both know that the other's views are radically different from theirs. To make small talk, the Marquesa asks about domestic help in England. This jejune topic takes Dr. Marlowe right back to the English drawing room, where she has had to endure the company of those women who desired to exchange domestic views with her, regardless of her own inclination.[68] Another rather witty and ironic passage concerns the Marquesa's opinion of the English guests that her son has forced on her.

> She disliked their guests on sight; or rather, sight confirmed her pre-view distaste. They looked to her truculent, opinionated, pugnacious, irreligious, interfering, and Red, and as if they might at any moment burn the chapel down. Freemasons, too, no doubt. All of them, that is, except the pale girl with green eyes who said nothing. And what Spanish

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[67] Florence Paxton, "Book Reviews," New York Herald-Tribune (October 27, 1940), p. 4.

[68] Macaulay, And No Man's Wit, p. 49.

> the woman doctor spoke! And, Holy Mary, what French! Woman doctor, indeed. A profession no modest woman could adopt. A widow, the Marquesa believed, but in that heartless English way, she wore no signs of it. How feed this horde tonight, and how tomorrow? The broad pink mother and daughter no doubt ate too much; as to young men, they invariably did.[69]

As an example of gentler irony, there is a passage about the English practice of sending telegrams. When urged to wait and write letters unless her telegrams were of the utmost importance, Dr. Marlowe rebelled.

> Dr. Marlowe thought her telegrams were of the utmost importance and of some urgency: one was to the President of the United States, approving his firm stand against the Japanese; another to the British Medical Association, disapproving theirs against permitting midwives to administer anesthetics; a third to her sister in London asking her to discover if Dr. Marlowe's Austrian refugee cook was accommodating in her house nine of her relations, as she had been informed by her neighbor was the case.[70]

There are a few passages in this novel that reveal her own thinking about things other than political matters. It would seem, even in view of Miss Macaulay's habit of not revealing her personal life, that she had a compulsion to include certain favorite prejudices in every book. There is, of course, the expected slam against the church. In this novel so taken up with political debate, there is not much room for dissertations against the church, yet she has the Marquis say: "As for

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[69]Macaulay, _And No Man's Wit_, p. 49.

[70]_Ibid._, p. 68.

the church, it doesn't concern me, and I leave it alone."[71] Miss Macaulay satirizes the very churchy and devout by having the elder Marquesa make fun of the younger Marquesa, and implies that one with faith such as hers is not very intelligent when she has the elder Marquesa say, "Juana's mind is closed. The good God did not give her intellect, only faith," and had the same woman say that she will not allow her granddaughter to be priest-led.[72]

In the regular Macaulay fashion, the priests themselves are subjected to ridicule. The Marquesa Vieja calls the priest of the younger Marquesa a man of small education,[73] and at another point, Miss Macaulay again mentions onions in connection with priests when she says that he ate an onion for his digestion.[74] This further upholds her generalization made in Going Abroad that all Spanish priests smell like garlic or onion. She could just as well have said that all Spaniards smell like onion or garlic.

One refreshing departure from the political theme of this novel, according to Florence Paxton, is the fiancee of Guy's, who is supposed to be the great, great-granddaughter of a mermaid.[75] Ellen has never

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[71] Ibid., p. 43.

[72] Ibid., p. 100.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid., p. 64.

[75] Florence Paxton, op. cit., p. 4.

been permitted to swim for reasons unknown to herself. Finally she gets away from her father to go to Spain with Dr. Marlow, and she goes for her first swim. In a matter of weeks she becomes proficient at swimming, and begins to believe that she is a mermaid. She has never liked hot, arid climates, and has always wilted when she was away from the water. When Dr. Marlowe tells her that they are driving right across the middle of Spain in order to get out before trouble starts, she can't stand the thought of leaving the sea. She eludes the Marlowes, swims out to sea, and on discovering that there are no more of her kind left in the sea, drowns herself. Her drowning disproves to the Marquis and others that there is something different about Ellen and that there is nothing to the theory that she was a mermaid, after all, for mermaids are not supposed to drown.

To uphold her theory that there is something different about Ellen, Miss Macaulay drops hints that she really is a descendent of a mermaid. She keeps pointing out that Ellen is not like other girls, and thinks about things like riding a porpoise. Everyone who sees her is made to remark that she is different. Even the disagreeable Marquesa says, "She has a strange beauty, that child; a blonde fairy, scarcely of this earth. She has her dreams, one sees."[76]

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[76] Macaulay, And No Man's Wit, p. 101.

Miss Macaulay took for the title of this novel part of a quotation that she used instead of a dedication.

> The sunne is lost, and the earth, and no man's wit
> Can well direct him where to looke for it.
> And freely men confesse that this world's spent . . .
> 'Tis all in pieces, all adhaerance gone;
> All just supply, and all Relation. . . .
>
> John Donne, "An Anatomie of the World" (1611)

Miss Paxton, reviewer for the New York Herald-Tribune, said about Miss Macaulay's quoting John Donne, "Since the half-grown cruelties of yesterday have grown into deliberate and purposeful violence today, Miss Macaulay does not find herself at her wit's end, but sunk." This is a rather poor pun, perhaps, but it certainly shows Miss Paxton's attitude toward the novel and the quotation. She further says that Miss Macaulay found herself in precisely the same plight that John Donne found himself in when he wrote the poem quoted.[77] Miss Paxton's attitude was that of most of the critics. Miss Macaulay's despair was the one thing remarked on most often.

Some of Miss Macaulay's hopelessness shows in the conversation that occurred between Guy and a Spanish refugee. They had both fought in the revolution, and both were trying to escape to France. As they talked about the fact that Franco had won and that Spain was still not free, the Spanish refugee remarked that Spain would be bathed in blood

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[77]Florence Paxton, op. cit., p. 4.

and violence, many more Spaniards would perish, and Spain might still not be free. He went on to say that violence was the sin of the Spanish, and ends by saying that what one does in Spain is to die.[78]

Only a small ray of hope is allowed to shine at the end of the novel. Guy and some friends are sitting outside a cafe in France, disagreeing about politics. One of those who opposes Guy most violently lends him some clothing and some money for fare home to England. Guy thought to himself as he sat there, "We can all sit together and talk and drink, with perhaps some nuisance coming tomorrow. One can differ about anything, and still sit and talk."[79]

The small nuisance Guy spoke of turned out to be World War II. This novel was written just before Hitler entered Poland, and from that time until after the war, in 1950, to be exact, Miss Macaulay did not publish a novel. This, too, was a pattern for Miss Macaulay, for she had not published any novels during World War I. This was probably a long wait for her old friends. One of the more lenient of her reviewers said that her old friends had probably enjoyed this novel, for the dialogue was clever and satirical, but added that the novel would probably not win her any new friends.[80]

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[78]Macaulay, And No Man's Wit, p. 336-337.

[79]Ibid., p. 351.

[80]Library Journal, LXV (October 15, 1940), 874.

CHAPTER VII

AFTER WORLD WAR II

When Rose Macaulay resumed writing novels after a ten-year rest, she published The World Is My Wilderness, 1950. Although her novel did not come out immediately after the war, she capitalized on the after effects and the damage caused in property and moral thinking. This novel again takes up the theme of a young barbarian against the world, and brings up to date the situation so wittily exploited in Crewe Train.[1] Even the name of the novel suggests a young person who resists being molded by the people surrounding her into a pattern alien to her nature.

This novel begins on the interesting note that the resistance movement is still going on, and is being practiced by all the flotsam of World War II in their fight against authority. Their resistance takes the form of annoying policemen, stealing, sabotaging automobiles, trespassing, and molesting fellow citizens. The idea of these young people is that it would be fraternizing with the enemy (authority) to become conventional.

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[1] London Times Literary Supplement (May 12, 1950), p. 292.

According to one of Miss Macaulay's critics, authority loses, as one would expect from a Macaulay novel, and Miss Macaulay comes to no conclusion.[2]

As the novel progresses, the heroine, Barbary, is sent to London to her brilliant and intimidating father and wholesome, English-type step-mother. Both of them are terribly conventional. Since Barbary does not fit with their ideas of how a seventeen-year-old girl should act, she is, to them, entirely incorrigible. Barbary acts as one would expect a very young child to, and becomes intensely jealous of her step-mother and step-brother. She becomes hostile toward her father's plans for her. She begins consorting with shop-lifters, thieves, and deserters as a protest movement. Because she has been in occupied France where such behavior was the expected reaction against the Germans, she sees nothing wrong in their behavior toward authority.

Eventually Mrs. Cox, housekeeper and cook to Barbary's father, has a policeman nephew watch Barbary. Of course, he catches her stealing. In trying to capture her, he tracks her to a hide-out in some blitz ruins. Barbary is injured, and her mother is summoned from France to look after her.

Madame Michele, or Helen, had sent Barbary away because she was suspected of having been one of a band of resistance youths who killed

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[2] _New Statesman and Nation,_ XXXIX (May 20, 1950), 586.

her step-father, a mild collaborator. Intensely interested in Barbary's welfare, Madame Michele forgives her and cares for her. In order to get Barbary back, Madame Michele tells Barbary's father, Gulliver, that he really didn't father her at all. The reader is left to decide for himself whether this is true or not.

In this novel, as in all Macaulay novels, the characters lack depth. Of her characterizations, a reviewer for the Catholic World had this to say:

> Miss Macaulay cannot quite get through to Barbary despite precious writing about her. It is with Helen that Miss Macaulay seems most at home. A Barbary and a Helen cannot be comfortable in the same book; yet, as depicted, neither seems worth a book of her own.[3]

Another critic complained about the characterization, saying that even Helen was unreal and supposed to be too many things--"a tigress, a Juno, a great classical scholar, a formidable gambler, as well as a 'true lady, being an Honorable and all that.'"[4] The reviewer for the London Times Literary Supplement said that Miss Macaulay's characters were all one step from reality. According to him, "Barbary is a touching figure, and among Miss Macaulay's subtlest creations, but the people around her do not wholly come to life." He goes on to say, "These

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[3] Catholic World, CLXXII (December, 1950), 33.

[4] New Statesman and Nation, XXXIX (May 20, 1950), 586.

characters are accurately observed in that they are chosen to illustrate a peculiar way of life or attitude of mind." The critic states further, "They serve Miss Macaulay in the capacity of mouthpieces." He said that the characters do not act convincingly under strong passion, they do not communicate emotions to the reader, they do not act convincing about love, love itself is given a hygenic approach, and the usual Macaulay debates, instead of being brilliant diversions, are in this book the central points.[5]

This is supposedly a novel on post-war morals, nerves, and ethics. Miss Macaulay takes any and all opportunity to harangue the church, however. Whether it is the Church of England or the Roman Catholic Church, it seems to make no difference to her. Through Barbary she says,

> "It is a pity that if we others [unbelievers] do wicked things, they stay done. Christians can undo what they've done by confession and absolution. Do you remember Henri Leclos at Port Vendres, he who attacked little girls? Then one day he was nearly drowned in a storm, and he repented and got absolution and a new life. So it was all right for him, but it made no difference to the little girls and their parents. If you are a Christian, you just think how you have sinned against God, and God will forgive you if you repent. But we others can't be forgiven, because we sin only against people, and people stay hurt or killed or whatever it is we have done to them. It would be better to be

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[5] London Times Literary Supplement (May 12, 1950), p. 292.

> a Christian and get forgiveness, and only mind about God and hell. Perhaps I shall myself turn devout.[6]

And again, "Repenting and confessing. It only puts _you_ right, not what you've done to people."[7] Later she said, "One wouldn't take on the Catholic Church or the Church of England because one's baptized into it too early to say no."[8]

Miss Macaulay rarely left any doubt as to her meaning. On the masculine viewpoint toward women she got in her expected barb through one of Helen's "friends" when she had him think how much he admired her, finding in her a woman's beauty and "the mind, grasp and wit of a man." He guessed in her too "a masculine freedom and sensuousness." He held that most women "loved with their sentiments, not their senses."[9]

According to Miss Macaulay, the prevailing moral atmosphere after World War II was, "What's the use of anything? It's each for himself, and grab what you can, and lucky if you keep alive."[10]

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[6]Rose Macaulay, _The World Is My Wilderness_ (Boston, 1950), pp. 54-55.

[7]_Ibid._, p. 73.

[8]_Ibid._, p. 26.

[9]_Ibid._, p. 33.

[10]_Ibid._, p. 76.

She expressed herself on the gullibility of people in this novel. "People are so easily hoaxed that it's second rate to hoax them."[11]

The war was to blame for a lot of things, according to Miss Macaulay, and deterioration of moral fiber was one of them. This is illustrated in this conversation between Barbary and her father:

> ". . . it was, of course, stealing. Do you often steal?"
> "Not very often," said Barbary. "Only when I need to."
> "I see. You and your friends used to steal in France, I take it. Did your Mother know?"
> Had her mother known? Barbary could not remember; perhaps she had, perhaps she hadn't. Perhaps she hadn't cared.
> "I don't know," she said. "I expect so. We all stole from the Germans and from the collabos, to get things for the Resistance. They steal here too, don't they?"
> "They do," said Sir Gulliver dryly. "But it's something rather new for people brought up like you to steal. That's come on since the war, I think. . . . Stealing and lying." Meditatively he turned the distasteful words over. "Odd, how prevalent they have become. It's distressing to find that my own daughter has joined the criminal classes. I hope you aren't intending to continue in the career. Are you?"
> "No," said Barbary, "not really."
> "Not really. I see. . . . That's most interesting, if a trifle ambiguous. I presume you mean, not until the next occasion when you need a little ready cash. . . ."[12]

Along with the general hopeless attitude of the novel she included a passage about the horrors of hell. She had a priest who had been trapped during the blitz preach to Barbary and her cousin, Raoul. In

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[11]Macaulay, The World Is My Wilderness, p. 89.

[12]Ibid., p. 126.

the ruins of the church where he had been trapped by fire, he preached this sermon:

> "We are in hell now. Hell is where I am, Lucifer and all his legions are in me. Fire creeps on me from all sides; I am trapped in the prison of my sins; I cannot get out. There is no rescue possible, for I have shut myself from God in the hell of my own making. I cannot move my limbs, I cannot raise my hands to God, I cannot call to him from my place of darkness. The flames press on; they will consume my body, but my soul will live on in hell, forever damned, for I have turned from God and he must turn from me. O, the way's dark and horrid! I cannot see: shall I have company? O yes, my sins; they run before me to fetch fire from hell. Trapped, trapped, trapped; there's no hope. . . . The weight of my sins: they lie across my chest and pin me; I cannot stir. For this is hell, hell."[13]

With this sort of religious philosophy about the Hereafter, it is surprising that Miss Macaulay did not turn _to_ the churches, instead of away from them.

In spite of adverse criticism, _The World Is My Wilderness_ was well received by many critics and readers at the time of its publication. The _Christian Science Monitor_ had this to say:

> For the reader whose primary interest is style, for the manner in which a tale is set forth, here is prose fresh and invigorating. Even at the outset, one's imagination and intelligence are caught. As for the reader who seeks plot above all else, he, too, will find satisfaction.[14]

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[13] _Ibid._, pp. 158-159.

[14] _Christian Science Monitor_ (October 31, 1950), p. 12.

The Library Journal said, "Those who have enjoyed Rose Macaulay through the years, especially Crewe Train, 1926, will welcome this new novel. It never lacks for entertainment, but it has little of the gaiety of Rose Macaulay's earlier delightful stories."[15]

Rose Macaulay's next and last book, published two years before her death, was The Towers of Trebizond. It came out in September of 1956, six years after The World Is My Wilderness. This last book is a rambling novel about an unfortunate girl named Laurie. She is another novelist in a book whose characters all write books. There are a few other prominent characters whose lives are intertwined with that of Laurie, but none of major significance to the plot. There is her Aunt Dot, who was a fat, comical missionary. There is Father Chantry-Pigg, an extremely high Anglican priest, and Dr. Halide, who is a lady doctor converted from Mohammedanism. Another important character who is never in the action of the story but mentioned only in the thoughts and ramblings of Laurie is Vere, her lover.

The characters in this book are, even more than most of her characters, thin to the point of emaciation. The love affair between Laurie and Vere sounds so antiseptic as to make it seem illogical that the pair would have felt the need to spend the evening together, much less a fortnight.

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[15] Library Journal, LXXV (October 1, 1950), 1661.

The old hobby-horse, woman's rights, is dragged out again in this book, but the main reason for its existence there seems to have been the need of Rose Macaulay to fuse the two sides of life as presented at the beginning and the end of this book--cheerful acceptance of life and its problems on the one hand, and on the other, a deep probing into spiritual anguish and a groping for a belief in the Hereafter, in God, and a reconciliation with the Anglican church, or between religion and reason.[16]

Throughout this book, Laurie, or the author through the mouth of Laurie, attempts to reason out her religious beliefs. She keeps up a running stream of satirical remarks about priests and the church at the same time. As an example of this type of remark and her approach to the church, we might examine some of Laurie's asides. Of the church service itself she has this to say:

> It seemed to me a mistake to think, as Father Chantry-Pigg thought, that all Anglican churches ought to have the same kind of services, and that type some approximation to what went on at St. Gregory's, for by no means all Anglicans like scenes of that nature. Some Commander (R.N.) in the Church Assembly, or some such gathering, once complained that one of the worst scandals in the Church of England was the variety of worship that occurred in its different churches and parishes, and that this scandal, said the Commander, kept many people from going to church at all, although one does not quite understand why it should have this effect; one would think that variety

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[16] London Times Literary Supplement (September 7, 1956), p. 521.

> would induce more persons to go, since there will always be something for this Commander, something for Aunt Dot and me, and something wonderfully extreme for Father Chantry-Pigg, who had made for himself a church so excessively high. . . .[17]

Again she rambled on for twelve pages about the Thirty-Nine Articles and said, "What are they doing in the Anglican Prayer Book at all, since some of them say the exact opposite to what most Anglicans believe, and this goes for clergy as well as the laity."[18]

In other places, her gropings are pathetic. One ran on in this manner:

> It took me some time to figure out the Greek inscription, which was about saving me from my sins, and I hesitated to say this prayer, as I did not really want to be saved from my sins, not for the time being; it would make things too difficult and sad. [This was referring to her affair with Vere.] I was getting into a stage where I was not quite sure what sin was, I was in kind of a fog, drifting without clues. . . .[19]

More insight into her pathetic gropings for understanding is supplied in this passage:

> ". . . have you put yourself beyond caring?"
>
> Not quite, never quite. I had tried, but never quite. From time to time I knew what I had lost. But nearly all the time, God was a bad second, enough to hurt but not to

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[17]Rose Macaulay, The Towers of Trebizond (London, 1956), pp. 53-54.

[18]Ibid., p. 237.

[19]Ibid., p. 159.

> cure, enough to hide, but not enough to seek, and I knew that when I died I should hear him saying, "Go away, I never knew you," and that would be the end of it all, the end of everything, and after that I should never know Him, though then to know Him would be what I should want more than anything, and not to know Him would be hell. I sometimes felt this even now, but not often enough to do what would break my life to bits.[20]

In Miss Macaulay's obituary in the Spectator, Christopher Hollis found such ramblings as these to be the expression of a faith unhesitatingly held and an avowal that man cannot divide his soul into compartments, content to be vicious at one time and at the same time be confident that he can remain virtuous at another. Miss Macaulay was saying, he went on, that sin was infectious, and that it must be eradicated or corrupt the whole soul. In spite of the fact that she described herself as "a high church agnostic" on a television program called "Frankly Speaking" just a short time before her death, he held such sayings to be only whimsical.[21] Another critic said this book is an allegory on what man is eternally striving for, but never attains.[22]

A despairing cry that may have been autobiographical but certainly is not novel to Miss Macaulay's fiction is this excerpt, another Laurie ramble:

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[20] Ibid., p. 72.

[21] Hollis, op. cit., p. 603.

[22] Atlantic, CXCIX (June, 1957), 91.

> Someone once said that Hell would be, and now is, living without God, without love, in utter loneliness and fear, knowing that God is leaving us alone forever; we have driven ourselves out, we have lost God, and gained Hell. I now live in two hells, for I have lost God and live also without love, or without the love I want, and I cannot get used to that either. Though people say in the end one does. To the other, perhaps never.[23]

Autobiography continued to creep into the narrative. Miss Macaulay's resentment against being denied the family closeness of a conventional upbringing is clearly reflected:

> "It is just a thing one does. As one loves one's mother."
> "I seldom meet mine. She left my father early for another, and we lost touch. She can't have been the possessive type of mother. My father was a priest, so he didn't divorce her. She is usually abroad somewhere. I rather like coming across her."[24]

This book contains perhaps the most wistful, idealistic statement Miss Macaulay ever made about a couple in love; and yet she never relents on the ultimate hopelessness of the relationship.

> . . . love was our fortress and our peace, and being together shut out everything else and closed down conscience and the moral sense. We used to wonder how long we should live in this doped oblivion if we had been married, and I supposed that the every-day life which married people live together after a time blunts romance, but we did not think we should mind that, if we had all the other things, even the tedious things, to do together. . . .[25]

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[23]Macaulay, The Towers of Trebizond, p. 287.

[24]Ibid., p. 106.

[25]Ibid., pp. 193-194.

The Towers of Trebizond has its share of farce, whimsey, and joking, such as Aunt Dot's coming in from High Mass on a camel,[26] but not all critics agreed that the book was "a sparkingly original, completely captivating novel, packed with entrancing humor, comic characterizations, fantastic escapades and serious insights," as one critic believed.[27] Another critic said of the book, "There are entertaining bits here and there, but for the most part the humor is the kind that palls, seems forced and self-consciously introduced," and that when the serious notes are introduced they seem out of key until the unexpected death of Vere at the end of the novel gives them meaning.[28]

Yet another critic declared that the book was exceedingly scholarly entertainment and would have been enjoyable except for the suffocating pertness of the writing.[29] Still another said that the book was "exasperatingly mannered, disorganized, and spell-binding," and that it assumed that the readers were "cultivated enough to recognize bits of Byron, Homer, Euripides, and the liturgy of the Church of England as

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[26] Spectator, CLXXVII (November 7, 1958), 603.

[27] Atlantic, CXCIV (June, 1957), 99.

[28] Kirkus, Bulletin from Virginia Kirkus Bookshop Service (October, 1957).

[29] Manchester Guardian, LXXV (September, 1956), 4.

they flash past." This reviewer complained of the span of the book, saying that Miss Macaulay gave herself opportunities to discuss Greek, Roman and Anglican offshoots of the Christian Church, espionage at home and abroad, historical and agricultural highlights in an area stretching from Istanbul to Jerusalem, the unscrupulous behavior toward each other of all those writing travel books," all at the same time that she tried to spin a witty, farcical, and satirical plot.'[30]

The London Times Literary Supplement found that the book started on a note of comedy and ended on an expression of spiritual doubt that was close to despair. The reviewer said that it covered a lot of ground, not only geographically, but spiritually and emotionally as well.[31]

There were so many other things for the reviewers to talk about in this book that they did not mention the typed, or rubber-stamped, or bloodless characters. The characters are caricatures, however, with the possible exception of Laurie. She is real in some instances, but bloodless in others. Although she expresses her feelings well enough, one sees only the hopelessness of her position. Because of the cold, matter-of-fact way she accepts her fate, it is hard for the reader to catch the hopelessness and the suffering that she is supposed to be experiencing, these intangibles being desiccated by Miss Macaulay's matter-of-fact narrative style.

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[30] New York Herald-Tribune (August 4, 1957), p. 3.

[31] London Times Literary Supplement (September 7, 1956), p. 521.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The opinion of critics has been, by and large, that the public could better spend its time in some pursuit other than reading the novels of Rose Macaulay, although there is of course some disagreement among them as to the worth of her novels, particularly at the beginning of her career. When she published Potterism, her fastidious dislike of ignorance, vulgarity, and cruelty, coupled with her satirical cleverness, won her the admiration of many of the reading public and some of the critics. Some of the same critics who admired these qualities about her added qualifications to their praise, however, and mentioned that her very admiration for deftness, the light touch, and clarity sometimes caused her to sacrifice emotion to cleverness, causing her to seem cruel, superficial, and heartless.[1]

Others noted that Miss Macaulay's recurrent theme was "the tragic futility and chaos of the post-war world which she reproduces with an interest that is partly disgust," and called her "a mirror of contemporary life," but added that her wit was sometimes "far too easily satisfied with itself."[2]

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[1] Twentieth Century Authors, p. 865. [2] Ibid., p. 866.

Miss Macaulay did have a substratum of conviction underlying her writing, and that is that women, in general, and she in particular, get short-changed in the world's competition. Her underlying philosophical position is a negative one of revolt and rejection; she seems to believe in nothing positively. "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity," expresses her philosophy. She questions the worth of practically everything that people believe in sincerely. To her, nothing is of great value, and nothing survives her sarcastic and satirical attack. Because people fail to implement their beliefs and live their religion consistently, she would have her readers reject the validity of those beliefs and convictions.

Wit unassisted by warmth becomes bitter and cruel in unfriendly hands such as Miss Macaulay's. Human beings naturally suspect the use of caustic wit. Even those critics who were trying to be as friendly and judicious to Miss Macaulay as possible seemed unable to be entirely sympathetic. Being sympathetic to her was like trying to love an ill-tempered porcupine. Although they might say that the best of her works had a personal flavor that was inimitable and that they were entertaining, the critics would add that, since her books had been unfailingly judged to be satirical, she had fallen victim to her own reputation to the extent that she introduced caustic and merry comments into the midst of tragedy, or that she had fallen the victim of mere topicalism.[3] The evidence

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[3] Twentieth Century Authors, p. 866.

of the novels examined closely in this thesis confirms this opinion fully.

Other critics frankly stated that the exaggerated caricatures became irritating, and that it was difficult to see why someone of her caliber would have been content with "pot-boiling."[4] Some wished for a novel not stuffed with her usual obsessions;[5] others thought her novels clever, but judged that they contained no meat or reality.[6] Some thought her characters too feebly drawn,[7] or her humor too self-consciously learned.[8] All these faults are present in her major works.

A summary judgment of her work is that she seems to have become a novelist chiefly for the purpose of fighting her inner battles on paper and venting her pet peeves. These she thinly disguised in a chatty, witty, satirical, and clever presentation, and glossed everything over as a farce on present-day life.[9]

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[4]*New Republic,* LIV (May 9, 1928), 358.

[5]*Nation and Athenaeum,* XLIII (April 7, 1928), 18.

[6]Wilson Follett, *Literary Digest,* LXXI (October 8, 1921), 67.

[7]*Catholic World,* CLXXII (December, 1950), 233.

[8]*Kirkus,* Bulletin from Virginia Kirkus Bookshop.

[9]Christopher Hollis, "Rose Macaulay," *Spectator,* CC (November 7, 1958), 603.

She felt it her mission to satirize social conditions and customs of the times instead of exploring the possibilities of solving the problems of people. She used her flattened-out characters as dummies to convey little sermons on the injustices of the times toward women, on the laxity or stupidity of the church, and on conventions she thought were ridiculous. She praised people for enduring their problems instead of trying to solve them, by preaching acceptance of one's fate. All these characteristics plus her writing on current topics instead of on universal problems dated Miss Macaulay's works so that she appears doomed to be read only by her contemporaries.

Instead of changing to circumvent adverse criticism, Miss Macaulay chose to ignore it for the most part. She saw no reason to heed it. She wrote for a certain segment of the public who must have believed, as she did, that the things she wrote about were Life as it really is. She must have believed that other authors who wrote of wickedness, passion, and strife were "dirty" and writing only to sell books. Her statements concerning Liela Yorke in Potterism and Catherine in Staying with Relations support this premise.

The public for whom she wrote was probably largely women, and there is still a vast amount of tame entertainment of the melodramatic kind aimed at them, such as the radio and television "soap opera," the Dr. Kildare series, or the "nurse" type of books in every newsstand,

library, or bookstall. These women are the ones who have had to stand by and watch things happen to themselves and those they cared about--things they have had no control over. They have had their wrists slapped by life so often that they think things are supposed to turn out badly, and that one who can be happy amid such universal sorrow and misery must be selfish and even wicked. They are the ones who, like Rose Macaulay, either do not feel real passion or do not allow themselves to feel any. They have sublimated their passions into ironclad moral convictions, justifying misfortune by accepting it as the destiny of the righteous. Rationalization such as this would cause women to welcome Rose Macaulay as what she liked to think of herself--a prophetess of truth.

When one experiences misfortunes of the kind spoken of in the preceding paragraph, one experiences life as it really is. It is difficult to see how anyone in this situation could so stifle emotion as not to recognize that none of Rose Macaulay's characters really suffered. They had things happen to them, but they did not experience. This should have been particularly apparent to the readers when Miss Macaulay tried to write of families or love affairs. She did it only reluctantly, and then got it over as quickly and cleanly as possible. She showed very little reflection of actual experience or even empathy. One can almost smell the odor of disinfectant wafting from her pages.

Miss Macaulay did reflect something in her writings that may have been more important to some people than reflections of actual experience and emotion. That was resentment. People like to know that they are like other people, so some might have enjoyed seeing their resentments on the printed page parading as the feelings of others. Miss Macaulay showed her resentment against conformity and convention in her novels, and who has not felt that resentment? She did not seem to recognize the fact that the conformity and conventions that we have are the products of generations, even centuries of the best refinement that people could give them--that of trying them out. Most of the conventions that we have, such as monogamy or even marriage itself, are for the protection of women. Yet Miss Macaulay rebelled against the fact that this is a man's world, showing her resentment in passages like the one in They Were Defeated where she hints that such an attitude was a seventeenth-century attitude and is out of place in our modern world.

Rose Macaulay felt that it was an injustice to women like Denham in Crewe Train to be subjugated by love into conformity just because our society is geared to the fact that it is a man's world. Passion, then, to Miss Macaulay, was to be ignored if possible, because the sex standards are set by men. When it could not be ignored, it was to be mentioned only briefly. Therefore, she might mention the fact that Laurie and Vere had an affair, but she would never mention any of the sordid details.

It was more to her liking, and to the liking of her following, to keep would-be lovers apart when one was married, as she did Adrian and Claudia in Staying with Relations and Peter and Lucy in The Lee Shore, no matter how much they were supposed to love. It would have been wicked for them to have each other; therefore, they had to suffer. Even the one couple she allowed to have an affair, Laurie and Vere, were destroyed before they had time to be together long, when she had Vere killed in an automobile accident.

Just as it did Vere no good to argue with the bus that killed him, it did all the people in her novels no good to argue with the forces that surrounded them. One of her novels, I Would Be Private, even took for its theme the fact that people cannot escape their destiny. Just as Denham was mastered by the conventions of the people around her in Crewe Train, just as Barbary in The World Is My Wilderness was defeated by post-war morals in contradiction to the way she had grown up in war-torn France, just as Gideon and Oliver were defeated in Potterism, and just as every single character in They Were Defeated lost to ideas and circumstances, either in the Cromwellian war or to personal disaster, so were all the characters in all her novels ultimately defeated in one way or another.

There are those people who are either selfish or egotistical enough to enjoy seeing others reap the same harvest of misfortunes that befalls

them. There was, and always will be, a large segment of the public who think as Miss Macaulay did. If the political and social ideas as well as the current events in her novels were not outdated, she might still be widely read. Those to whom her novels appealed were not greatly swayed by the opinions of the critics, for to them the critics were a part of the general dirty-minded plan to sell the public filth under the guise of reality. Reading for innocent amusement alone or for a reflection of True Life as it revealed itself to them, these people eagerly awaited the publishing of a new Rose Macaulay novel. They ignored the sounds the critics made as they would have the chirruping of a cricket.

Rose Macaulay was knighted for entertaining the public. She did furnish amusement by satirization of ridiculous customs and ideas. She used witty conversation. She employed beautiful poetic descriptions to set the stage in many of her novels, especially in _Staying with Relations_ and _Orphan Island._ She had ridiculous and amusing happenings occur in her novels. She wrote of some of the problems that people experience--especially uncertainty, doubt, and insecurity. Some of her characters were real enough to be memorable, allowing her readers to project themselves into the situations. She kept up with current happenings so that what she wrote was of immediate popular interest.

Rose Macaulay was intelligent, clever, progressive, and outspoken, but she was incapable of, or uninterested in taking constructive criticism. She would not change her methods, her themes, or her style. She would not, or could not, change; she was what she was. Had she put more depth into her characters, had she examined motives and explored possible solutions to the problems she raised, had she shown more sympathy and less satire in her humor, she could have won critical acclaim and made a bid for lasting success. A prominent shelf in the libraries of the future could have been reserved for Rose Macaulay.

APPENDIX

THE NOVELS OF ROSE MACAULAY

The Valley Captives	1911
The Lee Shore	1912
Views and Vagabonds	1912
Potterism	1920
Dangerous Ages	1921
Mystery at Geneva	1922
Told By An Idiot	1923
Orphan Island	1924
Crewe Train	1926
Daisy and Daphne (_Keeping Up Appearances_)	1928
Staying with Relations	1930
They Were Defeated (_The Shadow Flies_)	1932
Going Abroad	1934
I Would Be Private	1937
And No Man's Wit	1940
The World Is My Wilderness	1950
The Towers of Trebizond	1956

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