Rose Macaulay: Satirist

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Introduction

Dame Rose Macaulay possessed two qualities, a comic spirit and an intellectual pessimism, which made her one of England's finest modern satirists. Her satire has limitations. First, because of rapid and rather prolific productivity, some of the satire is repetitious. Second, the reader who enjoys satire is already aware of many of the flaws and incongruities of society. He has probably ridiculed them himself, so he may not find the satire as fresh and original as the author hoped it would be. Much of Miss Macaulay's satire is delightful and keen but occasionally she stoops to the trivial. In spite of these shortcomings and the fact that sometimes the humor seems so broad as to be almost forced, the presence of the comic spirit and the intellectual pessimism—her insight into both the comedy and the tragedy of life—gives much of her satire great appeal and universality.

A very intelligent woman, Miss Macaulay was an observer, a spectator, a critic of life. Writing during the periods of disillusionment which followed the world wars, she found much to criticize in society. At the peak of critical acclaim and of her productivity, she reached the conclusion that life was "a tale told by an idiot." A woman whose mental prowess forced her to an awareness of the stupidities, the absurdities, the tragedies of mankind, she regarded the world as a "queer world and life, all going to pieces and losing."

Throughout much of her personal life she was an agnostic, although she preferred to think of herself as an "Anglo-agnostic"; throughout much of her literary life she was an intellectual pessimist. On New Year's Eve, 1956, after she was reunited with her church, she wrote, "The world grows more and more dreadful and illiberal and unChristian. What kind of a year begins this midnight?" Always, though, in her writing the pessimism was tempered by her own joie de vivre. Whether she was driving alone through Portugal, bicycling to church, swimming daily in the Serpentine, going to parties, or perusing book catalogues, she was delighting in what she termed "personal pleasures." This zest for life is gaily reflected in her novels. As one of her closest friends said of her, "she is never not a humorist." Thus, in her novels, as in her life, two conflicting forces are the comic spirit and intellectual pessimism.


3 Rose Macaulay's book, Personal Pleasures, contains short essays about many of her favorite activities.

4 Father Hamilton Johnson in Letters to a Friend, by Rose Macaulay, p. 22.
Chapter I. The Shaping Factors

Early Environment

Rose Macaulay, a member of the upper middle class, was a product of scholarly and clerical ancestry.¹ Her father, George Campbell Macaulay, an assistant master at Rugby at the time of Rose's birth in 1881 and later a lecturer in English at Cambridge until his death, was the first Macaulay in several generations who was not an Anglican clergyman. Her mother, Grace Mary Conybeare, also came from a family of scholars and clergymen. Historian Thomas Babington Macaulay was distantly related.

The six Macaulay children grew up in an environment of culture and tradition. Surrounded by books and stimulating conversation, Rose became interested in literary pursuits at an early age. Before she could hold a pen properly, she and one of her sisters collaborated on a novel. Rose later remarked, "I did the talking while she worked the pencil. It's a natural impulse with children, like drawing."²

¹In Letters to a Friend, pp. 11 and 36, Rose Macaulay wrote, "No wonder...that I feel an interest in religion, considering how steadily and for how many centuries ancestors versed in theology have converged on me from all sides....I suppose I am grounded in religious knowledge more or less, having been brought up that way; and also, perhaps, inheriting an interest in theology and church literature from a thousand (or so) clerical ancestors."

Because of Grace Macaulay's health, the family went to Varazze, Italy, in 1887. In this small fishing village Rose grew from a child of six to a gauche tomboy of thirteen. Except for six months in a local convent school, in which she and her sisters felt uncomfortable because they were not permitted to join in prayers with the other children, she studied at home. Mrs. Macaulay, an entertaining and gifted storyteller, gave the children their early religious training. Their academic training was directed by their father, whom Rose greatly admired for his scholarship. Years later, speaking of him, she remarked that as a child in Italy, she had agreed with the servants who said of him, "Just like the Lord God--he knows absolutely everything." When the family returned to England in 1894, Rose and two of her sisters went to Oxford High School, which Rose found "Pretty dim...after our libertine and bare-legged scrambling about our Italian shore and hills, complete with canoe and pony."5

Although the Macaulays were not wealthy, the children were sent to good schools and were encouraged in their education. Auley was with the Royal Engineers in India and Will went to Canada to farm.5 Two of the girls became missionaries and one, a nurse. Rose was sent to Somerville College, Oxford, by Reginald Macaulay, her uncle

3Rose Macaulay, Letters to a Friend, p. 89.
4Ibid.
5There is no full length biography of Rose Macaulay. The biographical material for this paper is drawn from several sources and is in some instances incomplete.
and godfather. At Somerville, the shy athletic girl who liked hockey better than dancing became a vivacious conversationalist and "adventurer in ideas and experiences." She read history and acquired a love for the seventeenth century, readily detected in her historical novel, *They Were Defeated*.

When she came down, in the summer of 1903, Rose joined her parents who were living in rural Wales. Missing the stimulating company of Oxford and having always been interested in writing, she turned to writing quite naturally. Composing poetry had from childhood been both a hobby and something of a compulsion. "One has to write poetry (at least I always have) to express things that don't go into prose so easily; also I like playing with metres and rhythms; it was, in childhood and youth, one of my forms of insobriety..." Occasionally her poems were published in the *Westminster Gazette*. She also began her first novel, *Abbots Verney*, published in 1906. Writing to a Somerville friend, she said,

If you want to be really interested and entertained, publish a novel; it's quite worth it!...It's a frightfully amusing occupation—so amusing that the financial side of it seems of very minor importance, except as a sort of justification, to turn it from play to earnest.

6 Reginald Macaulay was interested in Rose and eager to help her further her career. When she began to attain some literary recognition, he gave her a small flat in London so that she might be near publishers, literary friends, and others who were influential in her career.


8 Ibid., p. 82.

9 Ibid., p. 15.
When George Macaulay received an appointment to Cambridge in 1906, the family moved to Great Shelford, where they stayed until his death in 1915. Rose continued writing novels and began to achieve some recognition. During this time she often travelled with her father. At his death she made London her home.

The heritage, the education and travel, and her own profession and those of her family marked Rose Macaulay as a member of the upper middle class. She enjoyed the privileges and accepted the obligations of her position. Reared in a tradition of service to humanity, Rose Macaulay was a capable woman who felt a responsibility to make a valid contribution to society. This she did through writing. She wrote occasionally to instruct, frequently to entertain, and almost invariably to reform.

Her early environment was at least partially responsible for Rose Macaulay's independent and sometimes rebellious spirit, so necessary for a satirist. It has been suggested that

The sunny freedom of a girlhood on the Ligurian coast prepared her for anything but the spiny conventionalities of the traditional education...that followed, giving rise to Rose Macaulay's frequent literary treatment of the struggles of the free spirit against rigid mores.\(^10\)

The few available details about her childhood confirm the suggestion that her independent spirit warred against all conformities. As we can glimpse in *Told by an Idiot*, one of her early novels, she, like

Imogen, longed to be a boy and join the Navy. She also secretly rebelled against confirmation. Although she had been delighted with the *Imitatio Christi* of Thomas à Kempis, which she had read perched in the top branch of a tree, she felt many religious doubts. But when the time came, she submitted to confirmation, too shy to mention these. Years later she said,

I am glad I didn't reject confirmation. I was 'a child that was an intemperate sucker' (a 17th-century quotation) of all that came my way, and not only honey from the rocks but I'm glad I wasn't such a silly little sucker as to do that.  

Temperament

By native endowment and temperament, she had intelligence, wit, independence, and a keen conscience—all qualities either helpful or even essential to a satirist. A precocious child who read and wrote at three, she became an erudite adult who corrected the dictionary as a hobby and counted logomachy as one of her personal interests.


12"On a blank page at the beginning of the Supplementary Volume of my Dictionary, I record emendations, corrections, additions, earlier uses of words, as I come on them in reading. Ah, I say, congratulating myself, here Messrs. Murray, Bradley, Craigie and Onions are nearly a century out; here were sailors, travellers, and philosophers chattering of sea turtles from the fifteen-sixties on, and the Dictionary will not have them before the sixteen-fifties. And how late they are with estancias, iguanas, anthropophagi, maize, cochineal, canoes, troglobytes, cannibals and hammocks. As to aniles, or old wives' tales, they will not let us have this excellent noun at all....To amend so great a work gives me pleasure...Had I but world enough and time, I would find earlier uses of all the half million words, I would publish another supplement of my own, I would achieve at last my early ambition to be a lexicographer." Rose Macaulay, *Personal Pleasures* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 279.
pleasures.\textsuperscript{13} Her readers are aware of her thorough knowledge of history and architecture. Her extensive travels through the United States, Central and South America, Europe, and the Middle East added to her understanding of people and places. Knowledge of contemporary events and attitudes gained her recognition as "the most acute social critic of her time" and "a mirror of contemporary opinion and strife."\textsuperscript{14}

Letters to Father Johnson\textsuperscript{15} reveal her proficiency in Greek, Latin, Italian, and French and a knowledge of the Bible exceptional in a layman. Also disclosed are two traits which are an integral part of intelligence: curiosity and independence. In her search for an accurate interpretation of Biblical passages, she often consulted several versions including those written in languages other than English. Although her faith had become a very vital part of her life, she did not accept blindly. To Father Johnson she wrote, "I don't think, do you, that I ought to wrestle with the Resurrection (as told in the Gospels) and the Virgin Birth, both of which are rather outside what my brain can easily take."\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13}There is poetomachy, bibliomachy, angelomachy, theologomachy, gastronomachy, erotomachy, a hundred other strifes; of them all, logomachy is the most absorbing, the most calculated to fill with sound and fury a pleasant Sunday afternoon." Ibid., p. 292.


\textsuperscript{15}A fan letter from Father John Hamilton Cowper Johnson of the Society of St. John the Evangelist (commonly known as the Cowley Fathers) started the correspondence that gradually guided Rose Macaulay back to the Anglican Church, after nearly thirty years' estrangement. She had known Father Johnson in London only in a professional way as he sometimes heard her confessions. After he came to Boston in 1916, they never met again. Their momentous correspondence, from 1950 until Miss Macaulay's death, was a source of delight for both. Her letters to him fill two volumes.

\textsuperscript{16}Rose Macaulay, Letters to a Friend, p. 95.
The dedication of Potterism, "to the unsentimental precisians in thought, who have, on this confused, inaccurate, and emotional planet, no fit habitation," clearly indicates that she aligned herself, in fiction, as in life, with the mentally discriminating. Beverly Nichols, who described her countenance as "lit with a sparkle of unusual intelligence,"\(^{17}\) said, "Hers is the most literal and accurate mind I have ever known."\(^{13}\) Her intelligence, her "literal and accurate mind" which refused to tolerate clichés, epithets, and words used indiscriminately, her skillful handling of those who bored her by taking umbrage, as she called it, and her manner of dealing with them by feigning deafness or, if that failed, employing an annihilating remark, made her appear rather formidable. Stuart Sherman recalls her "piercing eyes, ironically mocking, candid, caustic, pitiless, set in a face that knows too much" and describes her as "one of the wittiest writers going" but one who "makes me uncomfortable" as she made "no concealment of her scathing insight....Her intelligence has no reservations."\(^{19}\)

Two honors of which she was very proud came to her no doubt as a result of her intellectual prowess. In 1951, Cambridge University bestowed upon her an honorary Litt.D. Of the degree she said,

\(^{17}\) Beverly Nichols, *Are They the Same at Home?* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927), p. 188.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.

whether humorously or modestly, "I imagine it is actually more a tribute to my father and uncle, who were greatly esteemed in Cambridge, than to myself. But it is rather fun." In the New Year Honours List in 1958, she was created Dame Commander of the British Empire.

Perhaps one of the tributes which she would have prized most came from Father Johnson. He said of her letters, they "have quickened and polished up my mind more than any school, college, or university ever did; besides making me laugh—for she is never not a humorist."

The testimony to her delightful humor is abundant. That she was in demand as a speaker and as a guest at parties may suggest that she was a lively and witty conversationalist. Critics have always commented upon the humor which many readers automatically associate with her novels. For example, H. W. Boynton credited her with having "the godlike faculty of laughing heartily and without malice at all humanity." Rebecca West's tribute perhaps summarizes the attitude of Macaulay readers: "What one reads Miss Macaulay's books for is the humour. There is no one on earth who does this sort of thing better." Her wit, completely submerged in her poetry, occasionally surfaces in her critical studies and travel books, and floats merrily through the essays, but in the satirical novels, it is

21 Ibid., p. 22.
the vital force. It is a multi-level humor showing a wide variety, both in type and quality. It is a subtle intellectual humor for discriminating readers and for her own satisfaction; but she recognized, as do many of her journalist characters, that the majority of the book-buying public appreciate more obvious humor. And of these she was never neglectful. For them she created an ape who plays cards, does errands in the village, and drives a car but cannot understand the necessity of shifting gears or of sitting quietly during a church service; an armament firm called Pottle and Ketts; and a young man who plans to write a book about abortion in Ecuador although he has never been there. Both kinds of humor are evident in most situations, in the dialogue, in the characterization, and even in satiric comments. Furthermore some of her themes reflect the comic element. But far more often than not they are serious; and in fact they sometimes have too much of the satirist's plea for reform or the satirist's view of the evils of society to be comic, and reflect instead only the satiric element.

Independence is a third facet of Rose Macaulay's temperament. Margaret Lawrence advanced the theory that Miss Macaulay (along with Edna Ferber, Fannie Hurst, and G. B. Stern) was a "go-getter," one of a race of self-sufficient women who refused to admit any emotional dependence upon men.24 Perhaps her independence was shaped by World War I, which caused many young women to be self-reliant and independent; perhaps by the growing movement of equality for women; and perhaps

by her own intellectual curiosity, which did not permit her to adopt beliefs and attitudes without questioning. Whatever the motivation, she became a satirist who saw the world clearly and was not afraid to comment upon what she saw. Katherine Mansfield said of her, "...it is not only her cleverness and wit which are disarming. It is her coolness, her confidence, her determination to say just exactly what she intends to say whether the reader will or no."25

Humor, independence, intelligence--these qualities seem to appear in the greatest satirists and there is a fourth quality--the moral sense, the concern with good and evil, with the possibility of changing and reforming human institutions. As a matter of fact, surely one of the chief goals of the satirist is to inspire a reformation, a remodeling, or an improvement of human society as well as institutions. This desire may be said to distinguish great satire from invective, sarcasm, or mere pessimistic condemnations of society. Surely a moral concern is the fourth of the dominant characteristics of Rose Macaulay's temperament. Her intelligence led her to see the absurdities of mankind, her wit and independence shaped the approach she used, but her moral nature dictated the necessity of the attack.

Her strong sense of morality was grounded, in part, in her knowledge of history, in the culture and tradition of her social

class and the high value it placed on human worth and dignity, and in her religious heritage. Even though she spent several of her formative years in Italy, she imbibed from her mother firm Anglican beliefs. As a teenager, she often accompanied her mother and sister on Retreats. In 1909, when her brother Aulay, with the Royal Engineers in India, was murdered, Rose sought to become a missionary for Universities' Mission to Central Africa. This did not materialize, however. When she fell in love with a man who, she later learned, was already married, she struggled to reconcile their illicit friendship with her habitual religious beliefs and practices. In the early twenties, however, their secret attachment deepened, and eventually she broke away from the sacramental life of the Church. Her heartache caused by the conflict of desire for the church and desire for her lover is poignantly revealed in the somewhat autobiographical novel, *The Towers of Trebizond*. Several years after her companion's death,

26 In the introduction to *Last Letters to a Friend*, Miss Macaulay's cousin, Constance Babington-Smith, notes that Rose and her sister, like other members of the Conybeare family, took great delight in lively debates on questions of moral theology. Miss Macaulay gives several accounts of such discussions with friends, both laymen and clergy, in her letters to Father Johnson.

27 Constance Babington-Smith said of *The Towers of Trebizond*, "Her last novel, with its light-hearted blend of satire and fantasy, was entirely characteristic of Rose, as she was then and as she had always been. Its serious theme—the conflict between the torments and the joys of a guilty love—reflected the tragic secret in her own past (many guessed this when they read the book). But its underlying message—the living hell of not really wanting to journey toward the City of God, in spite of an unforgettable longing for it—was not (as some believed it to be) a representation of her own state of mind at the time she wrote it. For, thanks in the first place to her correspondence with Father Johnson, she had already found the way out of her 'wilderness' and had attained to serenity of heart and spirit." *Last Letters to a Friend*, p. 13.
Miss Macaulay started the correspondence with Father Johnson which gradually guided her back to the Anglican Church after nearly thirty years' estrangement. Father Johnson gave her what he described as "the little push back to where she belonged, inside the church door, instead of standing in the porch." During the last years of her life, Miss Macaulay attended church daily, went on annual Retreats, and shared her faith with others.

Despite her own nonconformity, she was never one to condone morally questionable behavior. Though she deals with violations of social ethics in her novels, she works frequently on a larger canvas. She denounced what she called the present cult in literature of violence and cruelty and obscenity. I agree that it is a contemporary fashion, and I don't like it. I suppose it comes from backwardness, uncultivated minds, whose only romance is violence—no, violence and sex; very much sex. The mass mind, too uneducated to look for or find romance and excitement in beauty, landscape, architecture, art, poetry, music; it can only thrill to the obvious physical excitement of horror and sex love, and craves avidly for more and more detail in the description of these. It not only disgusts me but bores me....Is it the effect of the growing influence of a tough, half-literate class of reader, who demands to sup of horrors? I hope that as we all grow better educated, this fashion will pass.

Potterism was called by one reviewer "a good antidote for the oversexed novel."  

29 Rose Macaulay, Letters to a Friend, p. 294.  
Writing one of a series of articles by noted men and women on "What I Believe," Rose Macaulay said, "I believe...that ignorance, vulgarity, and cruelty are the three black jungle horrors which have always beset and entangled man and hindered him from rising even higher above the apes than he has yet done." This doctrine made Miss Macaulay a pacifist; it also made her a seeker of reform, a social satirist.

Literary Influences

Living as she did in London at a time when literary coteries were rather numerous, it was inevitable that she should know most of the important writers of the time and to some extent share in their concerns. When she first came to London, she met, chiefly through Naomi Royde Smith, the literary editor of the Westminster Gazette, a "brilliant and vocal group of people" which included Walter de la


32In one of her letters to Father Johnson (Letters to a Friend, p. 77) she commented, "The question of the developing sense of morality is fascinating. When do we get to the point of rejecting War? I have long felt that one great international gesture would be worth while; saying, just once, to potential aggressors, 'Go ahead if you must and do your worst, we do not intend to behave like barbarians, whatever barbarians may do to us.' This might mean occupation and domination by some barbarian power like Russia; very unpleasant, pernicious, and horrible, but could not be more so than waging war ourselves, with all its cruel atrocities. And it just might help to start a new era. But I fear there is no hope of any such civility in a barbaric world, at present, and we shall go murdering each other by radio-active bombs, and destroying all that's left of beauty."

33Rose Macaulay, Letters to a Friend, p. 16.
Marc, E. V. Knox, J. C. Squire, Middleton Murry, and Hugh Walpole.

She later wrote,

I liked them all. They were all gay and intelligent and young or youngish, and hallowed to me with the glamour and sophistication of London; they chattered of the literary and political world and its personalities as initiates--or so it seemed to me, who was a Cambridge provincial.34

Later to her circle of literary friends she added the Bloomsbury group,35 Bertrand Russell, Roger Fry, Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, V. Sackville West, and Leonard and Virginia Woolf. Several of these friends were satirists, among whom were E. V. Knox, author of The Mechanism of Satire, and Walter de la Mare, who could occasionally treat the theme of a poem with biting satire. But satirists or not, all of these people provided through perceptive conversation a mental stimulation from which any satirist would benefit.

Always important was her reading. Her favorite authors included Shakespeare, Anatole France, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, and Max Beerbohm. She did not care for the writing of Thomas Hardy and Henry James. "In other words, what she admires is deftness and the light touch; what she dislikes is seriousness and the lack of clarity."36 Shakespeare she called "a kind of splendid miracle."37

34Ibid.

35Frank Swinnerton, who speaks deprecatingly of the Bloomsbury Group as "the spiritual home of exiles from Cambridge University," does not include Rose Macaulay in the group.

36Twentieth Century Authors, eds. Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, p. 921.

and praised his combination of thought and poetry. To E. M. Forster, one of her best friends, and Max Beerbohm she attributed several of the same qualities for which her own writing is praised. In letters to Father Johnson, she wrote that "E. M. Forster has such an attractive mind" and recommended Beerbohm for "his urbane irony and humour, his exquisite mannered style, his particular slant on his environment." In E. M. Forster's early stories Miss Macaulay found the message of what she called the eternal battle:

Reality, Life, Truth, Passion, Gaiety, Nature, Youth, call the thing what you will, fights for its life, in various garbs and with various weapons, against Unreality, Death, Sham, Conventionalism, Dullness, Pompousness, Age.

This message is not only the theme of Potterism but is also a recurrent one in her other novels.

The influences which molded Rose Macaulay into a social satirist--the tradition and culture of the social class to which she belonged, her early environment, her temperament, literary influences--are all qualities which fostered her satiric bent. But how much was shaped by pressures coming from the intellectual milieu of the time and from the social changes going on is harder to say. She saw the problem for any literary biographer. Commenting upon the writings of E. M. Forster, she observed:

38Ibid., p. 295.
Writers, like other people, are rooted in time and place, embedded in, growing and flowering out of, these conditioning soils, so that you will only with some pains sort their elements, disentangle the individual from the background, and never (I think) quite; indeed, how could you, since all the background, the march of all the centuries, the crowding shades of all the dead up to that moment, of all the living in that moment, charge the lightest spoken word at any given hour, with their unescapable rhythms, echoes, syntheses, and purposes? 41

It would seem that she was remarkably aware of the great forces at work in her own time. The breakup of Victorianism in England resulted in a questioning and a revaluation of "mental attitudes, moral ideals, and spiritual values... The old certainties were certainties no longer." 42 English writers learned the importance of approaching life from a questioning, agnostic point of view, that the structure of society is of inexhaustible interest to those who would examine it; that the novel should be a conscious and critical interpretation of life; that all is not well with the world nor with the institutions of society which reveal man's improvidence and incapacity; that poverty is a disease and that no good end will be served by calling it by any other name. And man? He is certainly not a noble creature—but still, not unhuman; willing unselfishly to aid his neighbor, but moderately covetous nonetheless; ambitious and successful, but not over-scrupulous; a creature capable of love, but not altogether discriminate in his affections; pious, but subject to impiety; honest, sometimes, but frail. 43

William C. Frierson saw in the period from 1900 to 1915, when Rose Macaulay's first books appeared, these tendencies: the struggle of romanticism versus realism with romanticism passing from fashion;

41 Ibid., p. 7.
the desire for social, political, and philosophical ideas in novels; the rise of subjectivism with many authors using "registers" to present personal views; the influence of H. G. Wells; the general Russian influence; and the emergence of the life-novel or spiritual biography. Rebellion followed questioning. "The Edwardians and the early Georgians were at war with the rigidly righteous, with hypocrisy, with social compulsion, with unimaginative Philistinism, with parental authority and pretension." 45

But rebellion paled before the war years which brought a new kind of chaos in their wake, not the least of which was a widespread disintegration of religious faith. As regard for authority weakened, Christian belief weakened.

There remain...considerable numbers who have shed the old beliefs without adopting alternatives. They are convinced of the bankruptcy of existing constitutions; they are sceptical not only of all in authority but also of all who aim at authority. They offer no remedy because they have trust in none. They are only spectators and critics of life, with an intense individualistic conviction that it is both dangerous and unwarrantable to attempt to arrange the lives of other people—and every system of religion and politics is planned to arrange other people's lives in conformity with a common design. They are tolerant of modern civilization only in so far as it safeguards the individual person from oppression by others; they are intolerant of it in so far as its persistent tendency is to standardize the human mind and spirit according to a pattern which pleases the majority, however unintelligent or base. 46

44 In an article called "The Contemporary Novel" in Fortnightly, November, 1911, Wells said, "Even if the author attempts or affects the impartial, he cannot avoid, as people say, putting ideas into his readers' heads. The greater his skill, the more vivid his power of suggestion. And it is almost equally impossible for him not to betray his sense that the proceedings of this person are rather jolly and admirable, and of that, rather ugly and detestable....The novel is not simply a fictitious record of conduct, but also a study and judgment of conduct."

45 William C. Frierson, op. cit., p. 146.

Part of this chaos in the 1920's was due to labor troubles, the failure of the League of Nations, and new conceptions introduced by psychology and sociology, especially the breakdown of marriage which was part of the general disregard for authority. And this was inevitably expressed in the literature.

The literature of the postwar era reflected the society. To the war-generation the truths of science were the only acceptable truths, and science had little human wisdom to give. It was bent upon asking factual questions, not upon solving ethical enigmas. So the war consciousness expressed itself in a protest at absurdities. It begot a spirit of confident agnosticism, known as sophistication, which on the one hand delighted in a frank paganism and, on the other, ridiculed the accumulated wisdom of the ages. Novelists betook themselves to private worlds where the characters acted with a logic of their own. Streams of consciousness...psychoanalysis...The general result was that censorship of language and ideas was finally abolished, technique altered in a variety of ways, and the last restraints upon the English novel cast aside.47

There were many experimental schools. Impressionists such as Frank Swinnerton, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, and Katherine Mansfield were capturing the "intense moment." The school of sophistication, an offshoot of scientific scepticism and despair, was led by Norman Douglas, and included such writers as Romer Wilson, Wyndham Lewis, Michael Arlen, William Gerhardi, Aldous Huxley, and Rose Macaulay.

The word "sophisticate" may cover a number of attitudes. In general we may say that it was a lighthearted, intellectual, and pagan revolt against all ideologies....Rose

47William C. Frierson, op. cit., p. xiv of Introduction.
Macaulay sympathetically presented a "lost generation" which could hold on to intellectual honesty when it had nothing else to hold to... The writers themselves shunned any attempt at definition. Perhaps they held (1) in a mad world beware of madness, and (2) in a region of total darkness, any light is a good one.

Before and during the 1920's Rose Macaulay had been following or in many cases seeking to help establish the literary trend in England. Her pre-war novels are filled with comment upon topical situations. The war had a strong influence upon her, calling forth her power of derision. It was during this period, the decade of the 1920's, that she did her most prolific writing, and achieved her greatest acclaim. Because she was an eyewitness, she excelled at the creating of the spectator who is also a critic of life. There was too in her a growth of a certain sense of futility. She continued to ridicule the foibles of mankind, but underlying her comedies is a burden of tragic futility.

Rose Macaulay was a cultivated woman who belonged to the responsible upper middle class of England. She inevitably found satire to be a medium through which to help mold public opinion, believing as she did in the power of the word in shaping the world. Her didactic purposes were stronger than her love of art for its own sake.

\[48\] Ibid., p. 248.

\[49\] The best example of this is Rome Garden in Told by an Idiot.
Chapter II. Satiric Techniques

An analysis of the satiric techniques Rose Macaulay used does not necessarily explain her success. The elements which make her books delightful rather than plodding, witty rather than dull, are intangible and do not lend themselves readily to analysis. Nevertheless the techniques align her with such satirists as Jonathan Swift, Mark Twain, and Sinclair Lewis and add immeasurably to the effectiveness of her work. Like Swift and other pre-twentieth century satirists, she occasionally devised allegories to ridicule provincialism, politics, and materialism as in Orphan Island and The Towers of Trebizond. She could also attack openly. In her novels such techniques as a reverse Utopia, parody, invective, mimicked conversation, verbal irony, dramatic irony, symbolism, and satiric characterization are to be found. Sometimes these are combined with an abundance of detail or a refreshing look at human nature, thus adding delightful wit and humor to the satire.

Reverse Utopia

One example of a combination of a satiric technique with an insight into human nature occurs in The Making of a Bigot. Here the Utopian idea can be identified with Eddy Oliver's conception of a newspaper to be called Unity. Explaining the purposes of Unity, Eddy said, "We stand for Truth. We are of Use....We're not... going on a down-with anybody tack. Our métier is to encourage the
good, not to discourage anyone. That, as I remarked before, is why we shall sell so extremely well."\(^1\) Unity lasted only three months. Most Londoners, including the aunt of Eddy's fiancee, found it a trifle savourless. A little abuse hasn't usually been found, I believe, to reduce the sales of a paper appreciably. We most of us like to see our enemies hauled over the coals; or, failing our enemies, some innocuous and eminent member of an unpopular and over-intelligent race. In short, we like to see a fine hot quarrel going on. If Unity isn't going to quarrel with anyone, I shall certainly not subscribe.\(^2\)

Perhaps this technique could more accurately be called a reverse Utopia since the paper would represent the perfection any reader should want from a newspaper. That human nature finds absolute perfection, truth, unbiased fact, too dull and the Utopian ideal for journalism dies gives added force to the satire.

Parody

One of the favorite targets for her satiric arrows is journalism. Because the characteristics of poor journalism are so widely known, parody, in which the author can exaggerate the characteristics and cram them compactly into her imitation, is an effective method for the attack. In *Keeping Up Appearances* (American title, *Daisy and Daphne*) Daisy Simpson "would have liked to be as Erinna, who has left a considerable reputation as a poet, but only a few lines of poetry,"\(^3\) but achievement without labour was for her, as


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 213.

for most, a difficult goal. Instead she worked for a Sunday newspaper which required from her periodic articles on one or another of those absorbing problems that beset editorial minds concerning the female sex and young persons, as, should women simultaneously rear young and work for their living, should they play games, can they see jokes, have they minds or souls, what is the religion of the young?\textsuperscript{4}

An excellent example of parody occurs when a British typist having been killed on the island which Daisy was visiting, Daisy was requested to do a series of articles about the murder.

The mystery surrounding the shingled girl typist, Vera Wilson, who was found dead in a wood here five days ago, is still unsolved, though the police are said to be at work on clues in their possession. "I cannot think," said her sister, who has come over here, "why Vera should have met with this untimely end, as she was a very bright, popular girl, of a sunny disposition, with no worries and no intimate men friends. It is, naturally, a terrible grief to my poor mother, who had not at all expected any such thing when Vera left England a month ago with a Lunn Party for a holiday." The dead girl's sister, Mrs. Albert Hammond of Walsall, is a handsome well-dressed, shingled woman, who is naturally in a state of considerable distress. Sensational developments as to the mystery are expected shortly. The islanders are much excited about it, as murders are as unusual here as they are common in Great Britain.\textsuperscript{5}

Daisy thought two hundred words would look better than the one hundred and sixty-eight she had typed, so she added, "The belief is general that the girl's murderer was of British nationality, though she does not appear to have been particularly friendly with any male fellow.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 19.

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., p. 33.
member of her party." Rose Macaulay's comment is that "Daisy, like other journalists, believed, no doubt justly, that the murders of young ladies are usually perpetrated by their gentlemen friends."?

Invective

Sometimes parody seemed too mild a method for her to show her vehement dislike of mediocre journalism. When a more forceful cudgel was needed, she turned to another satiric device, invective.

Year by year, Vicky, a character in Told by an Idiot,

was to be found again in what newspaper reports, in their mystic jargon call, for reasons understood by none but themselves "a certain condition"...whether these journalists think the statement, "she was going to have a baby" indecent, or coarse, will probably never transpire, for they are a strange, instinct-driven, non-analytical race, who can seldom give reasons for their terminology.\(^6\)

Because she used invective sparingly, the technique was very effective when she applied it to those things she particularly wanted to ridicule. She called Potterism, a word she coined to mean Philistinism, mainly an Anglo-Saxon disease, and said it was worst of all in America, that great home of commerce, success, and the booming of the second-rate....In Russia...it practically did not exist. The Russians were without shame and without cant, saw things as they were, and proceeded to make them a good deal worse. That was barbarity, imbecility, and devilishness, but it was not Potterism.\(^8\)

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 34.

\(^7\)Ibid.


In Dangerous Ages her target is life, fate, whatever stands in the way of man's achieving his goal.

To be aimless: to live on emotions and be by them consumed: that was pitiful. To have done one's work for life, and to be in return cast aside by life like a broken tool: that was tragic. The thing was to defy life: to fly in the face of the fool nature, break her absurd rules, and wrest out of the breakage something for oneself by which to live at the last.\(^1\)

As the language in the passage is not violent or vituperative, it can scarcely be called invective although it is certainly a strong denunciation of the human condition itself.

The Mimicked Conversation

In connection with the quality of realism in Rose Macaulay's novels, two critics touch upon various aspects of her reportorial skill in dialogue. R. Brimley Johnson felt Miss Macaulay managed dialogue with
distinguished courage. Conducting a spirited discussion upon Women's Suffrage, for example, she introduces the disputants with stark, and surprising simplicity: "Mr. Robinson said. Benje said. Louis said...." Here is a daring repudiation of the rules against repetition of which the dramatic value is obvious. We feel at once how one after the other drops in his contribution to the controversy: the quick response, the ready tongue, the appreciation of each other's point of view. Talk reported in this manner becomes revelation of character.\(^1\)

Patrick Braybrooke said of Rose Macaulay that she was quick to grasp a bit of inane modern conversation. There's a nice example in a bit of conversation about a cabaret


show: a bit of clever and silly talk about what was seen there. How much leg can be implied, how many fat elderly men, with open mouths longing to "eat" the long-limbed girls of few brains and no morals.

"Guy came in late, and said next morning that the cabaret had been dull and poor. 'The Pyrenees are altogether too primitive. No grace or wit or elegance. I nearly asked for my money back.'"

An admirable picture of the foolish Englishman trying to impress how much he longs for a really scorching show, so that when he gets back to his unobtrusive villa, he can say how much and how far the French really do go. Miss Macaulay brings out an answer to a very direct feminine question, with much cleverness.

"'What did you see, darling?' Evelyn asked.

'Oh, well it wasn't quite so dull as all that,' said Guy. ‘What time is that train?’"

These last two lines seem to me to indicate to some extent the 'smartness' of Miss Macaulay. The direct feminine question parried by the shuffling and indirect masculine reply is indeed typical of much conversation that is indulged in by the sort of sophisticated people about whom Miss Macaulay writes in Crewe Train. And in such a piece of dialogue Miss Macaulay is not only "smart," she is also natural.12

She is not only smart, but she is engaged in something which belongs with her satiric technique in general. It is akin to parody because it derives from only a slight exaggeration of something all of us recognize immediately as being true or real. The mimicked monologue or dialogue was used effectively by Sinclair Lewis. In mimicked conversation the speaker quickly exposes that he is stupid or

pompous or unthinking through his use of euphemisms, cliches, and over-familiar proverbs; through his digressions and confident generalizations; through his insistence on minute details; or through his rhetorical questions to which he provides superficial truisms as answers. Rose Macaulay uses mimicked conversation in three basic ways: to show characterization, to develop a humorous situation, and to satirize the lack of accurate and precise thinking of which she found almost everyone guilty. One example of mimicked conversation used to reveal character occurs in the third section of Potterism, which is called Leila Yorke's book. Leila Yorke, the mother of Clare and the twins, Jane and John, is the author of best sellers "quite unmarred by any spark of cleverness, flash of wit, or morbid taint of philosophy."¹³ In a long passage in which there is more monologue than dialogue, the euphemisms, cliches, digressions, and generalizations are amply illustrated.

Love and truth are the only things that count. I have often thought that they are like two rafts on the stormy sea of life, which otherwise would swamp and drown us struggling human beings. If we follow these two stars patiently, they will guide us at last into port. Love--the love of our kind--the undying love of a mother for her children--the love, so gloriously exhibited lately, of a soldier for his country--the eternal love between a man and a woman, which counts the world well lost--these are the clues through the wilderness. And Truth, the Truth which cries in the market-place with a loud voice and will not be hid, the Truth which sacrifices comfort, joy, even life itself, for the sake of a clear vision, the Truth which is far stranger than fiction--this is Love's very twin....I must begin with that dreadful evening of the 4th of September last....

¹³Rose Macaulay, Potterism, p. 5.
"Is that you, mother?" she said, quite quietly and steadily. "There's been an accident. Oliver fell downstairs. He fell backwards and broke his neck. He died soon after the doctor came." The self-control, the quiet pluck of these modern girls! Her voice hardly shook as she uttered the terrible words. I sat down, trembling all over, and the tears rushed to my eyes. My darling child, and her dear husband, cut off at the very outset of their mutual happiness, and in this awful way! Those stairs--I always hated them; they are so steep and narrow, and wind so sharply round a corner.

"Oh, my darling," I said. "And the last train gone, so that I can't be with you till the morning. Is Clare there?"

"Yes," said Jane. "She's lying down....she fainted."

My poor darling Clare! So highly-strung, so delicate-fibred, far more like me than Jane is!...I went straight to Percy...I could hardly bear to tell him the dreadful news...Then he sat and thought, and worked out plans in his head, in the concentrated, abstracted way he has, telephoning sometimes, writing notes sometimes, almost forgetting my presence. I love to be at the centre of the brain of the Pinkerton press at the moments when it is working at top speed like this....Then he turned from the newspaper owner to the father, and sighed heavily, and said, "Poor little Janie. Poor dear little Babs. Well, well, well...."

I have never been orthodox; I am not even now an orthodox theosophist; I am not of the stuff which can fall into line and accept things from others; it seems as if I must always think for myself, delve painfully, with blood and tears, for Truth. But I have always been profoundly religious; the spiritual side of life has always meant a very great deal to me; I think I feel almost too intensely the vibration of Spirit in the world of things. I probe, and wonder, and cannot let it alone, like most people, and be content with surfaces....

We went up by the 9:24 and went straight to Hampstead. Quietly and sadly we entered that house of death. I led Jane into the drawing room. I felt her calm was unnatural. "Cry, my darling," I said. "Have your cry out, and you will feel better."

14 Jane had just discovered that she was in love with another man, after knowing for some time that her marriage had been a mistake.
"Shall I?" she said. "I don't think so, mother. Crying doesn't make me feel better, ever. It makes my head ache."

I thought of Tennyson's young war widow and the nurse of ninety years, and only wished it could have been six months later, so that I could have set Jane's child upon her knee....

I went in to Clare. She was sitting in an arm-chair by the window. Her poor, pretty little face was pinched and feverishly flushed; "My poor little girl," I murmured. "Cry, darling. Cry, and you will feel better." Clare was always more obedient than Jane. She did cry.

Percy had to leave us now, in order to go to the Haste and see about things there. He said he would be back in the afternoon. He would, of course, take over the business of making the last sad arrangements, which Jane called, rather crudely, "seeing about the funeral"; the twins would always call spades "spades." Presently I made the suggestion which I had for some time had in my mind. "May I, dear?" I asked very softly, half rising. Jane rose, too.

"See Oliver, you mean? Oh, yes. He's in his room."

In the presence of the Great White Silence I bowed my head and wept. Death is wonderful to me; not a horrible thing, but holy and high...

In I Would Be Private the mimicked dialogue is used to develop a situation based upon the multiple birth of the Dionne quintuplets which is delightfully parodied in the passage. Ronald McBrowm's wife is giving birth and Mrs. Grig, Ron's mother-in-law, is keeping Ron informed.

Presently Mrs. Grig came in. She was flushed, triumphant, a grandmother. "First a girl," she said. "A bit undersized, but lovely. Ten fingers. Ten toes. There's another just coming."

Ronald, surprised, asked "Toe or finger?" But Mrs. Grig had gone. Five minutes later she was back, more flushed, more triumphant, still more a grandmother.

15Percy was the owner of the Haste and Oliver had been the editor.

16Rose Macaulay, Potterism, pp. 89-103.
"And then a boy," she said. "A lovely boy...."
"If doctor's not mistaken, Win's got something up her sleeve still."

Something up her sleeve? She couldn't mean... She did mean. She looked in presently to say "Another little boy. You've got trips, son."

Ron thought trips definitely too many. He became discontented, and threw the cat from his knee on to the floor. The cat would have to leave; it was apparent that all the milk would be required elsewhere. Well, it was trips, and that was that. An unfortunate thing to happen to a policeman. The police ought to be able to prevent that kind of thing happening. Mrs. Grig came in again. She was chuckling, and wiping her eyes with her apron. "Another little girl," she gasped. "Win's been and gone and had quads! Who ever'd have thought it of Win, so quiet as she is? Why, she'll be the talk of the country!"

Ron got up. Obviously, he was needed next door. "Here, what's all this? I must stop it. She can't go on like this."

"Well, she has. You stay where you are, boy. You know you're not allowed in there. It's all as right as rain, and you ought to be proud, and in a minute nurse and I'll bring you the lot to look at. You sit down and be good."

Mrs. Grig entered again. Ron, breaking into a sweat, exclaimed "My God!"

His mother-in-law's apron was up over her face; she sank, convulsed, on the sofa, gasping and giggling. "Another little boy! Win's got quins! Can you beat it? Oh, my, my, my! Did any one ever hear the likes of it?"

Ron stared, dumbfounded, mazed and strange. Did, then, such things occur? And not in the news, far off, remote, but to oneself? "Here. How do they stop it? Some one'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."

Mrs. Grig was wiping her streaming eyes. "Don't you get fussed, son. That's the lot now. Doctor says so."

Ron, who thought he should have said so at least three babies back, felt suspicious. "How am I to know?" He
had to go on duty again presently. At this rate, when he returned home at midnight, he might find his flat a creche. It crossed his mind to look in and speak firmly to Win about it, but, if she didn't know what she was doing, poor girl, where was the use?  

The use of mimicked conversation to satirize the lack of accurate and precise thinking is amply illustrated in *Mystery at Geneva*.

"I see," said the clergyman, "that you have one of the French comic papers with you. A pity their humour is so much spoilt by suggestiveness."

Suggestiveness. Henry could never understand that word as applied in condemnation. Should not everything be suggestive? Or should all literature, art, and humour be a cul-de-sac, suggesting no idea whatsoever? Henry did not want to be uncharitable, but he could not but think that those who used this word in this sense laid themselves open to the suspicion (in this case, at least, quite unjustified) that their minds were only receptive of one kind of suggestion, and that a coarse one.

"I expect," he replied, "that you mean coarseness. People often do when they use that word. I notice. Anyhow, the papers are not very funny, I find."

Henry was invited to dinner with Dr. Fanchi and his niece, Miss Longfellow. Dr. Fanchi quoted a poem, "as one of your Edwardian poets has sung. That was a gifted generation; may it rest in peace. For I think it mostly perished in that calamitous war we had....But your Georgians—they too are a gifted generation, is it not so?"

"You mean by Georgians those persons who are now flourishing under the sovereignty of King George the Fifth of England? Such as myself? I do not really know. How could it be that gifts go in generations? A generation, 


suresly, is merely chronological. Gifts are sporadic. No, I find no generation, as such, gifted. Except, of course, with the gifts common to all humanity....People speak of the Victorians, and endow them with special qualities, evil or good. They were all black recently; now they are being whitewashed—or rather enamelled. I think they had qualities, as a generation (or rather as several generations, which, of course, they were); men and women then were, in the main, the same as men and women to-day. I see nothing but individuals. The rest is all the fantasy of the foolish, who love to generalise, till they cannot see the trees for the wood. Generalisations make me dizzy. I see nothing but the separate trees. There is nothing else....

With reference to the much bandied term new woman, Miss Longfellow said,

"We don't like the New Woman over here. Perhaps Mr. Beechtree admires her though."

"The New Woman?" Henry doubtfully queried. "Is there a new woman? I don't know the phrase, except from old Victorian Punch pictures."

"Ah, has the woman question, then, over in your country—died out? Fought to a finish, perhaps, with honours to the victorious sex?"

"The woman question, sir? What woman question? I know no more of woman questions that of man questions, I am afraid. There is an infinity of questions you may ask about all human beings. People ask then all the time. Personally, I don't; it is less trouble not to. There people are; you can take them or leave them, for what they're worth. Why ask questions about them? There is never a satisfactory answer."

With regard to even so broad a term as woman, one can see Miss Macaulay's rejection of abstractions and class terms for the sake of the individual. On the way to dinner Henry asked Miss Longfellow,

19 Ibid., p. 30.

20 Ibid., p. 82.
"Are you a Catholic, Miss Longfellow?"

"I was brought up Catholic. Women believe what they are taught, as a rule, don't they?"

"I hadn't observed it," Henry said, "particularly. Are women so unlike men then?"

"That's quite a question, isn't it? What do you think?"

"I can't think in large sections and masses of people. Women are so different from one another. So are men. That's all I can see, when people talk of the sexes. Most people always think in large masses of people. They find it easier, more convenient, more picturesque. It is indeed so, but less accurate. Accuracy—do you agree with me?—is of an importance very greatly underestimated by the majority of persons."  

Verbal Irony

Another satiric device used is verbal irony. This includes remarks of the author directed to the reader in which such mechanisms of irony as grouping of incongruous objects, sham praise, naive irreverence, and innocent acceptance of absurdity are used. In Going Abroad we find an example of incongruous objects grouped together. The Bishop of Xanadu has been hearing glowing reports from the Buchmanite Groupers from Oxford about their missionary work.

The movement flourished in Canada, Australia, Switzerland, Paris, Holland, the Scandinavian countries, Czecho-Slovakia, and Germany! What a link it must be forming between all these people. Even more successfully, one has been told, than the League of Nations. It must, surely, be melting the barriers between black and white, Swede and Dane, Frenchman and German, Russian and Pole, Aryan and non-Aryan, Oxford and Cambridge.  

21Ibid., p. 68.

In *Orphan Island*, Rosamond Thinkwell is described as not being able to "distinguish between women and men, nor between the Georgian poets." Rose Macaulay's groupings of incongruous objects are more subtle and perhaps not as effective as Stephen Vincent Benet's use of this method in *John Brown's Body*. In describing Mary Lou Wingate, the wife of a Southern plantation owner, he said she "knew her Bible--and how to flirt" and gave a testimonial to her efficiency in the description "and the shirts and estrangements were neatly mended." Miss Macaulay is content to say of one of her characters that he enjoyed "such things as conversation, malice, good jokes, and the foolishness of other people."

She is also more subtle in her use of sham praise than are many satirists. The sting of the satire is evident to the reader almost before he realizes that the praise technique is being used. Much of her sham praise is directed toward the British. "Londoners are musical people, on the whole; no one can say that, though they like bad music, they don't like good music, too; they are catholic in taste."

Isn't it extraordinary how many traditional friendships we British seem to have accumulated? What with France and Italy and Turkey and Bulgaria and Portugal and Japan, and now the Basques...I do feel it's splendid of us and still better is the way we have never allowed it to cramp our style or hamper our international technique.

25Ibid., p. 155.
Occasionally the satire is directed against a situation Miss Macaulay no doubt experienced. "It was a nice hotel, and the management were so eager to help us that they begged us to let them cash our traveller's cheques at a much higher rate than we should have got from a bank."\(^{29}\)

Not even a President of the United States could escape. A character in *Non-Combatants* replies in answer to a question about how she liked the President,

> Oh, delightful. Like most governments, they're nearly all charming personally, I believe. So much stronger, as a rule, in the heart than in the head. They mean so much good and do so much harm, poor dears. A curse seems to dog them. They're the victims of an iniquitous and insane system; and they lack foresights and sound judgment so terribly, for all their good intentions.\(^{30}\)

As to naïve irreverence, one has the feeling that Miss Macaulay's characters are seldom naïve. In a passage in *Mystery at Geneva* the tone seems to be that of a sophisticated rather than a naïve mentality. Yet the fact that the passage is described as "not quite happily put" seems to indicate that the speaker, the acting President of the League of Nations, in telling what the League had done since the preceding Assembly, was unaware of what he was saying of the limitations of the League of Nations.

It had grappled with disease and drugs, economics, sanitation, prostitution, and education; it had through its Court of Justice arbitrated several times in international disputes and averted several wars; other wars it had deplored; it had wrestled with unemployment and even with disarmament...("not, perhaps quite happily put," murmured one British delegate to another.)\(^{31}\)


Naive irreverence is clearer in The Making of a Bigot.

Eddy, the main character in this novel, a young man who finds something good in all ideas, is naively irreverent about the church.

Eddy was getting to know that critical, disapproving look too well. Everywhere it met him. He hated it. It seemed to him even stranger in clergymen than in others, because clergymen are Christians, and, to Eddy's view, there were no negations in that vivid and intensely positive creed. Its commands were always, surely, to go and do, not to abstain and reject. And look, too, at the sort of people who were of old accepted in that generous, all-embracing circle.32

Naive irreverence also appears in connection with Rose Macaulay's characters who rebel against the standards of society.

In Orphan Island a native of the island asks Rosamond Thinkwell, the daughter of a Cambridge don, about England. "Is it free, as grand-mamma says it is? Can people do as they please there?"

"No," Rosamond was sure of that. "We don't do as we please, most people don't. There are police, you see. And work. And we have to do things. Tiresome things...wear shoes and stockings...in the road. And other clothes we don't want. Come in to meals at meal-times. Sleep indoors, mostly. Go out to tea sometimes. Talk to people who come in the house. Have classes, teaching girls and boys things--at least I do. Go to bazaars. Oh, dear, lots of things."

"Why do you? Is it the law, or does your papa make you?"

"No, father doesn't bother much. He has to do them, too. And it's not the law--not most of it...I don't know...you just have to."33

There is a kind of naïveté in Denham Dobie (Chapel), another nonconformist who cannot understand the rules of society.

Denham seemed to have an erroneous idea that it didn't matter what the inside of houses looked like, so long as they were reasonably comfortable, and contained the things one was likely to want ready to one's hand. She insisted on pinning maps on the walls, and these, with a barometer and thermometer, were the only mural decorations she cared to hang, though she made no objection to anything Arnold liked to put up.\(^3^4\)

This kind of naïveté is not as irreverent as it appears to those who have false reverence.

Miss Macaulay's use of the innocent acceptance technique of verbal irony covers topics from widows to dress to a favorite, the church.

All widows are wonderful: Henry knew this, for always he had heard "Dear so-and-so is being simply wonderful" said of bereaved wives, and knew that it merely and in point of fact meant bereaved; but the French widows are widows indeed.\(^3^5\)

Morning dress...rest gown...tea gown...bridge coat...

Life must be, to those who lived sartorially, a complex and many-changing business; they must be at it from morning till night, in order not to risk being caught in the wrong clothes.\(^3^6\)

The essay "How to Choose a Religion" gives many examples of innocent acceptance.

...the Roman Catholic branch has dignity, antiquity, and authority, and will save you a lot of trouble in deciding for yourself what to believe, for it knows the truth and


\(^3^5\) Rose Macaulay, Mystery at Geneva, p. 30.

\(^3^6\) Rose Macaulay, Keeping Up Appearances, p. 95.
and tells you....On the other hand, marriage with non-Catholics and divorce with anyone at all are troublesome in this church, and a good deal of attendance at services is expected. The Orthodox branch also has dignity and an ancient tradition, but its clergy do not always look what our novelists call well-groomed. Many of them do up their hair with hair-pins.37

It is very nice to be a Quaker. Quakers say no creeds, so they can believe anything they like....As to Baptists, Congregationalists, and Wesleyans, the chief thing the ordinary person knows about them is that their places of worship are always (together with the police station) the ugliest buildings in the village....They have ministers, and at elections they vote Liberal. I do not know why this is. The better-off classes in the country think it ill-bred to be this kind of Dissenter. It is worst bred of all, I believe, to be a Plymouth Brother. It is also very sad, as these do not keep Christmas by so much as a mince-pie.38

Or you can be a Unitarian. Often quite cultured people are Unitarians. It is a religion suitable for religious people who cannot believe very much....If you believe even less than Unitarians do, and yet are still a religious person, you will do well to join the Ethical Church.39

In The Making of a Bigot the clergymen as well as the beliefs were innocently accepted by Eddy, who accepted everything.

Eddy thought being a clergymen was fine because clergymen get their teeth into something: they make things move; you can see results, which is so satisfactory. They can point to a man, or a society, and say, "Here you are; I made this. I found him a worm and no man, and left him a human being," or, "I found them scattered and immoral units, and left them a Band of Hope, or a Mothers' Union." It is a great work. Eddy...threw himself vigorously into men's clubs and lads' brigades, and boy scouts, and all the other organizations...Father Finch...had set all kinds of people and institutions on their feet....So his parish was a live parish....Father Finch was emphatically a worker. Dogma and ritual...did not occupy the prominent place given to

38 Ibid., pp. 20 and 22.
39 Ibid., p. 23.
them by his senior curate, Hillier. Hillier was the
supreme authority on ecclesiastical ceremonial. It was
he who knew, without referring to a book, all the colours
of all the festivals and vigils; and what cere-cloths and
maniples were; it was he who decided how many candles were
demanded at the festal evensong of each saint, and what
vestments were suitable to be worn in procession, and all
the other things that lay people are apt to think get done
for themselves, but which really give a great deal of trouble
and thought to some painstaking organiser. Hillier had genial
and sympathetic manners with the poor, was very popular in
the parish, belonged to eight religious guilds, wore the
badges of all of them on his watch-chain, and had been
educated at a county school and a theological college.
The junior curate, James Peters, was a jolly young cricketer
of twenty-four....Teach the men and boys of the parish to
play Rugger like sportsmen and not like cads, and you've
taught them most of what a boy or man need learn, James
Peters held. While the senior curate said, give them the
ritual of the Catholic Church, and the second curate said,
give them a minimum wage, and the vicar said, put into them,
by some means or another, the fear of God, the junior curate
led them to the playing-field hired at great expense, and
tried to make sportsmen of them; and grew at times, but
very seldom, passionate like a thwarted child, because it
was the most difficult thing he had ever tried to do, and
because they would lose their tempers and kick one another
on the shins, and walk off the field, and send in their
resignations, together with an intimation that St. Gregory's
Church would see them no more, because the referee was a
liar and didn't come it fair.40

Humor, erudition, and a personal crusade to make the reader
aware of the accurate and literal meaning of words brand her books.

No mavericks escape the iron. Even the travel books contain satire
and comments about word choice. As one critic said,

One is tempted to quote again and again to show not only
"the neatness of the nonsense" but also the keen insight of
Miss Macaulay's behaviorist psychology and her refreshing
reinterpretation of language. "Mentality: that was the
word one used about Charles, as if he had been a German during
the late war (Germans having, as all readers of newspapers
will remember, mentalities.)"41


42Katharine Sergeant Angell, "Miss Macaulay in Lighter Vein,"
Dramatic Irony

Dramatic irony, as opposed to verbal irony, results from a situation; it comprises such disjointing of events by either fate or man as causes sighs or chuckles at the inversion of expected results. Miss Macaulay usually uses dramatic irony to produce a tragic fate. In *Orphan Island*, the ship brought by the Thinkwells to rescue the islanders is hijacked by the convicts on the island; and the Thinkwells become instead of the rescuers, the stranded. A beautiful touch of dramatic irony is found in the historical novel *They Were Defeated*. Julian Conybeare, a lovely talented girl of about sixteen and a poetry-writing pupil of Robert Herrick, visits her brother in Cambridge in 1640. Her father arranges that she shall be tutored by Mr. John Cleveland, who is also her brother Kit's tutor. Mr. Cleveland falls in love with Julian and discourages any serious study. In a fight between her oldest brother Francis and Mr. Cleveland, she is killed. As Mr. Cleveland holds her, he sees a poem she had written in tribute to Lord Strafford. He had never read her poems while she was alive, but he reads this one and keeps it. When Mr. Herrick, in 1647, reads a book of Cleveland's poetry, the most popular of the day, the only poem he really likes is an epitaph on Strafford, "that seemed to Mr. Herrick to have a sad brief poignancy and beauty that the others lacked. He might, thought he, almost have written it himself."\[42\]

Rose Macaulay often treats death with tragic dramatic irony. In *The Making of a Bigot* Eddy Oliver and Arnold Denison go to the docks where a union man is speaking. Arnold decides to speak and is killed and Eddy injured in the fight which follows. During Eddy's convalescence, he reflects upon the irony of circumstance.

Through the queer, dim, sad days and nights, Eddy's weakened thoughts were of Arnold; Arnold the cynical, the sceptical, the supercilious, the scornful; Arnold who had believed in nothing, and had yet been murdered for believing in something, and saying so. Arnold had hated democratic tyranny, and his hatred had given his words and his blows a force that had recoiled on himself and killed him. Eddy's blows on that chaotic, surprising evening had lacked this energy; his own consciousness of hating nothing had unnerved him; so he hadn't died. He had merely been buffeted about and knocked out of the way like so much rubbish by both combatant sides in turn. He bore the scars of the strikers' fists and boots, and of the heavy truncheon of the law. Both sides had struck him as an enemy, because he was not wholeheartedly for them. It was, surely, an ironical epitome, a brief summing-up in terms of blows, of the story of his life. What chaos, what confusion, what unheroic shipwreck of plans and work and career dogged those who fought under many colours! One died for believing in something; one didn't die for believing in everything.\(^{43}\)

A similar ironic death occurs in *Potterism* when Arthur Gideon, the leader of the Anti-Potter League is killed in Russia,

...first beaten nearly to death by white soldiery, because he was, entirely in vain, defending some poor Jewish family from their wrath...then found by Bolshevists and disposed of...somehow...because he was an Englishman...A placard for the press. A placard for the Potter press. Had he thought of that at the last, and died in the bitterness of that paradox? Murdered by both sides, being of neither, but merely a seeker after fact. Killed in the quest for truth and the war against verbiage and cant and, in the end, a placard for the press which hated the one and lived by the other.\(^{44}\)


Symbolism

Much serious symbolism can be found in the poetry of Rose Macaulay, but less in her novels, where its satiric function is primarily in the titles of some novels and the names of the characters. The titles of some of the novels, particularly *The Valley Captives*, *The Lee Shore*, *Potterism*, and *The World My Wilderness*, suggest symbolism. The symbolism of the last mentioned title seems self-explanatory. In *The Valley Captives* the captives are the people of a lonely Welsh village; they are bound by the galling chains of their daily routine, and class prejudice and sectarian dislike are the real mountains which prevent them from seeing that which happens outside their valley.\(^{45}\)

In *The Lee Shore* "An aristocrat by birth and training, but a 'vagabond' by temperament, Peter Margerison meets the losses that the years bring him with a philosophy through which he attains the hardly won peace of life's 'lee shore.'"\(^{46}\) The word *Potterism*, coined by Miss Macaulay, is another word for Philistinism. According to the hero of the story, "...Potterism has, for one of its surest bases, fear. The other bases are ignorance, vulgarity, mental laziness, sentimentality, and greed."\(^{47}\) In the book it is explained that the word was chosen because Mr. Potter was the head of the Potter Press and Mrs. Potter published best-selling novels under the name of Leila Yorke. The Anti-Potter League was not aimed at the Potters personally but at the great mass of incoherent, muddled emotion that passed for thought and that was being supplied to the

\(^{45}\)"The Valley Captives," *Nation* 92:650 (June 29, 1911).


\(^{47}\)Rose Macaulay, *Potterism*, p. 66.
The word is an inspiration. We have wanted it now this many a day; for it is a short cut over the fields for a thing which we have had to go around to get at; a neat cover into which to roll up a bundle of ideas which have been dangling loose for a long time. And what is "potterism?" Like most words it roots in several directions. Let a suggestion suffice. A potter is obviously one who makes pots or jugs, usually of clay; and clay—which is much the stuff out of which men and women are made as well—is an unctuous, unstable, shapable material with which vessels of various kinds may be fashioned, baked and half-baked; and, even when finally glazed and painted, they remain fragile and are easily broken.48

In addition to the symbolism in a few of the titles, there is also some symbolism in names of some of the characters. Barbary in The World My Wilderness is obviously suggestive of the barbarian. She is described as wary, "like a watchful little animal or savage,"49 a child who "seemed to examine civilization...and to reject it"50 and who felt at home in the bomb ruins because "here you find the irre-mediable barbarism that comes up from the depth of the earth, and that you have known elsewhere."51 Helen, her mother, is described as having classical features and the sensual voluptuous beauty of a film queen, a goddess, or Cleopatra. Her first husband whom she had jilted said she had "the power to dominate people by her presence...that

50 Ibid., p. 30.
51 Ibid., p. 122.
outrageous power of inflaming. The name and description surely are associated by readers with Helen of Troy. In Non-Combatants the mental female is Evie, "a healthy, pretty, jolly sort of girl...who never bothered about the war or anything." Basil, the mental neutral who is injured in the war, no longer loves Alix (also a mental neutral) but turns to Evie because "Evie was life...life which, like love and hate, is primitive, uncivilised, intellectually unprogressive, but basic and inevitable" and "found her satisfactory to some deep need in him; the eternal masculine, roused from slumber by war, cried to its counterpart, ignoring the adulterations that filled the gulf between." The genesis of Evie's name is obvious.

There is some actual structural symbolism as in The Towers of Trebizond. She wrote to Father Johnson that "...Trebizond stands for not merely the actual city (tho' this comes in, and a lovely place it is) but for the ideal and romantic and nostalgic vision of the Church which haunts the person who narrates the story." Laurie, the narrator, is torn between the secular and the sacred, her desire for her lover

52 Ibid., p. 233.
53 Rose Macaulay, Non-Combatants, p. 115.
54 Ibid., p. 154.
55 Ibid., p. 155.
56 Rose Macaulay, Last Letters to a Friend, p. 219.
57 With the exception of the four sections in Potterism, this is the only novel Rose Macaulay wrote in first person.
and her desire for the Church. Through the symbolism of Laurie's father being a priest and her mother running off with a wealthy adventurer, the conflict of passion and religion is presented as an inherited or intrinsic part of Laurie (and Miss Macaulay suggests, of everyone).

**Satiric Characterization**

Perhaps more than through any of the devices illustrated, Rose Macaulay conveys her satiric purpose through character. In one of his many letters to her, Father Johnson asked her how she thought of a novel, how the creative process started. She replied:

That depends on the novel. *Keeping up Appearances* had its genesis in the reflection how manifold is human nature, and that it might be fun to present one person as two, as far thro' the book as was possible. After that, the characters create themselves. *They Were Defeated* developed from brooding on Cambridge life as it was about 1640; I had always read a great deal of 17th c. letters and memoirs. I got a group of people, most of them real, some half real; I took Herrick and re-imagined him as a live person, how he would talk and feel; then I built up round him the Yarde family, and Dr. Conybeare and Julian (Dr. C. was rather like my mother's cousin, F. C. Conybeare of Oxford.)

Then I thought up the Cambridge milieu--and what fun it was! *The Wilderness* was a meditation on Ruin, physical and material, with a lost waif for its central character. Now I have one at the back of my mind--two distinct characters, but not,

58 In an earlier letter (Letters to a Friend, p. 35) Rose Macaulay said, "The Dr. Conybeare in *They Were Defeated* was the son of an Elizabethan schoolmaster who was my ancestor; we have the line of descent, and a little Latin book he wrote; it was edited and reprinted by my mother's cousin F. C. Conybeare, an atheistical Oxford don, who wrote a book called *Myth, Magic, and Morals* (the Latin book was by the schoolmaster, not by Dr. C.). I invented Dr. Conybeare in a sense but I made him as like as I could to my cousin Fred of Oxford, atheism, appearance and all."

59 Apparently Laurie and Aunt Dot or Father Chantry-Pigg in *The Towers of Trebizond*. 
so far, much of a plot. This will arise when I give it my attention. So, you see, it's sometimes one thing first, sometimes another.°

Rose Macaulay's characters are often a combination of the real and the invented. Like most satirists who work chiefly through character, she did not write satire which was primarily personal; consequently her characters are mainly imaginative creations though they often had a starting point in observation. About the characters in And No Man's Wit she wrote,

Ernie I knew slightly; he worked in a garage; but he was a Durham man and I made him Worcestershire, so he probably talked wrong. Dr. Marlowe was based on a woman doctor I knew, but only externally really; internally she was like a number of ardent public-spirited liberal women I have met. Ellen I invented entirely; I never knew a mermaid, or even a part-mermaid. All her conversation, such as it was, is such as I supposed a part-mermaid might utter, in such circumstances. The Frenchman too I invented. Hugh is rather like a man I know. The others are out of my head. Except that Guy looked rather like Guy Burgess, one of our two vanished diplomats.°

Inevitably, being a satirist she is also a moralist. Therefore her characters are seldom one dimensional; they have moral conflicts. They are not just humours characters like some of Ben Jonson's. In answer to Father Johnson's comment that he liked Mrs. Arthur in Keeping up Appearances, Miss Macaulay commented not only on how she created Mrs. Arthur but also on the responsibilities which she felt a novelist had in that area:

°° Rose Macaulay, Letters to a Friend, pp. 299-300.
°°° Ibid., pp. 208-9.
I'm glad you like my Mrs. Arthur; I grew fond of her myself. She was based, externally, on a nice woman who kept a small cigarette and sweet shop in Marylebone near me. She looked like that, and had that bonhomous air. The rest—character, career, conversation—I made up. Dear me, the liberties one takes with people scarcely known but just met; they provide a basis, on which one builds some fantastic structure, no doubt with no relation at all to the actual person. What would that nice, no doubt most respectable, lady think if she knew? But this habit of novelists only becomes dangerous when they use as a basis someone recognisable whom they know and who will certainly read the book; they invariably think it is all meant to be them, and will never believe they were only a starting point and that the finished character is really something quite unconnected with them. A dangerous trade; one skates on such thin ice...Of course some novelists...are completely ruthless; they put in not only real people but real situations, some of them supposedly unknown to the people's friends, such as secret love affairs, jiltings, etc., and leave a trail of misery behind them. Very cruel and unfair. Novelists should have a sense of responsibility towards those they might injure, like car drivers, and not run them down from behind.°2

In another letter to Father Johnson, she stated:

I think what one misses in most novels is a sense of right and wrong and the conflict between them. Compare the great 19th cent. novelists, such as George Eliot, whose chief characters are at perpetual war with themselves. The people in so much fiction now seldom appear to be this. Yet everyone, almost, must be, I suppose, anyhow at intervals, however subconsciously and weakly. A good novel can be written without this, but the people in it seem to lack one dimension. One doesn't want preaching, but just a hint of that motive in life, to make it a true record of the "condition humaine."°3

She did not think of her novels as satiric novels, but as novels, and tried to make satire only an ingredient. Nevertheless

°2 Ibid., p. 70.

°3 Ibid., p. 102.
she did tend to type characters. She classified them here with a sexual typology. She had a unique mode of classifying human beings, the stereotyped male, the stereotyped female, and the class in which the mind has been emancipated from the body. The main character in Mystery at Geneva, perhaps speaking for Miss Macaulay, put people into three categories: mental females, who are womanly women who talk about "clothes, children, domestics, the prices of household commodities, love affairs, or personal gossip"; mental males, who are manly men who talk about "sport, finance, business, animals, crops, or how things are made. Theirs is also a difficult type of conversation to join in, being also above one's head"; and mental neutrals of both sexes.

They talk about all the other things, such as books, jokes, politics, love (as distinct from love affairs), people, places, religion (in which, though they talk more about it, they do not, as a rule, believe so unquestioningly as do the males and the females, who have never thought about it and are rather shocked if it is mentioned), plays, music, current fads and scandals, public persons and events, newspapers, life, and anything else which turns up. They gravitate together, and often marry each other, and are very happy. If one of them makes a mistake and marries a mental male or a mental female, the marriage is not happy, for they demand the conversation and interest in things in general, and are answered only by sex.

Generally speaking, then, Miss Macaulay's characters could be classified as mental males, mental females, and mental neutrals with the predominant number in the last category. Among her mental neutrals are the characters who are at war with themselves; in The Towers of Trebizond, Laurie, a mental neutral as the name which can be for either a man or a woman indicates, is the most notable illustration.

64 Rose Macaulay, Mystery at Geneva, p. 145.
Laurie knows she should give up adultery for religion, but her love is too strong for her to renounce.

Rose Macaulay never created a character of the proportion of Tartuffe, a fully developed three-dimensional character, yet a great satiric portrait. Perhaps her most fully realized characters are delightful eccentrics like Aunt Dot in *The Towers of Trebizond* and the Crevequers in *Views and Vagabonds* and *The Furnace*. In the main, however, though she developed character to some extent, she subordinated character to satiric purpose. Consequently, one critic has called Miss Macaulay's characters "talking puppets." Another called them a collection of "cranks and sillies and puzzled people twist[ed] and turn[ed] for our laughter...." It seems to be true that several of her characters are just mouthpieces for ideas. Others are obviously intended to add to the humor.

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65 R. M. in a letter to Father Johnson wrote: "...I suppose it is difficult for a novelist not to be, so to speak, overset by love, the strongest emotion that most people ever feel in their lives. So they are apt to lose sight of the other considerations that war against it; as in actual life we lose sight of these. To them it seems that everything must take a back place beside it, when it bursts on them in its full strength; and they visualise a future in which it will always be the strongest thing. For, of course, it does last a long time sometimes, even a wrong love; and its very strength blinds those who feel it to its wrongness, often, and might do so for many years. Everything else pales in its light, and it seems its own justification. Of course novelists should get outside this and look at it with detachment, in its right perspective against the standards of right and wrong that are really the ultimate thing and the eternal thing....Human passions against eternal laws—that is the everlasting conflict. And human passions use every device to get the best of it, and set themselves above the laws. All very tragic and pitiful; but writers about it should be on the right side—if they can." Letters to a Friend, p. 171.


Perhaps one cause for the feeling that some of the characters are just puppets to be tossed in the toy chest when the play is over is the way Miss Macaulay treats death in her books. Death is simply not comic material. The deaths of her major characters are always ironic. For example, in Potterism the hero, who is the leader of the Anti-Potter League and who stands for truth and reason in a world of muddle and cant and "second-rate sentimentalism and cheap short-cuts and mediocrity," ⁶⁸ is killed in Russia, but the account of his death stresses the idea that Potterism will go on forever and evokes little or no feeling for the character. In one instance death is treated humorously. In The Towers of Trebizond, Aunt Dot casually mentions that her father was eaten by a crocodile and that her husband shot himself after attempting to shoot her to save them from being captured by cannibals. These deaths the reader accepts as humorous because anything connected with the eccentric Aunt Dot would be somewhat humorous. One death occurs almost as a plot necessity. It has nothing to do with either irony or humor but functions to bring out a quality in the character whom it affects. The reader is not prepared for the type of death which Miss Macaulay conjures up for Vere, Laurie's lover. Laurie, who is torn between her love for Vere, a married cousin, and her desire for the Church, is a serious character. It somewhat jars the reader when Laurie, irritated because buses always turn on the red light, charges into an intersection the instant the light turns green, and kills Vere in the collision. Granted that the book is "a mixture of the comic,

⁶⁸ Rose Macaulay, Potterism, p. 50.
the exotic, and the grave...and moves from high comedy to deep seriousness, from farce to satire..."69 But the transition at that one point seems somewhat abrupt.

Two other comments frequently made about Rose Macaulay's characters are that many of her young female characters are very childish and that "there was a sexless quality about many of the leading characters in her novels which she underlined by giving them Christian names appropriate to either a man or a woman...."70 Examples of the first are a seventeenth century hoyden, Meg Yardes in They Were Defeated, who, at an age when she should have been thinking about marriage, was instead tying a pig to Robert Herrick's pulpit so that it disrupted his harvest sermon; Barbary Deniston in The World My Wilderness, an eighteen-year-old child who made up her own sermons in the bomb ruins of a London church and called for her "Mummy" when she was lonely or sick; and Imogen in Told by an Idiot who at eighteen played alone in the woods with bows and arrows pretending a game of Indians, bought toy pistols for herself and walked around London pretending to be Patrick, a young detective whom she had created in some feeble attempts at fiction, and ran away from home to watch the launching of a ship.

Examples of the names which could suggest either sex are Louie in Views and Vagabonds, Julian in They Were Defeated, Alix in Non-Combatants.


70 Constance Babington-Smith in the Introduction to Letters to a Friend, p. 18.
Denham, Audrey, and Noel in *Crawe Train*, Clare in *Potterism*, Hero and
Frankie in *Going Abroad*, Stanley and Rome in *Told by an Idiot*, and
Neville and Gerda in *Dangerous Ages*. All of the above mentioned are
female characters. Male characters with names used for either sex are
not so numerous. One example is Kay in *Dangerous Ages*; another is
Neville in *The Making of a First*.

Although Miss Macaulay can be criticised because her characters
do not all seem vitally alive, she can also be praised for her finesse
in concise characterization.

Few writers, since Jane Austen, have achieved so compact
a treatment of English...The peculiarity, at its best, is
most noticeable in her introduction of a new character,
whereby she conquers one of the chief difficulties in
narrative. Some introduction is generally regarded as
necessary; but a long preliminary analysis always defeats
its one end...sacrifices the secret of good fiction: that
character should reveal itself. Miss Macaulay, however,
has the gift of an ideal hostess who, in almost an epigram,
says just what is needed to put two talkers at ease....
"Professor Denison was a quiet person, who said little, but
listened to his wife and children. He had much sense of
humour and some imagination. He was fifty-five. Mrs.
Denison was a small and engaging lady, a tremendous worker
in good causes: she had little sense of humour, and a vivid,
if often misapplied, imagination. She was forty-six. Her
son Arnold was tall, lean, cynical, intelligent, edited
an University magazine (the most interesting of them),
was president of a conversation society, and was just going
into his uncle's publishing house. He had plenty of
sense of humour (if he had had less, he would have bored
himself to death) and an imagination kept within due bounds...."

The assured decision of this paragraph is almost unique.
It reveals personality.71

Miss Macaulay used character as many of the great satirists
have done to achieve certain satiric effects such as incongruity,

Ironic contrast, and social typology. Among this last group may be placed the characters who are primitivistic, one might call them the uninformed, and a closely allied group of characters living or travelling in a country other than their own. Despite these uses of character, however, she did not resort to caricature. She did not select one objectionable quality, assign it to a character, and then overwhelm the victim with that particular quality to the exclusion of everything else. References to characters may be in terms of elements satirized, but never the element satirized. Even her type characters, having been given some individual traits, are far too real to be called caricatures. One example of the use of incongruity is Ronald McBrow, the young policeman who is so incorruptible that he leaves the force because a politician who ran a red light and killed a woman was found to be innocent. Ronald refuses to use the money that pours in when his wife has quintuplets, but finally he succumbs and makes ingenious quincuncial arrangements in the quinary where his children are on display to visitors three times daily. Another is Aunt Dot ffoulkes-Corbett in The Towers of Trebizond. Aunt Dot is an Anglican missionary sent to Turkey, but she is more interested in emancipating Turkish women, would prefer atheism if it would make an easier life for the women, and vows that whether Turkish women cover their heads is more important to her than the Trinity.

Ironic contrast is used in the characters of Denham, the barbarian, and Audrey, the sophisticated, in Crewe Train. Everyone expects Arnold, a civilized young publisher, to fall in love with and marry Audrey; this would be a suitable match. Instead he marries Denham and
they live unhappily ever after the honeymoon. Denham and Arnold play
together but it is with Audrey that he must talk. *Keeping up Appearances*,
a story in which the reader, unless he is very discerning, is led to
believe until mid way through the book that the two personalities of
Daphne Daisy Simpson are two different girls, provides ample opportunity
for the use of ironic contrast.

Most of Miss Macaulay's characters, notably the mental neutrals
earlier referred to, are intelligent people capable of gay repartee
and shrewd observations about topical situations. Within the group of
mental neutrals come certain characters who have strong primitivistic
qualities or are naively ignorant. Denham, the central character in *Crew Train*
is an example of this type. When she comes to London to live with
relatives after her father's death, she has to learn which fork to use
first, that shoes are to be tied before one goes walking, and that a hostess
expects her dinner guests to pay for their dinner with stimulating conver-
sation. She much prefers living in a cave she discovers on the Cornish coast.

The satiric device of having characters living or traveling
in a foreign country, made so popular by Swift, is also among Miss Macaulay's
methods. In *Orphan Island* the whole book is really a development of
this method giving the author opportunity for remarks about Parliament,
the educational system, and the writing of novels. In telling Mr.
Thinkwell about Orphan Island's Parliament, Mr. Smith says,

"Our Parliament, you know, is closely modelled on yours,
only we've only one House....My brother-in-law Albert Edward
is the Prime Minister, you know. Always is. He's a great
man at working the elections."

"Who votes?"

"Men who own or rent a certain amount of land."
"Not exactly democratic."

"No; that's the notion; that's as it should be."

Mr. Thinkwell in comparing Great Britain to Orphan Island says,

"Not that I personally regard a vote as a privilege, or as a particularly useful instrument in helping to govern a country, for we can only vote for the candidates who present themselves, and these are, as a rule, singularly inefficient persons. All the same, however, foolish as they may be, they count as votes in a division, and the House may possibly occasionally divide on a question of importance. But the whole business is a very foolish performance, and a very poor and dilatory way of getting things done. I have no doubt that yours is the same." 72

Mr. Thinkwell also observes "that your educational system suffers, as ours does, from a strange obsession as to the importance of the dates at which kings and queens reigned." 73 He asks if Orphan Island has that curious branch of literature, the novel.

"Nothing so long as to be called that, if Wuthering Heights is the standard. There are difficulties as to writing materials, you see. The serial stories written daily on the shore are pretty long sometimes, but they are rubbed out when read."

"An excellent idea, indeed. Sand is a most appropriate material, and should be more widely used." 74

In the book And No Man's Wit three of the main characters, all friends at Oxford, are Armand, a French chocolate king; Ramon, a Spanish marquis; and Guy, a Britisher. They have opportunity to compare forms of government as in the following conversation.

72Rose Macaulay, Orphan Island, p. 203.
73Ibid., p. 211.
74Ibid., p. 225.
"No, the Spanish aren't so docile at all. That is why no system of government lasts long with them; they lose patience and throw it off."

"Much like the French."

"...Yes, we too are quick to lose patience, though we change our governments with more constitution and legality. You English, you are more patient; you let your governments linger on, long after they have earned the disdain, even the disgust, of the general....For my part, I think your governments are very right. Once in office, by all means let them stay in office...and as to the voice of the people, it is a voice very ignorant, and not to be listened....So you will keep your democracy, and it will be in name only, and your nice gentleman rulers will have their way all the time. When they wish to make a war, they will make a war, when they wish peace, they will make a peace, they will squeeze you dry with taxes (ours don't do that, for we turn them out; we French rentiers are most firm about taxes) and blow you sky high with vapour about patriotic sacrifice, and tighten your laws upon you, one after one, until you are all held fast and caught in them like in ropes—and all the time you will boast of how you have the oldest and best democracy and how all should imitate you...."75

Criticisms occasionally made about Miss Macaulay's use of type characters do not seem justified as satire is concerned with society rather than individuals; and consequently it tends to use types. Externality and typicality are fitting for satire; introspection and individuality usually are not. She says of her own ability:

Heaven never, I think, destined me for a story-teller, and stories are the form of literary activity which give me the least pleasure. I am one of the world's least efficient novelists; I cannot invent good stories, or care what becomes of the people of whom I write. I have heard novelists complain that their characters run away with their books and do what they like with them. This must be somewhat disconcerting, like driving an omnibus whose steering-wheel, accelerator and brake are liable to be seized by the passengers. My passengers know their places, and that they are there to afford me the art and pleasure of driving.76


Chapter III. Multiple Stances

Rose Macaulay's whole attitude toward life seemed to be one of trial and error. In *The Making of a Bigot*, Eddy Oliver thinks of becoming a novelist,

that last resource of the spiritually destitute.
For novels are not life, that immeasurably important thing that has to be so sternly approached; in novels one may take as many points of view as one likes, all at the same time; instead of working for life, one may sit and survey it from all angles simultaneously. It is only when one starts walking on a road that one finds it excludes the other roads....It is, after all, one way through this queer, shifting chaos of unanswerable riddles. When solutions are proved unattainable, some spend themselves and their all on a rough-and-ready shot at truth, on doing what they can with the little they know; others give it up and talk about it. It was as a refuge for such as these that the novelist's trade was presented to man.¹

Because Miss Macaulay tends to "take as many points of view" as she likes, in her novels one finds a series of stances, various attitudes toward society. As a woman, Miss Macaulay was an active participant in life; and this participation allowed her ample opportunity for observation. As an intelligent woman, her observations were keen. As a writer, she satirized the society. Her purview was large. She looked at religion, politics, current events, groups and organizations, literature and art, marriage, journalism, national characteristics, fashions, doctors and nurses, and policemen. Of more interest than the society which she portrays, is the relationship of the characters to the society. Some characters defend the society; they strive to

maintain the status quo. Some characters see flaws in the society and strive for reform. Some characters rebel as they strive to combat poverty, convention, superstition, and commercialism. Some characters search for something which they feel is missing in life; they strive for answers. But not all the characters strive. Some characters are nonchalant; some merely observe the show; and some of the observers have attained a philosophical acceptance. For the last three groups the fight does not matter, the fight is enjoyable if one has a ringside seat, or the fight does not exist. From these various angles of vision she successively satirizes society. The relationship of the characters to society determines the fundamental aspect of the satire.

The characters who defend the status quo share certain traits. They are "haves" rather than "have nots." Members of middle or upper class families, they feel a sense of security, both economically and socially. Those who work enjoy their work. Those who are married are happily (or at least not unhappily) married. Their ages, their occupations, and their political beliefs vary. Because of these variations, they do not defend the same segments of society, but they all defend.

In And No Man's Wit Dr. Kate Marlowe, her daughter, her younger son, and the financee of her elder son, go to Spain to look for Dr. Marlowe's son Guy, who had been a member of the International Brigade and had vanished one night about a year earlier, in 1939. Although most people supposed Guy was dead, Dr. Marlowe thought he might be in prison or working as an underground anti-government agitator and she
wanted to know. She asks the aid of the Marquis Ramon Maria-Jesus Carlos Cabrera del Monte, who had been a friend of Guy's at Oxford. Another Oxford friend, Armand Arachon, the heir to a chocolate fortune in France, is visiting Ramon. Dr. Marlowe thought "these rich young men, these supporters of the Right and of the established order, of the forces of reaction"\(^2\) odd friends for Guy but assumed they were clever and good company, which counted. When Armand returns to France, Ramon, enchanted by Guy's fiancée, agrees to tour Spain with the Marlowes in search of Guy. After several weeks and many miles and political arguments, the Marlowes learn that Guy is living as a gypsy and waiting to see the next revolution (which in Spain would surely be soon.) Because of the approaching World War, they return to England. Guy, wanted by the Spanish police, flees Spain. By coincidence he finds Ramon with Armand in the Bar Basque at Saint-Jean-de-Luz. The book ends with a long discussion by the three friends "with perhaps some nuisance coming to-morrow."\(^3\)

Ramon and Armand both represent defenders. In discussions with Armand and the Marlowes, Ramon defends the numerous Spanish revolutions. Yes, we find guns easier to handle, more in accord with our traditions and culture. All this paper voting,--so corrupt. And more particularly when the mass of the people can neither read, write nor think, and had better not try. Fortunately our little Caudillo has put it quite down. A true soldier, he believes in the representation of generals, or riches, and of force, not of those who can put a cross on a scrap of paper at the bidding of agitators.\(^4\)

\(^2\)Rose Macaulay, *And No Man's Wit*, p. 41.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 384.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 44.
He defends the violence and the restriction of personal freedom which attend the revolutions. "In England you think that is shocking, to put people in prison for their opinions; one day, when it is too late, you may greatly wish that you had done so." Ramon resents any intrusion into Spain or her policies by people of another country. He resists ideas or knowledge which might bring change.

Referring to the French, he complained,

And what ideas, God help us! Voltaire, Rousseau, the Jacobins, the Encyclopaedists, the Anti-Clericals, the radical revolutionaries, the communists, they have all discharged their guns at us across the Pyrenees, aiming at our heads and often finding them....Ideas are bacilli which would be often better to be burnt. Instead they ramble round the world and poison people.

Armand also defends. He defends the philosophy of *Candide*.

His creed is

*Liberty, prosperity, tranquillity—it is these that we crave....The world has gone a little madder even than usual lately. All that we bourgeoisie ask is to be left in peace to cultivate our gardens, to make our chocolate, to spend our money well—and what peace do we get...?*

Armand feels that Guy, a reformer, demands too much.

You ask the model democratic system of Sweden or Finland, the habeas corpus of Britain, together with the refinement of civilization and the arts

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that would belong to your musical patron princes…
you can't have everything.

Armand accepts that one can not have everything but he will fight to defend what he has. Guy laments that the war will be purely a national war for most people whereas he favors a war of ideologies or "doxies" as he calls them. Armand concedes that for him the war will be national—Germany against France which he prefers whatever the political views of the Germans might be.

War doesn't convert. That is why I think nothing of your ideologue wars, my dear Guy, and feel that wars should confine themselves to their metier, which is to shut Germany in her stables and prevent her from galloping over the lands of us others and disturbing our petites vies tranquilles. So far as I care she can be what animal she prefers so long as she stays at home. As she won't, we must catch her and shut her up.

There you are, thinking in nations as usual. Why in hell shouldn't one care that thousands of people are living enslaved and tortured in Germany—why should you wash your hands of it just because they're not French? You might as well say you don't care what happens to people in Normandy because you live in Paris and Provence. It seems to me ludicrous.

Mon ami, God knows that I don't care in the least what happens to those avaricious Scandinaves, and few outside Normandy do so.

Ramon said,

You take such interest in the fate of others, Guy. It is really a disease. You are altruist, and rush about the world like St. George hunting for dragons. Armand and I prefer to cultivate our gardens. I, as you saw, even

8The three young men had decided that the best solution for the problems of Germany, Spain, and Italy would be to divide the countries into small sections under kings or princes or dukes "each with a fat mistress and a bevy of mincing favourites and a troupe of pet musicians... so they couldn't afford expensive aggression at all." Ibid., p. 377.

9Ibid., p. 377.
took no part in the revolution in my own land. I said to myself, another revolution? It is time. 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 till there is less noise. 10

The differences in Guy, Ramon, and Armand are that Guy thinks people, politics, and ideas are important and are worth any fight. Ramon thinks politics and his own garden are important, and he will watch while others fight. And Armand, like a fellow Frenchman, Voltaire, thinks only his own garden is important, but he will fight to defend it. Armand, a defender, will go to war to preserve his right to make and sell chocolate without interference.

In the novels, the parents of young rebels, searchers, reformers, and other young people are often defenders. Mr. and Mrs. Bunter in *Views and Vagabonds* defend the political and class system as it existed in 1912. Mr. Bunter stood successfully as a conservative in each election. Mrs. Bunter deplored the upsetting ideas about class and hoped that Benjie, her socialist son, who often spoke at meetings for the poor, would try

cheering the poor things up; not telling them how sad it all is... Now, I always encourage people to think they are comfortable, if they can manage to; what is the good of looking on the dark side? And it's so much a question of what one is born to... the poor do get along fairly well after all, I mean, and don't feel things quite like—well, like that, you know. 11


Dean and Mrs. Oliver in *The Making of a Bigot* defend propriety, correctness, good breeding, intelligence, and "cathedralism."

It mattered in the Deanery what one's father was; quite kindly but quite definitely note was taken of that; Mrs. Oliver valued birth and breeding, though she was not snobbish, and was quite prepared to be kind and friendly to those without it. Also it mattered how one dressed.... Also it mattered that one should be able to find one's way about a Church of England Prayer Book during a service.\(^{12}\)

Lord Pinkerton and Leila Yorke (Mr. and Mrs. Potter in *Potterism*) defend the muddled thinking and greedy exploitation which is Potterism. They point to their vast circulation and the long succession of letters of the alphabet added to Lord Pinkerton's name every new year in the honour's list and remind their twins, members of the Anti-Potter League, that Potterism bases its stand on human nature and can not be destroyed by any league.

Pretty Vicky Garden, in *Told by an Idiot*, "skimmed gracefully over life's surface like a swallow" plunging "frequently, ardently, and yet lightly, into life,"\(^ {13}\) and defending whatever was the current fashion. She was a happy Victorian, a happy Edwardian, and a happy Georgian. "People she loved, and parties, and gossip, and bridge, and her husband and children....A delightful woman, with an unfailing zest for life."\(^ {14}\) The war horrified her but she became enthusiastically pro-war and helped organize bazaars. Vicky defended whatever was the mode.


\(^ {13}\) Rose Macaulay, *Told by an Idiot*, p. 314.

\(^ {14}\) *Tbid.*, pp. 265-266.
There are many other defenders in Rose Macaulay's fiction for defenders are necessary to the reform-seeking satirist. As one might expect, many Macaulay characters are reformers. The methods used, the solutions proposed, and the optimism retained by each reformer vary greatly. Most, however, are depressingly ineffective.

Benjamin Bunter, in Views and Vagabonds, is a young socialist who believes that the ultimate goal is for all people to work and like it. He converts theory into action by becoming a blacksmith after coming down from Cambridge and marrying a poor mill-hand because "Men must marry to populate the country...and the best people (the workers) should do it rather than the worst...I maintain that we should all marry the hardest workers we know."

Benjie and his wife separate when she realizes that his main interest in her is that she is poor. Benjie learns that "The life of a reformer is a lonely life, often. He needs faith and hope and much philosophy, for his function is to reform and reform, and it remains often an intransitive verb." In rather sudden and melodramatic developments, Benjie realizes that joy is the great thing and resolves to dedicate his life to being happy. When he learns that the Bunters are his aunt and uncle and his real father is a common sailor, his wife, believing that they can be happy now that they are both of the same class, returns. Benjie has to modify his new philosophy and it becomes, "One's got to be pleasant,

15 Rose Macaulay, Views and Vagabonds, p. 33.
16 Ibid., p. 162.
I suppose."¹⁷ Benjie alienates his socialist disciple and cousin, Cecil, when he acknowledges

The universe is not coherent, according to my knowledge of it; it is a series of unrelated episodes. A most surprising place....You are a monist; you want to reduce it all to a single basis. You think there is a Truth. I happen to be a pluralist. There we differ, you see.¹⁸

And Benjie, a reformed reformer, devotes the rest of his life to being pleasant.

Some reformers do not change as Benjie did, but do compromise with society. In Potterism three members of the Anti-Potter League are among those who compromise. The twins, Jane and Johnny Potter, are only intellectually but not morally Anti-Potters. As the leader of the Anti-Potter League says of the twins,

they stand for brain and clear thinking against muddle and cant; but they're fighting it with Potterite weapons--self-interest, following things for what they bring them rather than for the things in themselves.¹⁹

Jane, one of the twins, is described as being

Level-headed, clear-brained, hard, calm, straight-thinking, cynical, an egotist to her finger-tips, knowing what she wanted and going for it, tough in the conscience, and ignorant of love except in its crudest form of desire for the people and things which ministered to her personal happiness....²⁰

She compromises with society when she weds an editor to further her writing career. Johnny, also a profiteer, comes out of the war a major with many ribbons, and takes an assistant editorship vacated by the leader of the Anti-Potter League who felt that the editor had started to mix fantasy with fact to increase sales.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 287.
¹⁸Ibid., p. 296.
¹⁹Rose Macaulay, Potterism, p. 50.
²⁰Ibid., p. 173.
Katherine Varick, who "isn't touched anywhere with Potterism," does not renounce the beliefs of the Anti-Potter League. But as a reformer, she also compromises. She says, "People are very odd, unreliable, and irregular in their actions and reactions. You can't count on them as you can on chemicals." Of Arthur Gideon, the leader of the league, Katherine says that he "should have been a scientist or a scholar or a chemist...something in which knowledge matters and people don't. People will break his heart." She refuses the clash which association with people would bring. A very timid (or perhaps wise) reformer, she contents herself with writing on "Catalysers and Catalysis, and the Generation of Hydrogen."

Two of Miss Macaulay's reformers die defeated. Arthur Gideon, the leader of the Anti-Potter League who "was direct and keen and passionate...and thought finely and acutely...and lived for causes and beliefs and ideals," resigs from his paper when he sees it becoming popular. He decides to spend the rest of his life finding out things. In his quest for learning and truth, he goes to Russia, the former home of his father, who fled during a pogrom. There he is first beaten nearly to death by white soldiery, because he was, entirely in vain, defending some poor Jewish

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21Ibid., p. 56.
22Ibid., p. 125.
23Ibid., p. 200.
24Ibid., p. 220.
family from their wrath...then found by Bolshevists and disposed of...somehow...because he was an Englishman.... Murdered by both sides, being of neither, but merely a seeker after fact. Killed in the quest for truth and the war against verbiage and cant and, in the end, a placard for the press which hated the one and lived by the other.26

In The Making of a Bigot, Hugh Datcherd, a Socialist, is described as "awfully sad...and at odds with life. He feels it hideous, and he minds. He spends all his time trying and trying can he change it for people. And the more he tries and fails, the more he minds."27

He possessed an extraordinarily ardent fire of energy, at once determined and rather hopeless. The evils of the world loomed, it seemed, even larger in his eyes than their possible remedies; but both loomed large. He was a pessimist and a reformer, an untiring fighter against overwhelming odds....He had tried and failed to get into Parliament; he had now given up hopes of that field of energy, and was devoting himself to philanthropic social schemes and literary work.28

But his fight takes his strength, and the reformer dies.

Several of Miss Macaulay's reformers, although perhaps no more successful than those who die or compromise, keep working for reform. Daphne Oliver, a feminist in The Making of a Bigot, put a sticky brown liquid in the local mail boxes and tried to set fire to a workman's shelter in her campaign for women's suffrage. Mrs. Folyot in Keeping Up Appearances is a reformer with both a leaflet and a platform habit. She likes to travel and incite to Revolution "in the

26 Ibid., p. 226.
28 Ibid., p. 63.
name of Christ, Liberty, and International Labour."

What she held should be done with life was to help revolutions....When in England, she...applauded industrial strikes, and offered hospitality to such foreigners as sought asylum in that country from the mutual persecutions of their home governments and themselves though she strongly deplored their occasional tendency to say it with bombs.30

Mrs. Folyot helps organize the Anti-Dictators' League

...for the benefit of...foreign friends, and also for that of the dictators, for it was a very civilised, constitutional league, the motto of whose organisers was not "Say it with bombs," but rather, ardent epistolophiles, "Write to the newspapers," so that MM. Mussolini, Pilsudski, Stalin, Primo de Rivera, Carmona, Pashich, Bratiano, and the other European potentates, had really reason to be grateful to the League, for they did not, for the most part, at all mind the British newspapers being written to about them, and no other newspapers printed the letters.31

Unlike Benjamin Bunter who found reforming lonely work, Mrs. Folyot enjoyed it greatly. Dr. Kate Marlowe in And No Man's Wit has faith in reform through education. She has a clinic where she tries to train women and children in self-control. She feels this work is very important because women and children often have delicate nervous systems and are known to be often irrational, too. She also believes in reform via telegram. In Spain she needs to send telegrams to

add her signature to the appeal to President Roosevelt to stop the Japanese, to a request to the British Foreign Secretary to pay an immediate visit to Moscow, which should make up to that city for only having had Mr. Strang on an earlier occasion, to a

29Rose Macaulay, Keeping Up Appearances, p. 20.
30Ibid., p. 16
31Ibid., p. 170.
message of sympathy with oppressed Czechs, to an appeal to the women of Britain not to buy silk and another to the shops of Britain not to sell it them; they would convey her regret that she could not sit on platforms at various meetings and her full sympathy with the objects to be attained by meeting; they would assist, however slightly and imperfectly, in saving from Fascist aggression what was left of Europe to be saved.32

Two more public spirited and civic minded reformers are Daphne Sandomir in Non-Combatants and Stanley Garden in Told by an Idiot. Daphne Sandomir, who crusades for peace during World War I, lives by the philosophy that we've got to be strong women, for our own sakes and for the world's--especially we who have the brains to be some use if we try. The poor old world needs help so very badly just now, with all the fools there are who hinder and block the way.33

She believes in meetings, branches, and study circles.

Ignoring: that's always been the curse of this world. We shut our eyes to things--poverty, and injustice, and vice, and cruelty, and sweating, and slums, and the tendencies to make war...laziness, selfishness and stupidity. It's those three we've got to fight. We've got to replace them by hard working, hard living, and hard thinking.34

She helps organize the Society for Promoting Permanent Peace and hopes for reform. Stanley Garden is an ardent social worker, later an ardent aesthete, and finally an ardent imperialist as a Victorian; an eager feminist as an Edwardian; and a capable and active noncombatant as a Georgian. When she obtains employment in

32Rose Macaulay, And No Man's Wit, p. 185.
33Rose Macaulay, Non-Combatants, p. 240.
34Ibid., p. 255.
the Labour department of the League of Nations, she feels it is going to be the most interesting work of her life. "To find one's best job at sixty-two--that's rather nice....Life's so full of hope." An idealist and an embracer of life, Stanley is a happy reformer.

The gallery of reformers is not complete without the religious reformers. In Going Abroad, young Groupers tour the Spanish coast hoping to "Change" Basques and tourists alike and get everyone to "Share." Dot ffoulkes-Corbett and Father Chantry-Pigg are a high Anglican missionary and a very high Anglican clergymen in The Towers of Trebizond. They are sent to Turkey by an Anglo-Catholic missionary society to investigate the possibilities of establishing churches and to show potential converts what Anglican services are like. Father Chantry-Pigg thinks the Blessed Trinity may be a stumbling block to Moslems, who hear the One God proclaimed so many times a day. Dot dismisses the Trinity as not important, her mind being set on the liberation of women. They do not convert anyone; nor do they liberate any women. But they do manage to see Russia before their return to England.

The reformers are depressingly ineffective. A minor character in Non-Combatants gives the reason. He divides people into three groups: the respondents, the reactors, and the indifferents--ordinary people.

We all hope our own pet organization or tendency is going to step in...and transform society. Social workers hope for a new burst of philanthropic brotherhood; Christians

35 Rose Macaulay, Told by an Idiot, p. 312.

36 Members of the Oxford Group organized by the American evangelist, Frank Nathan Daniel Buchman.
hope for Christianity; artists and writers for a new art and literature....But really I believe the world will be left very much where it was before, because of that great immobile section which weighs it down.  

Some characters who see the faults of society are temperamentally or mentally unsuited to be reformers, they are too involved with personal problems to be reformers, or they recognize the general ineffectiveness of the reformers. They become the rebels.

Harry Robinson, an overworked, unhealthy young man in Views and Vagabonds rebels against his poverty and against what he feels to be the cause of poverty.

"Gentry! Rotten, all of 'em, rotten all through. England won't be fit for honest men to live in till there ain't one o' them gentry left in it. Then with their fair talk and their wantin' to 'elp the pore and their charity. Charity! The charity we want out of them is the right to live....Ain't a man a man, then pore or rich?"

Harry's rebellion takes the forms of talk and membership in the local Socialist Club.

Love is sometimes the motivating force behind the rebellion and sometimes the force which ends the rebellion. Eileen Le Moine, a beautiful divorcee in The Making of a Bigot, is driven by her love for a married man to spend the last days of his life with him. In Dangerous Ages Gerda Bendish holds that free unions are infinitely preferable to marriage, "a fetter on what shouldn't be fettered." Barry Briscoe, Gerda's fiancee, is enough older that he holds with the traditions,
disappointed egotist, strained her eyes into the distance and half smiled. It might be a dream, that liberty, but it was a dream worth a fight. 41

Some rebels soon give up the fight; others devote a lifetime. In I Would Be Private Ron McBrow, a London policeman and the father of quintuplets, rebels against the injustice of English law 42 and against the lack of privacy which the quints have caused. He quits the force, and he and his family go to Papagayo where they hope the islanders, all so odd themselves, will not notice the quints. But privacy for quintuplets does not exist on Papagayo either. No longer a rebel, Ron soon finds great pleasure in planting quincuncial arrangements of vegetables in the garden where the quintuplets are displayed three times daily to visitors, who dropped their visiting-fees into a box and passed within the garden. 43

Maurice Garden in Told by an Idiot is a lifelong combination rebel and reformer. He is what Arthur Gideon would have been had he not been killed in Russia. He is like Arthur Gideon in that he disliked tosh, and more and more most of the world seemed to him to be forever talking it. Oh, God, for clear heads and hard facts, unmuddled by humbug and romanticism. 44 He is a rebel in that

He was a democrat impatient with democracy, a journalist despising journalism, the product of an expensive education at war with educational inequality, a politician

41 Ibid., p. 235.
42 A member of Parliament, running a red light and killing a woman, is acquitted, and Ron, who saw the accident, is warned that his remarks are slanderous in light of the jury's verdict.
43 Rose Macaulay, I Would Be Private, p. 324.
44 Rose Macaulay, Told by an Idiot, p. 111.
loathing politics, a husband chafing at his wife, a child of his age in rebellion against it, an agnostic irritated by the thoughtful, loquacious agnosticism of his day. 45

Maurice is a rebel with the philosophy of a reformer. To his sister, who holds that life is a tale told by an idiot, he says,

I don't share your philosophy. I still believe, in the teeth of enormous odds, that it is possible to make something of this life—that one kind of achievement is more admirable—or less idiotic, if you like—than another.46

A young barbarian in Crewe Train, Denham Dobie rebels against the duties, responsibilities, and customs which most people occasionally resent but on the whole accept as a part of life. Like her father, who gave up being a clergyman because he got tired of being bothered and moved to Andorra to get away from people, Denham dislikes work as much as she dislikes company. The two principles by which she lives are to let people alone and hope that they will do likewise and to do as little work as possible so she will have time for other things. When her father dies and she goes to London to live with relatives, she feels as if she is walking on a tight-rope. The things you mustn't do, mustn't wear. You must, for instance, spend a great deal of money on silk stockings, when for much less, you could have got artificial silk or Lisle thread. Why? Did not these meaner fabrics equally clothe the leg? Why had people agreed that one material was the right wear and that others did not do? Why did not anything do?

The same with gloves, with shoes, with frocks, with garments underneath frocks. In all these things people had set up a standard, and if you did not conform to it you

46 Ibid., p. 269.
were not right, you were left. You wore thick stockings and brogues in the country, thin stockings and high-heeled shoes in the town. You wore a hat if you have a lunch party, a sleeveless dress in the evening. You had, somehow or other, to conform to a ritual, to be like the people you knew. You had to have, when you ate, one food brought in after another....Trouble, indeed, to others and to oneself, seemed to be one of the greatest objects of this strange human life.

Denham sometimes dreamed of a life in which one took practically no trouble at all. One would be alone; one would have no standards; there would be a warm climate and few clothes, and all food off the same plate, if a plate at all.47

Her strangeness attracts Arnold Chapel, a promising young publisher, and they marry. To please Arnold, Denham tries to have dinner parties and carry on conversations. But her moments of barbarian revolt lengthen.

Conventions. An odd word. So were conventional and unconventional. Denham had heard the other occupants of the house in which they lived called unconventional. They even thought themselves so. "If you don't mind a flat in a rather unconventional house," one of them had said to her and Arnold. But now Denham knew that they weren't unconventional at all. They lived just like other people, and did things in the same way. They had lots of plates at meals, and they talked about painting, and their shoes and stockings were always pairs, and they never said, during the soup: "Let's have the port at once." To be sure, some of them were apparently, what newspapers call intimate together, without having undergone marriage—but that cannot be considered unconventional, exactly, though, of course, thought Denham, remembering church teaching on that matter, it was doubtless wrong.

No, the occupants of the downstairs flats were not in the least unconventional. None of them would have dreamed of going out into the streets with their shoes laced with string. Denham had not so much dreamed of this as done it, in her early days in London. She had not understood but had accepted her Aunt Evelyn's reasons why she must never

47Rose Macaulay, Crewe Train, p. 47.
do it again, and why the kind of laces sold with shoes are the only permissible way of tying shoes. Not to tie one's shoes with string; she had made a mental note of it. But did anyone else in this house need to make a note of it? They did not. They had pure instincts, where she had only information from outside. Their obedience was of the soul, hers an enforced, shallow thing. Their state was the more gracious. 48

After Denham loses the baby which she had not wanted because it would be such a bother, she leaves Arnold and lives in a cave on the south Cornish coast. She returns when she learns she is pregnant again.

She must have this child; she could not again fight against it. Arnold must have his way. Because she loved Arnold, she would go and live again as he lived, surrounded by people, civilization and fuss...tangled in a thousand industries and cares, a thousand relationships, instead of soaking in idleness alone. 49

What was the good of revolt? Life was too strong; it forced one. One was trapped by love, by that blind storming of the senses, by that infinite tenderness, that unreasoning, friendship, which was love. This was the trap, this was the snare...Love broke one in the end, ground one down, locked the fetters on one's free limbs. If you have never loved, you could be happy, loafing, idle and alone, exploring new places, sufficient to yourself. Once committed to love, you couldn't; it came baldly, to that. You had to go back. Love was the great taming emotion; perhaps the only taming emotion. It defeated all other desires in the end. You might struggle and rebel, but in the end love got you.... 50

Some of the most appealing of Miss Macaulay's characters are those who search. In Told by an Idiot Mr. Garden loses his faith with the regularity of the seasons. He becomes an Anglican clergyman,

48 Ibid., p. 116.
49 Ibid., p. 242.
50 Ibid., p. 241.
a Unitarian minister, a Roman Catholic layman, an agnostic, an Ethicist, an Irvingite, a Quaker, a Positivist, a Baptist, a Theosophist, a New Theologian, and several of these more than once. Mr. Garden's search for truth ends happily. At eighty he believed all the faiths.

What, after all, is truth? An unanswerable riddle, to which papa replied, "The truth for each soul is that faith by which it holds." So truth, for papa, was many-splendored, many-faced. The sunset of life was very lovely, as he journeyed westward into it murmuring, "I believe...I believe."  

Not all of the searchers seek truth. Gert Grig, the quintuplets' aunt in I Would Be Private, seeks Life; that beckoning siren, how it called her on and on. She had seen it in London, at Southend, at Brighton, on Caribbean islands; but still unsated, she chased its flying skirts. Eternal adventureress, she would take Love in her stride, take lovers as they came and went; she would see them, yes, for a space, and, without heavi- ness, see them go, and go herself; it was Life she would grasp at and hold.  

Alix Sandomir, a sensitive young artist in Non-Combatants, seeks peace, relief, and a way to fight war. Alix, who detests war, is bitter because she can not fight. She becomes even more miserable when her younger brother takes his own life at the front because he can not stand any more horror, and the man she loves, an artist who loses the middle finger of his right hand, falls in love with a lovely, healthy girl who is indifferent to war. In her search, Alix turns

51 The idea for Mr. Garden came from hearing stories about the father of novelist Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Tom Arnold, who "spent his life migrating from one church or no-church to another and back again." Letters to a Friend, p. 111.
52 Rose Macaulay, Told by an Idiot, p. 264.
54 See page 45.
to the Society for Promoting Permanent Peace, which her mother helped to organize, and the Anglican Church.

In *The Towers of Trebizond* Laurie searches for some reconciliation of her love for Vere, a married man, and her desire for the church. When Vere is killed in an automobile accident for which Laurie feels to blame, there is nothing to prevent her return to the church. But she does not. She says it would be "cheap meanness" to creep back now that the way was clear... it... would divide me further from Vere. It had always tried to divide us; at the beginning, it had nearly succeeded. To turn to it now would be a gesture against the past that we had shared, and in whose bonds I was still held.

Miss Macaulay said,

I, too, you know, felt Laurie's half-stunned insensibility, and even aversion, towards the Church, for some time after the man I had loved for so long died. I don't take Laurie far enough in her life to get to where she, as I did, encounters some influence that brings her church-ward. But of course it came: feeling as she always had about the church and about separation from God, she would not for very long be outside it.

Laurie's search is the fictional account of Rose Macaulay's own search. The reader must supply for the fictional search the satisfying realization of reunion with the church with which the real search culminated.

Although probably the least likely to be autobiographical in any way, some of the nonchalants are among the most delightful of the Macaulay characters. Two charming vagrants, Betty and Tommy

55See page 70.


Crevequer, appear in both The Furnace and Views and Vagabonds. One critic calls them

the most ideal brother and sister in fiction....
They are born tramps; joyfully irresponsible
Bohemians by instinct, and blissfully unconscious
of nearly everything we associate with Civilisation,
the Progress of Man, or social responsibilities. In
one word, they are Youth.58

But unlike most youth, they are completely unconcerned about causes
or convention. While they are poor, they work only as much as they have
to; and when they can bear work no longer, they go to a fair and
throw rings at alarm clocks. After they inherit a large estate, they
hold open house for everyone and never know how many people are staying
with them until they count each night. When their home burns and they
are financially ruined, they say "The only real fire we've ever had,
and we missed it. Wasn't it bad luck?..."59 Something will turn up;
it always does...Only it has been fun, being rich. I wonder if we
really did all we might have done with it."60 Then they grope among
the ruins for their treasures and greet each find with joyful surprise.

The Crevequers seemed to enjoy things irrespectively
of any merit therein. They were omnivorous consumers
of life; not fastidious at all. They took and used
all that came their way, and if nothing came their
way they were somehow not at a loss even then. And they
had a useful knack of making, with naive simplicity,
large requests, and getting them granted. They seemed
both to take and give with open hands.61

58R. Brimley Johnson, op. cit., p. 68.
60Ibid., p. 276.
61Ibid., p. 178.
Wasn't that the way to live—to take what arrives and be thankful, to lose all and yet never lose all, because, having nothing, one yet possesses all things? Life to these was no empty vessel to be filled with wine, but the very wine itself, spilling over with beauty and delight. They did not demand that good things should be put into their hands; they were craftsmen, and made their own good things, by sheer delight in them.  

No other nonchalants can match the Crevequers either in appeal or in attitude. Mr. Grig in *I Would Be Private* comes fairly close to the happy-go-lucky acceptance of the Crevequers without their generosity. He is happy as a merchant sailor with a family in London. When he is imprisoned in Venezuela by a policeman who, rightly or wrongly, suspects him of looking for pearls, he escapes and disappears. When his children find him in Papagayo, he is married and has four "picionies." Perhaps his nonchalance stems from his philosophy that

Everything's meant... Why was I caught by those darned dago police...?... Why did I manage to escape and get away safe 'ere, so that 'ere I had to stay and not see my ship nor England again? All because the Lord knew it were time I had a rest in my old age, so he settled me down comfortable in this place.  

With this philosophy he persuades his daughter and son-in-law that the Lord had sent the quintuplets to make their fortune.

Some characters manage to be nonchalant even in war time. In *Non-Combatants* Evie Tucker, a beautiful mental woman is concerned about making and buying new clothes, designing millinery, being respectable, and having flirtations without causing the men to

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62 Ibid., p. 281.  
become serious about her. In a group of mental neutrals, Evie gets by on her face which covered all vacancies. Of the war she says, "I can't see that the war makes such a lot of difference, to ordinary people. One seems to go on much the same from day to day, doesn't one?"64 Irving Garden in Told by an Idiot enlists but goes mainly to look after some property rights near the front. His sister Una, described as a placid woman "who never thought, never read anything but tosh, talked in slang, and took life as it came, cheerful, unquestioning and serene,"65 sent food to her sons and the farmhands at the front.

The nonchalants are not sensitive. They are not worriers. They are probably the least intelligent but the best-balanced of Miss Macaulay's characters.

The characters with which critics have felt Miss Macaulay identified particularly are the observers. It has been suggested that these portrayals are self-descriptions.66 At any rate, the

64 Rose Macaulay, Non-Combatants, p. 149.
65 Rose Macaulay, Told by an Idiot, p. 16.
66 Stuart Sherman in Critical Woodcuts, p. 83, suggests that she was describing herself in the description of Rome Garden in Told by an Idiot, p. 56. Rome was "a woman of the world, a known diner out, a good talker, something of a wit,...She had elegance, distinction, brain, a light and cool touch on the topics of the world, a calm, mocking, sceptical detachment, a fastidious taste in letters and in persons." Another probable self-portrait is that of Katherine Varick in Potterism, pp. 14 and 185, who had "...frosty blue eyes,...slightly cynical face,... You had the...feeling with Katherine...of being analysed and understood all through." Claudia Cradock, "ironic, amused, passionless, detached, elegantly calibate,...a travelled European, a bland mocker," is a third self-description in Staying with Relations, p. 14.

Frank Swinerton, in his book The Georgian Scene, p. 285, has this to say about Rose Macaulay:

"She has sympathy for none but the critically alert, those who stand aside from the follies of man and laugh (not jeer) lest they should weep with exasperation and shame. As her first heroine said--
young women who fall in this category would probably be capable of writing good satire if they were so inclined. Anne Vickery, a minor character in Views and Vagabonds, is an early sketch of the detached onlooker. Anne sees people as people: they either interest and amuse her or they do not, and that settles them.

Anne...had a habit of it laughing; a sort of silent twinkling underlay even her more serious conversation. Anne was an amused person of about twenty-seven; she had a pale, delicate, ironic face, that easily looked tired and very easily looked interested, and rather easily looked cynical, and wavy, light hair, and solemn blue eyes that observed and discerned and twinkled, and an attractive, satiric mouth...She had...a certain detachment about her, as of one who looked on at the game even while she played it—played it cleverly and effectively, and enjoyed it extremely. Her touch on the world was light, and yet of an unafraid directness, a gay courageousness, as of one who will readily take a hand in all that offers, because it is more fun to be in the game.67

Catherine Grey, a young novelist in Staying with Relations, would like to be an observer.

People stimulated and absorbed this young woman; they were her hobby. "You're so clever," said the inhabitants of Much Potton, South Devonshire, where Catherine's father had a vicarage, "We're all frightened of you, lest you put us in a book."68

However Catherine has neither the intelligence nor the insight to be

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a successful observer. She classes her cousins, whom she is visiting, as the celibate type, or the maternal type, or some other type, only to find her types need revising when her cousins' actions surprise her. Her own turbulent and disorderly private history--debts, a lover, and what not--keep her from attaining the complete composure and detachment a good observer should have.

A masterpiece in Rose Macaulay's gallery of observers is Rome Garden in Told by an Idiot. Rome, whose jade-green eyes watch and mock, is a critic with a sceptical mind. She is urbane. She likes to watch life at its games and therefore prefers to live in London because it is like having a better seat at the play. Her inquiring mind causes her to question curious uses of words, as well as any connections between

High Church dogma and ornate ritual; between belief in class distinctions and in the British Empire; between dissent and Little Englandism; art and unconventional morals; the bourgeoisie and respectability; socialism and queer clothes.

Rome, whom her sisters described as very fashionably fin-de-siècle, asks herself "What's worth doing, after all?" and answers "The only job worth doing in this curious fantasia of a world, as I see it, is to amuse oneself as well as may be and to get through it with no more trouble than need be. What else is there?" Rome, who could do anything, chooses to do nothing except to survey the foolish world.

69 Rose Macaulay, Told by an Idiot, p. 25.

70 Ibid., p. 39.
Then she falls in love and is very happy until (1) she learns her lover is married and (2) he is shot by the jealous suitor of his jealous wife. Rome's civilization crumbles; however after a few weeks in the country, she returns to London "as apparently bland, cool, and composed as always." But

Into her old detached amusement at the queer pageant of life had come a faint weariness, as if nothing were very much worth while. If she thought anything worth serious comment, she did not reveal it. Life was to her at this time more than ever a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing.\footnote{Ibid., p. 108.}

At first the spectacle of the world entertained her, but after a time the comedy of the world becomes too bitter to be amusing.

Before long, the folly was to become too desperate, too disastrous, too wrecking a business to be a comic show even to the most amused eyes; the circus was, all too soon, to go smash, and the folly of the clowns who had helped to smash it became a bitterness, and the idiot's tale held too much of sound and fury to be borne.\footnote{Ibid., p. 109.} Rome saw the war and what had led up to it as the very crown and sum of human folly, and helped, very capably and neatly, to pack up and send off food and clothes to British prisoners.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 269 and 291.}

After the war, Rome, now sixty-four, learns she has cancer and will die within a year.

The thought that it would only, probably, be a few months set her considering, as she drove herself home in her car, her practised hands steady on the wheel, life, its scope, its meaning, and its end. Life was well enough, she thought; \ldots\ and a gay enough business for those who had the means to make it so and the temperament to find it so. Life was no great matter, and nor, certainly, was death; but it
was well enough. We come and we go; we are born, we live and we die; this poor ball, thought Rome, serves us for all that; and, on the whole, we make too much complaint of it, expect, one way and another, too much of it. It is, after all, but a turning ball, which has burst, for some reason unknown to science, into a curious, interesting and rather unwholesome form of animal and vegetable life. Indeed, thought Rome, I think it is a rather remarkable ball. But of course it can be but of the slightest importance, from the point of view of the philosopher who considers the very great extent and variety of the universe and the extremely long stretching of the ages. Its inhabitants tend to overrate its importance in the scheme of things. Human beings surely tend to overrate their own importance. Funny, bustling, strutting, vain, eager little creatures that we are, so clever and so excited about the business of living, so absorbed and intent about it all, so proud of our achievements, so tragically deploring our disasters, so prone to talk about the wreckage of civilisation, as if it mattered much, as if civilisations had not been wrecked and wrecked all down human history, and it all came to the same thing in the end. Nevertheless, thought Rome, we are really rather wonderful little spurs of life. The brief pageant, the tiny, squalid story of human life upon this earth, has been lit, among the squalor and the greed, by amazing flashes of intelligence, of valour, of beauty, of sacrifice, of love. A silly story if you will, but a somewhat remarkable one. Told by an idiot, and not a very nice idiot at that, but an idiot with gleams of genius and of fineness. The valiant dust that builds on dust—how valiant, after all, it is. No achievements can matter, and all things done are vanity, and the fight for success and the world's applause is contemptible and absurd, like a game children play, building their sand castles which shall so soon one and all collapse; but the queer, enduring spirit of enterprise which animates the dust we are is not contemptible nor absurd.74

Without opposition and without heat, she had refused to be made an active participant in the business, but had watched it from her seat in the stalls as a curious and entertaining show.75

Pamela Hilary, an observer who supplies the philosophy in a chapter of Dangerous Ages significantly titled "The Key," echoes

74 Ibid., p. 312.

75 Ibid., p. 314.
the attitude of Rome Garden. Pamela, capable, humorous, intelligent, and well bred, has *savoir-faire* as well as kindness and never loses control of herself.

Pamela, who seemed lightly, and as it were casually, to swing a key to the door against which Neville, among many others, beat; Pamela, going about her work, keen, debonair and detached, ironic, cool and quiet, responsive to life and yet a thought disdainful of it, lightly holding and easily renouncing; the world's lover, yet not its servant, her foot at times carelessly on its neck to prove her power over it--Pamela said blandly to Grandmama, when the old lady commented one day on her admirable composure, "Life's so short, you see. Can anything which lasts such a little while be worth making a fuss about?"

"Ah," said Grandmama, "that's been my philosophy for ten years...only ten years. You've no business with it at your age, child."

"Age," returned Pamela, negligent and cool, "has extremely little to do with anything that matters. The difference between one age and another is, as a rule, enormously exaggerated. How many years we've lived on this ridiculous planet--how many more we're going to live on it--what a trifle! Age is a matter of exceedingly little importance."

"And so, you would imply, is everything else on the ridiculous planet," said Grandmama, shrewdly.

Pamela smiled, neither affirming nor denying. Lightly the key seemed to swing from her open hand.

"I certainly don't see quite what all the fuss is about," said Pamela.76

As a satirist Rose Macaulay points out the faults of society. As an artist she portrays the individual in relation to society.

The society she describes, in what is (with the possible exception of her last two novels which seem to be part of a new trend of thought) undoubtedly her key book, is so chaotic that it seems to the sensitive observer truly a tale told by an idiot. In some of the books Miss

Macaulay does suggest, partly in seriousness, partly in jest, several axioms for better living. The Crevequers recommend two policies: be happy and be pleasant, and accept "people, circumstances, poverty, wealth, friendships, religion..."—everything. Eddy Oliver, who sees truth in all organizations and causes, learns that one must become a bigot, dedicated to one organization or cause, in order to get to work in this extraordinary world. As the chief ends in life Arthur Gideon recommends learning; Miss Montana, love; and Laurie, travel.

"What's the remedy then?...Education...Learning. There's nothing else."78 "...To love and be loved very greatly is the one stake to cling to in these troubled seas, the one unfailing life-buoy."79 "I agree with those who have said that travel is the chief end of life."80 But the reader is left with the haunting feeling that perhaps the best advice is that of Rome Garden and Pamela Hilary. "Can anything which lasts such a little while be worth making a fuss about?"81 The reader feels the "aftertaste of derisive bitterness,"82 the emotion which Gilbert Highet calls the final test for satire.

77Rose Macaulay, Views and Vagabonds, p. 238.
78Rose Macaulay, Potterism, p. 212.
81Rose Macaulay, Dangerous Ages, p. 241.
Chapter IV. The Summing Up

The degree of greatness of Rose Macaulay's artistry can be determined only from an historical perspective. Nevertheless there seems to be an overall picture or pattern of her thinking, shaping the novels, determining the type and amount of satire, which can be seen from close range. In her early novels, apparently there was no unifying theme and her style had not yet attained maturity. She was learning her trade, practicing such techniques as irony and symbolism, sending her characters to war against society, and forming her own ideas about the enigma, life. Then in the years immediately after World War I came her three most important books. They are important because they were written at the peak of her productivity, because they brought her the best critical reviews and the greatest acclaim,¹ and because they illustrate the trend of her thought which led her intellectually to the conclusion that trying to achieve some satisfactory rapport with society is futile because life is "a tale told by an idiot." Her deepening and gradually intensifying disillusionment with society and inevitably with life itself can be traced in Potterism (1920), Dangerous Ages (1921), and Told by an Idiot (1923). These novels reflect the period of disillusionment after the war; possibly they reflect a personal moral disillusionment which resulted from her deepening attachment to her lover and her resulting break with the sacramental life of the church; perhaps they also reflect the pessimism which many great satirists have felt when they saw society becoming more absurd rather than yielding

¹Thirty-five editions of Potterism were printed the first year and Dangerous Ages was awarded the Femina-Vie Heureuse prize in 1921.
to reforms. In the three novels, Miss Macaulay reached these conclusions: that the forces of Potterism, a term previously explained, are invariably triumphant over the very few truth-seeking, clear-eyed idealists who are not tainted by some aspect of Potterism; that all ages are dangerous for women, and one presumes for men also, and the key to life is the philosophy that since life is so short, it is not worth making a fuss about; and that life itself is "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Stuart Sherman suggests the power of Miss Macaulay at her peak.

Consider the mad speed with which Rose Macaulay has run through the bright hopes of the feminist program. Her course was slowly prepared and her lamp was trimmed by such poor, old, patient plodders as Samuel Butler, G. B. Shaw, and H. G. Wells. Forty years it took these fumbling iconoclasts to get the Victorian candelabra thoroughly junked and the clean cinder path laid out for the Arn Veronicas of the present age. With Potterism, 1920, Rose Macaulay caught up what for brevity we may call the Wellsian torch, and in four short years she burned it out and tossed us the charred wick in *Folk by an Idiot* . . . Rose Macaulay cynically explains to the now tittering young people that before they can get around to reform the world they themselves will be old, and then, of course, it will be useless to try to do anything about it.²

Intellectually, Rose Macaulay seemed to reach a depth of despair, to attain a philosophy of deep pessimism. Yet two factors emerge. First, despite the pessimism, a certain posture, perhaps both literary and personal, of the spectator watching the human

²Stuart Sherman calls Potterism "The gospel of Wells, the ideas of Wells, with the rose color rubbed off, the sentiment squeezed out." *Critical Woodcuts*, p. 85.

³Stuart Sherman, *Critical Woodcuts*, p. 94.
comedy is never lost. Second, even though the themes of the three books reveal intense pessimism, there is a light, gay, bubbling spirit of true comedy which pervades, almost incongruously, and sets the tone. One critic, writing about *Told by an Idiot*, called it, a novel of unusual distinction made almost unique in recent fiction by the fact that it is conceived entirely in the vein of pure comedy. The true comic spirit, with its invitation to what Meredith called thoughtful laughter and to the wholesome, unprejudiced self-observation, is rare enough in any age and almost totally absent from our own. That it so largely informs Miss Macaulay's novel is therefore notable and suggests that she has achieved absolute control of her equipment and command of her art; in short, that she has extracted the greatest possible value from her talents and her material.  

That she could so successfully combine the comic spirit with intellectual pessimism speaks well for her ability. It also suggests something which her later writing would seem to bear out, namely that personally she wished to reject the pessimism to which her intelligence led her. A spectator who relished watching the human comedy, she was also an eager participant. She delighted in many of the joys of everyday life, among which were dinner parties, stimulating conversations, daily swims, bicycle rides, book catalogues, and her car. A woman who terrified her friends by her driving, she pictured heaven as some paradise traversed by great fair roads, to each soul a road to herself, along which her car shall dash at some supramundane speed, hugging (for souls shall be made perfect) the near border of thyme Elysian grass.  


Everything she touched took on part of her own vitality...whether she was at the centre of a fascinated group at one of the innumerable parties which she managed to reach day after day; whether, with inexhaustible kindness, she was giving a precious fragment of her own courage to someone who had need of it, she never failed to find friends. And out of her friendships there flowered not only a series of novels which have not lost their power to enchant but a natural eagerness for life, which lifts her, at times, from sparkling prose to moments of true poetry.6

Her zest for life seemed to counteract her intellectual pessimism, resulting in a backing away from the bitter cynicism which engulfs many satirists. She seemed to reject earlier depths of pessimism which might conceivably have brought her greater fame as a satirist and perhaps personal tragedy. From 1924 to 1940, she wrote one book of poetry, one historical novel, three collections of essays, two anthologies, three critical studies, and seven novels full of flippant wit and sparkling satire. These seven novels earned her the reputation of being clever, urbane, acerb, sophisticated, cool, whimsical, ironically mocking, and intensely modern. She was even compared to Cervantes.

There is no doubt but what Miss Macaulay looks at her day and its state of mind much as Cervantes looked at his, and her result in fiction is in kind if not in degree the same. In degree it is far ahead of its kind beyond anything done by her contemporaries.7

The World War II years were troubled ones for Rose Macaulay. Three deaths, those of her sister Margaret, her brother Will, and the


man she loved, together with the bombing of her London flat made the early 1940's a time of great personal stress for her. Her library, some unpublished manuscripts, and most of her belongings were destroyed when her home burned. She recorded the tragic sense of loss she felt after the fire in a short story called "Miss Anstruther's Letters." This is a poignant story of a writer who saves her wireless, her typewriter, and a suitcase full of books but loses them to the rescue-squad men when she tries to dash upstairs for the letters from her dead lover "that should have been the first thing she saved." Details such as Miss Anstruther's being a writer with a large library and cherishing such things as 'the tiny walnut shell with tiny Mexicans behind glass and a box with a mechanical bird that jumped out and sang,' described in Personal Pleasures as two of Miss Macaulay's favorite keepsakes, cause the reader to conjecture that much of the story is autobiographical. The description of Miss Anstruther, who 'hoped each night that there would be another raid, which would save her the trouble of going on living,' is perhaps a literary expression of the anguish Miss Macaulay felt. From 1941 to 1949, she wrote only three travel books. Perhaps her sense of the futility of life was so strong at the time that she did not trust herself to write a novel.

9This story appeared in the book London Calling, a Salute to America, edited by Storm Jameson. Several well known English writers contributed poems, essays, or stories for the book, which was sold for the U.S.O.


10Ibid., p. 304.

11Ibid., p. 301.
Speaking of one of the travel books, *They Went to Portugal*, she suggests perhaps another reason when she says it

entailed a good deal of hard work and research. I was very unhappy just then, and had to deaden it by work; I couldn't have done a novel possibly. I always talked over my novels with my companion, who stimulated my invention; when he died my mind seemed to go blank and dead.¹²

The death of her lover, personally tragic for her and instrumental in increasing her pessimism, set the stage for her return to the church, a turning point in her writing as well as in her life. In 1950, she wrote *The World by Wilderness*, a haunting and unusual story of post-war adjustment "about the ruins of the City, and the general wreckage of the world that they seem to stand for. And about a rather lost and strayed and derelict girl who made them her spiritual home."¹³ Three significant ideas are expressed or implied in the novel. The first is that the world is a wilderness, a feeling essentially like Miss Macaulay's earlier conclusion that life was "a tale told by an idiot." Second, the central character, often seeking refuge in the bombed ruins of a church, chanting phrases and words, and attempting to initiate some ritual, seems to sense that the Church and its teachings may be the answer to the riddle of the wilderness. Third, the author suggests that the love of the mother for her daughter may eventually rehabilitate the daughter, making her capable of coping with the wilderness. Father Johnson said of

¹³Ibid., p. 27.
The World My Wilderness that it betrayed Rose Macaulay's longing to be back in the church. It also seems to suggest that she was still harboring the feeling that essentially life was futile but possibly religious faith or love made it purposeful. In essence the book shows more hope than any of the earlier novels.

In 1956, came The Towers of Trebizond, for which she was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize.

Her last novel, with its light-hearted blend of satire and fantasy, was entirely characteristic of Rose, as she was then and as she had always been. Its serious theme—the conflict between the torments and the joys of a guilty love—reflected the tragic secret in her own past (many guessed this when they read the book). But its underlying message—the living hell of not really wanting to journey toward the City of God, in spite of an unforgettable longing for it—was not (as some believed it to be) a representation of her own state of mind at the time she wrote it. For, thanks in the first place to her correspondence with Father Johnson, she had already found the way out of her "wilderness" and had attained to serenity of heart and spirit.

The novel reflects her personal faith and hope. Like Potterism, it has for one of its main themes the search for truth; but in this novel, unlike Potterism, Miss Macaulay suggests that the truth exists, it can be found, and it is eternal. She does not resort to the cliche of the camel going through the eye of the needle to enter the kingdom of heaven, but she does suggest that one may have to learn to ride a white camel or do other tasks so difficult that...

14 Dame Rose Macaulay died suddenly of a coronary thrombosis on October 30, 1958, a day after she had been one of several British writers to sign a telegram to the Writers' Union in Moscow protesting the treatment of Nobel Prize winner Boris Pasternak.

many will despair, in order to find truth, faith, the kingdom of heaven. The novel is a wonderful testimonial to her renewed faith and to the charming, delightful wit and sparkling satire which were always hers.

Usually there is an interim after a writer's death during which interest in the writer's works may wane. Then, if his works have a degree of greatness, they are revived. Although it is still too early to tell what will happen in the case of Rose Macaulay, three posthumous collections of her letters published to date suggest a continuing interest in her. It also seems probable that her best novels may survive as minor classics. Surely, because much of her satire is topical and because she was keenly aware of the time in which she lived, her books will earn a place in literature as reflections of an historical period. According to E. M. Forster, "The final test of a novel will be our affection for it, as it is the test of our friends, and of anything else which we cannot define." If this test is valid, Rose Macaulay's place in literature should be assured.

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