

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND: FORM AND STYLE,

by

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I. Introduction

Critics¹ have found fault with Macaulay's History² on at least two grounds. The first is that it was never "finished," that Macaulay, characterized by these critics as someone who lived in the past, could not, did not want to, deliver on his promise to "write the history of England from the accession of King James the Second down to a time which is within the memory of men still living" (I, 1), that he shrank from writing about events that would have been, from his point of view, too painfully recent. The second is that it is too politically and morally biased to be reliable as a serious work of history, that, for example, Macaulay blackens the character of James II, his antagonist, and white-washes that of his protagonist, William III. Although there may be some truth in what these critics have said, they are largely irrelevant in my approach to Macaulay's History as a finished work of art, and one that can be appreciated appropriately by readers who are willing to see embodied in it qualities that we are used to thinking of as epic, romantic, dramatic--and techniques that we usually associate with the novel.

For now, let us think of Macaulay predominantly as an imitator, as belonging to the mimetic tradition. Aristotle tells us that "The objects the imitator represents are actions, with agents who are necessarily either good or bad--the diversities of human character being nearly always derivative from this primary distinction, since the line between virtue and vice is one dividing the whole of mankind."³ The "one [comedy] would make its personages worse, and the other [tragedy] better, than the men of the present day."⁴ If I must justify writing about Macaulay's History for a master's report in English literature, I may resort again to what Aristotle says: "the one [history] describes the thing that has been, and the other

[poetry] a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history. Since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars."⁵ And further: ". . . if he [the poet] should come to take a subject from actual history, he is none the less a poet for that: since some historic occurrences may very well be in the probable and possible order of things; and it is in that aspect of them that he is their poet."⁶ Macaulay was attempting to graft the philosophic and grave import of poetry to history itself, as we shall see in the passage to follow.

Macaulay began his review of Hallam's Constitutional History of England (1828): "History, at least in its state of ideal perfection, is a compound of poetry and philosophy. It impresses general truths on the mind by a vivid representation of particular characters and incidents."⁷ Macaulay's use of the narrative form of an epic "makes it," as Aristotle says, "possible for one to describe a number of simultaneous incidents: and these, if germane to the subject, increase the body of the poem."⁸

Leaving Aristotle's theories to one side for a moment, let us look at a sample from Macaulay's History, itself. I would like to quote from three historical treatments of the same incident, the execution of Monmouth after his abortive rebellion of July, 1685. David Ogg, writing a century after Macaulay, condensed the whole event into one sentence: "After capture, in conditions of extreme distress, Monmouth was executed on 15 July."⁹ David Hume, writing a century before Macaulay, spent a paragraph on the event:

The favorite of the people was attended to the scaffold with a plentiful effusion of tears. He warned the executioner not to fall into the error which he had committed in beheading Russel, where it had been necessary to repeat the blow. This

precaution served only to dismay the executioner. He struck a feeble blow on Monmouth, who raised his head from the block, and looked him in the face, as if reproaching him for his failure. He gently laid down his head a second time; and the executioner struck him again and again to no purpose. He then threw aside the axe, and cried out that he was incapable of finishing the bloody office. The sheriff obliged him to renew the attempt; and at two blows more the head was severed from the body.¹⁰

Macaulay lingers over the same event for four pages (I, 612-615). In Macaulay's passage, the crowd is more than just "a plentiful effusion of tears." It is an audience: "Tower Hill was covered up to the chimney tops with an innumerable multitude of gazers, who, in awful silence, broken only by sighs and the noise of weeping, listened for the last accents of the darling of the people" (I, 613). And then we have, in a mixture of direct and indirect quotes, the words of the condemned man, of his Bishops, and of the headsman, too: "Ketch flung down the axe with a curse. 'I cannot do it,' he said; 'my heart fails me.' 'Take up the axe, man,' cried the sheriff. 'Fling him over the rails,' roared the mob. At length the axe was taken up. Two more blows extinguished the last remains of life; but a knife was used to separate the head from the shoulders. The crowd was wrought up to such an ecstasy of rage that the executioner was in danger of being torn in pieces, and was conveyed away under a strong guard" (I, 614-15). The scene is reminiscent of an engraving of Hogarth's, translated into English prose by Dickens (and into French by Zola). Macaulay made the past present, brought the distant near, invested "with the reality of human flesh and blood beings whom we are too much inclined to consider as personified qualities in an allegory. . . ." ¹¹ And yet he has also given us the allegory.

We return now to Aristotle's rules for epic and drama. We want to see how, in more aspects than we have so far mentioned, Macaulay fits the

prescription for a poet. "The poet being an imitator just like the painter or other makers of likenesses," Aristotle says, "he must necessarily in all instances represent things in one or other of three aspects, either as they were or are, or as they are said or thought to have been, or as they ought to be."¹² We should keep in mind also that Aristotle makes the point that poetry treats "the kind of thing that might be."

II. Double Vision

If we take Macaulay to be an imitator as defined by Aristotle and if we accept for the time being that his History is a kind of poem, then, with Aristotle, we can say that in the work the "statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars." How Macaulay earns the name of poet-historian is in part by showing us historic singulars as universals, and that he does by combining the individual parts of the elements above in various ways. The result is what George Levine (in The Boundaries of Fiction)¹³ called double vision. The first time we encounter this double vision is on page 14 of volume I, and it is a combination of things as they are and things as they might have been:

Had the Plantagenets, as at one time seemed likely, succeeded in uniting all France under their government, it is probable that England would never have had an independent existence. Her princes, her lords, her prelates, would have been men differing in race and language from the artisans and the tillers of the earth. The revenues of her great proprietors would have been spent in festivities and diversions on the banks of the Seine. The noble language of Milton and Burke would have remained a rustic dialect, without a literature, a fixed grammar, or a fixed orthography, and would have been contemptuously abandoned to the use of boors. No man of English extraction would have risen to eminence, except by becoming in speech and habits a Frenchman.

England owes her escape from such calamities to an event which her historians have generally represented as disastrous. . . .

(I, 14-15)

Here as elsewhere, Macaulay is using his double vision for much the same reason Homer or Milton used epic similes--namely, to bring into actuality, for an instant, images and information from without the narrative, for the sake of completeness, to comprehend as much of human experience as possible; but, as we shall see, he also used actual epic similes.

A second type of double vision belongs to the world of painting and cinema. It appears in Macaulay's scene-painting, and here he is at his magical best: he can give us Whitehall in its splendor at the very moment we watch it burn before our eyes:

On the evening of the fourth of January, a woman,--the patriotic journalists and pamphleteers of that time did not fail to note that she was a Dutch woman,--who was employed as a laundress at Whitehall, lighted a charcoal fire in her room and placed some linen round it. The linen caught fire and burned furiously. The tapestry, the bedding, the wainscots were soon in a blaze. The unhappy woman who had done the mischief perished. Soon the flames burst out of the windows. All Westminster, all the Strand, all the river were in commotion. Before midnight the King's apartments, the Queen's apartments, the Wardrobe, the Treasury, the office of the Privy Council, the office of the Secretary of State, had been destroyed. The two chapels perished together: that ancient chapel where Wolsey had heard mass in the midst of gorgeous copes, golden candlesticks, and jeweled crosses, and that modern edifice which had been erected for the devotions of James, and had been embellished by the pencil of Verrio and the chisel of Gibbons. . . . No trace was left of that celebrated gallery which had witnessed so many balls and pageants, in which so many maids of honor had listened too easily to the vows and flatteries of gallants, and in which so many bags of gold had changed masters at the hazard table. . . . Unfortunately some of Holbein's finest pictures were painted on the walls, and are consequently known to us only by copies and engravings. . . . The Treasury now occupies the site of the cockpit, the Privy Council Office the site of the tennis court.

(V, 329-330)

We see here in this history of a place not only things as they were and are, but in a third perspective--in the process of ceasing to exist; and among these things are the Holbeins, which are "known to us only by copies

and engravings," just as, in turn, the Whitehall of 1698 is known to us only by Macaulay's (and others') printed words. This passage seems to illustrate Eliot's "Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past. / If all time is eternally present / All time is unredeemable."¹⁴ But Macaulay comes to the opposite conclusion--all time is redeemable.

For another example of Macaulay's double vision, we can turn to his description of the battlefield at the Boyne, where, on July 1, 1690, a battle between James II and William III took place. As Macaulay has arranged it, we see William and his army approach the spot on June 30, 1690; we are then suddenly seeing the scene from the spot which William occupied, but through Macaulay's eyes, as it was in the year 1848, and then just as suddenly we are returned to 1690--so we have experienced the scene as it was before the battle and since the battle, but we do not see the actual battle until seven pages later. William approaches the crest of a hill on June 30, 1690 and in the middle of a sentence we flash forward 158 years, then back again. Watch:

Still William continued to push forward, and still the Irish receded before him, till, on the morning of Monday, the thirtieth of June, his army, marching in three columns, reached the summit of a rising ground near the southern frontier of the county of Louth. Beneath lay a valley, now so rich and so cheerful that the Englishman who gazes on it may imagine himself to be in one of the most highly favored parts of his own highly favored country. Fields of wheat, woodlands, meadows bright with daisies and clover, slope gently down to the edge of the Boyne. That bright and tranquil stream, the boundary between green banks crowned by modern palaces, and by the ruined keeps of old Norman barons of the pale, is here about to mingle with the sea. Five miles to the west of the place from which William looked down on the river, now stands, on a verdant bank, amidst noble woods, Slane Castle, the mansion of the Marquess of Conyngham. Two miles to the east, a cloud of smoke from factories and steam vessels overhangs the busy town and port of Drogheda. On the Meath side of the Boyne, the ground, still all corn,

grass, flowers, and foliage, rises with a gentle swell to an eminence surmounted by a conspicuous tuft of ash trees which overshadows the ruined church and desolate graveyard of Donore.

In the seventeenth century the landscape presented a very different aspect. . . .

(IV, 7-8)

One does not have to argue too hard that in this passage Macaulay is both poet and historian. He visited as many as he could of the places he wrote about, but it seems also that he visited some of them a second time, in a novel. Here is how Scott describes a Scottish glen in Waverly:

It was towards evening as they entered one of the tremendous passes which afford communication between high and low country; the path, which was extremely steep and rugged, winded up a chasm between two tremendous rocks, following the passage which a foaming stream, that brawled far below, appeared to have worn for itself in the course of ages. A few slanting beams of the sun, which was now setting, reached the water in its darksome bed, and showed it partially, chafed by an hundred rocks, and broken by an hundred falls. The descent from the path to the stream was a mere precipice, with here and there a projecting fragment of granite, or a scathed tree, which had warped its twisted roots into the fissures of the rock. On the right hand, the mountain rose above the path with almost equal inaccessibility; but the hill on the opposite side displayed a shroud of copsewood, with which some pines were intermingled.¹⁵

Here is Macaulay:

The path at Glencoe lies along a stream which issues from the most sullen and gloomy of mountain pools. Huge precipices of naked stone frown on both sides. Even in July the streaks of snow may often be discerned in the rifts near the summits. All down the sides of the crags heaps of ruin mark the headlong paths of the torrents. . . .

(IV, 300)

Which is the novelist and which the historian? A second landscape passage brings out another aspect of Macaulay's double vision: sometimes a scene remains the same through time, but the viewer's attitude changes:

It is not easy for a modern Englishman, who can pass in a day from his club in Saint James's Street to

his shooting-box among the Grampians, and who finds in his shooting-box all the comforts and luxuries of his club, to believe that, in the time of his great-grand-fathers, Saint James's Street had as little connection with the Grampians as with the Andes. Yet so it was. In the south of our island scarcely anything was known about the Celtic part of Scotland; and what was known excited no feeling but contempt and loathing. The crags and the glens, the woods and the waters, were indeed the same that now swarm every autumn with admiring gazers and sketchers. The Trosachs wound as now between gigantic walls of rock tapestried with broom and wild roses: Foyers came headlong down through the birchwood with the same leap and the same roar with which he still rushes to Loch Ness; and, in defiance of the sun in June, the snowy scalp of Ben Cruachan rose, as it still rises, over the willowy islets of Loch Awe. Yet none of these sights had power, till a recent period, to attract a single poet or painter from more opulent and more tranquil regions. Indeed, law and police, trade and industry, have done far more than people of romantic dispositions will readily admit to develop in our minds a sense of the wilder beauties of nature. A traveller must be freed from all apprehensions of being murdered or starved before he can be charmed by the bold outlines and rich tints of the hills. He is not likely to be thrown into ecstasies by the abruptness of a precipice from which he is in imminent danger of falling two thousand feet perpendicular; by the boiling waves of a torrent which suddenly whirls away his baggage and forces him to run for his life; by the gloomy grandeur of a pass where he finds a corpse which marauders have just stripped and mangled; or by the screams of those eagles whose next meal may probably be on his own eyes.
(III, 296-97)

Here Macaulay indulges his taste for slapstick humor and ridicule of the fad-prone side of human nature. He shows us things as they were and are, things as they were said or thought to have been, and things as they ought to be. This passage also brings up another dimension of Macaulay's double vision--the relativity of values within one era or in different eras. He has been discussing the dissension between William and his councillors over the expansion of the army. He explains the dissension, saying, "They were differently situated and necessarily saw the same objects from different points of view" (V, 405). Elsewhere, Macaulay analyzes perfectly the

colonialist's temperament: the English in Ireland in the seventeenth century were like the English in India in Macaulay's own time (He had spent time in India, almost singlehandedly writing the criminal code.), more English than the English: "They spoke English with remarkable purity and correctness, and . . . they were, both as militiamen and as jurymen, superior to their kindred in the mother country" (III, 189-90). "The character, thus formed, has two aspects. Seen on one side, it must be regarded by every well constituted mind with disapprobation. Seen on the other, it irresistibly extorts applause. The Spartan, smiting and spurning the wretched Helots, moves our disgust. But the same Spartan, calmly dressing his hair, and uttering his concise jests, on what he well knows to be his last day, in the pass of Thermopylae, is not to be contemplated without admiration" (III, 191). In another place, Macaulay talks about how contemporary estimates of William's character differed; his point of view shifts and at last comes into focus in the narrative present, where a true estimate can emerge:

In every Continental country where Protestant congregations met, fervent thanks were offered to God, who, from among the progeny of His servants, Maurice, the deliverer of Germany, and William, the deliverer of Holland [William I] had raised up a third deliverer, the wisest and mightiest of all. At Vienna, at Madrid, nay, at Rome, the valiant and sagacious heretic was held in honor as the chief of the great confederacy against the House of Bourbon; and even at Versailles the hatred which he inspired was largely mingled with admiration.

Here he was less favorably judged. In truth, our ancestors saw him in the worst of all lights. By the French, the Germans, and the Italians, he was contemplated at such a distance that only what was great could be discerned, and that small blemishes were invisible. To the Dutch he was brought close: but he was himself a Dutchman. In his intercourse with them he was seen to the least advantage: he was perfectly at his ease with them; and from among them he had chosen his earliest and dearest friends. But to the English he appeared in a most unfortunate point of view. He was at once too near to them and too far from them. He lived among them, so

that the smallest peculiarity of temper or manner could not escape their notice. Yet he lived apart from them, and was to the last a foreigner in speech, tastes, and habits.

(III, 48-49)

We have already cited an example of Macaulay's vision of the might-have-been, but not yet an example of the ought-to-have-been, which, in this case, is combined with things as they are. Macaulay here is discussing what Elizabeth I ought to have done: "If, a hundred years earlier [than 1689], when the division in the Protestant body was recent, Elizabeth had been so wise as to abstain from requiring the observance of a few forms which a large part of her subjects considered as popish, she might perhaps have averted those fearful calamities which, forty years after her death, afflicted the Church. . ." (III, 93).

Macaulay could adapt his double vision for many purposes, as we have seen. Where did he learn this technique? Let us look for a moment at a passage from the Aeneid. Aeneas approaches the prophesied site of Rome:

The scorching sun has scaled the sky's midcircle
When they can see far off the citadel
and walls and scattered rooftops that today
the power of Rome has raised as high as heaven;
but then it was Evander's, a poor land.¹⁶

Here is another passage from the Aeneid. Here, Evander walks with Aeneas and tells him the history of the countryside as Virgil tells us simultaneously the future of that same countryside. Notice, too, the savages who "fed on branches and harsh food of hunters." Somehow they evoke for us the aboriginal Celts of Macaulay's seventeenth century Ireland who "lived on roots and sour milk" (III, 133).

Then King Evander, founder of Rome's stronghold:
These groves were once the home of fauns and nymphs
and a race of men sprung from tree trunks
and sturdy oaks. They had no rule and no
refinements; for they could not yoke their bulls

or gather wealth or save what they had gained;
they fed on branches and harsh food of hunters.

· · · · ·
His words were scarcely done when, moving on,
he points out both the altar and the gate
the Romans call Carmental, ancient tribute
in honor of the nymph Carmentis, fate-
foretelling prophetess, the first to sing
the greatness of Aeneas' sons and future
of noble Pallanteum. And Evander
then shows to him a spacious grove that, later,
brave Romulus made into an asylum;

· · · · ·
With such talk to each other, they drew near
a poor man's house, the home of King Evander;
and here and there the cattle lowed along
what are today the elegant Carinae
and Roman Forum.¹⁷

The similarities between Macaulay's technique and Virgil's are striking: a narrator is observed from the perspective of the poet-historian's own time, telling part of the story; the poet-historian adds to the original narrator's account the continuation of the story as far as he can take it--to his own time, and the reader holds in his hand a story that he can regard either as complete or incomplete--to be finished by himself. I am not saying that it was from Virgil alone that Macaulay learned how to do this: Gibbon did the same thing in I, 1 of the Decline and Fall: Macaulay was eclectic. Using double vision enabled Macaulay to do the kind of thing epic poets can do--to surround his events of seventeen years with their past and their future, to dig into them, to ornament them, and bring them to life.

Foreshadowing

Another kind of double vision we saw in the passage from Virgil is foreshadowing, flashes forward. Sometimes with Macaulay it is only a matter of a few words, sometimes an entire situation, that functions as a predictor; sometimes it is a matter of interpreting an omen. As a rule,

the predictions are predictions of misfortune. In a few words Macaulay alludes to the pass at Glencoe where a massacre is to take place; it happens in Volume III: "Another Macdonald, destined to a lamentable and horrible end, led a band of hardy freebooters from the dreary pass of Glencoe" (III, 326); the massacre itself happens several hundred pages later. Two hundred pages and two years before the Darien expedition, Macaulay tells us: "How that dream originated, and by how terrible an awakening it was broken, will be related hereafter" (V, 237). In IV, we get a preview of the Battle of Landen, a Pyrrhic victory for the French: "On the left flank, the village of Romsdorff rose close to the little stream of Landen, from which the English have named the disastrous day" (IV, 512).

In describing the reaction by university students to James's abuse of power in the universities, where he attempted to install Catholic authority, Macaulay says, ". . . that those high-spirited youths who a few months before had eagerly volunteered to march against the Western insurgents should now be with difficulty kept down by sword and carbine, these were signs full of evil omen to the House of Stuart. The warning, however, was lost on the dull, stubborn, self-willed tyrant" (II, 277). Of course, among other things, Macaulay is reminding us of James's biggest failing--the inability to know himself, and the corollary to it, the inability to read other people's words and actions, to interpret his world. This quality his daughter Anne inherits.

An example of the second type of foreshadowing is in Macaulay's extensive description of Lady Churchill's relationship to the future queen, Anne--a piece of foreshadowing that is never entirely balanced out later, since the History, as it turned out, did not cover the actual span of

Anne's reign. But it does include the more immediate situation in which Anne must decide--and is guided in her decision by Lady Churchill--whether to support William's and Mary's takeover. Within that larger situation of the politics of succession we have, typically for Macaulay's style, a foreglimpse of Lady Churchill in old age as "that most odious and miserable of human beings, an ancient crone at war with her whole kind. . ." (II, 250). In the closing volume, we get a flash-forward of William's death and Anne's accession to the throne: "In a few months the vaults of Westminster would receive the emaciated and shattered frame which was animated by the most far-sighted, the most daring, the most commanding of souls! In a few months the British throne would be filled by a woman whose understanding was well known to be feeble. . ." (V, 536).

The last of the types of foreshadowing I mentioned--by omen--is managed in the following way: While on his embassy from James to the Pope in 1687, Castlemaine visits the Jesuits' headquarters where "Sculpture, painting, poetry, and eloquence were employed to compliment the strangers: but all these arts had sunk into deep degeneracy. . . ." As an example of bad style, Macaulay quotes from a wall inscription. "There was a still more unfortunate distich, which at the time attracted little notice, but which, a few months later, was remembered and malignantly interpreted. 'O King,' said the poet, 'cease to sigh for a son. Though nature may refuse your wish, the stars will find a way to grant it'" (II, 261). James III, born the following year, was considered by many of the English to be suppositious.

III. Epic Elements of the History

It is too simplistic to look at a work like Macaulay's History, as an epic, and only an epic, and to say that in all respects it fits the epic

pattern, not only as a political statement, but as a work with an epic hero, battle scenes, catalogs, a journey, a trip to the underworld, epic games, as a work marked by epic similes, epithets and grandiose language; yet perhaps it is helpful for a reader to keep in mind that the History does indeed contain elements of the epic. Certainly Macaulay was fond of the idea that some types of historical events lend themselves to epic treatment. For example, in discussing the rivalry between the clans in Scotland, he says, "A Highland bard might easily have found in the history of the year 1689 subjects very similar to those with which the war of Troy furnished the great poets of antiquity. One day Achilles is sullen, keeps his tent, and announces his intention to depart with all his men. The next day Ajax is storming about the camp, and threatening to cut the throat of Ulysses" (III, 333). William's contingency scheme to vacate Holland in 1672, during a political controversy, and to emigrate with his followers to the Indian archipelago, Macaulay sees as "a scheme which has an aspect of antique heroism, and which, if it had been accomplished, would have been the noblest subject for epic song that is to be found in the whole compass of modern history" (I, 215). (Later on, Macaulay gives us the history of such a scheme that failed--the attempted colonization of Darien [the Isthmus of Panama] by the Scots in 1699.)

In The Boundaries of Fiction, George Levine says:

The famous opening of the History has all the solemnity and sweep of the announcements of subject and scope which begin the great epics Macaulay loved. . . . the paragraphs might very well be out of a traditional epic invocation. . . . The juxtaposition of past and present begins here, and honor is done to both--to the past because it so heroically struggled to transcend itself, to the present for its intrinsic greatness.¹⁸

Macaulay's hero, William III, is a warrior, a general in fact, and a king. He comes to England by the grace of a "Protestant wind," a wind that

enables him miraculously to land where until the last moment it seemed he would not be able to:

The weather had indeed served the Protestant cause so well that some men of more piety than judgment fully believed the ordinary laws of nature to have been suspended for the preservation of the liberty and religion of England. Exactly a hundred years before, they said, the Armada, invincible by man, had been scattered by the wrath of God. Civil freedom and divine truth were again in jeopardy, and again the obedient elements had fought for the good cause. The wind had blown strong from the east while the Prince wished to sail down the Channel, had turned to the south when he wished to enter Torbay, had sunk to a calm during the disembarkation, and as soon as the disembarkation was completed, had risen to a storm, and had met the pursuers in the face. Nor did men omit to remark that, by an extraordinary coincidence, the Prince had reached our shores on a day on which the Church of England commemorated, by prayer and thanksgiving, the wonderful escape of the Royal House and of the three estates from the blackest plot ever devised by Papists.

(II, 473-74)

The credulous, those "men of more piety than judgment," certainly get a fair hearing from Macaulay. If they had lived in the times written of in the classical epics, they would have been likely, as Homer did, to attribute the miracle to Olympian deities.

William, as we have said, is Macaulay's epic hero. Repeatedly he is referred to as a deliverer. A Dutchman, though also descended from the House of Stuart and married to a Stuart, he arrives like any good epic hero, by sea. Our first encounter with him, however, takes place in Volume I where, characteristically, he is forgiving, perhaps too forgiving. He "extended to crimes perpetrated in his cause an indulgence which has left a stain on his glory. . . . Young as he was, his ardent and unconquerable spirit, though disguised by a cold and sullen manner, soon roused the courage of his dismayed countrymen" (I, 215). We find often references to William's clemency: "William, however, with politic clemency, abstained

from shedding the blood even of the most culpable" (III, 41). "His clemency was peculiar to himself. It was not the clemency of an ostentatious man, or of a sentimental man, or of an easy-tempered man. It was cold, unconciliating, inflexible" (III, 569). "It has seemed strange to many that a prince of high spirit and acrimonious temper should have treated servants, who had so deeply wronged him, with a kindness hardly to be expected from the meekest of human beings. But William was emphatically a statesman . . . with the outward show of serenity . . . [he] not only forgave, but often pretended not to see, offences which might well have moved him to bitter resentment" (V, 178).

At this point, lest a reader think that such clemency disqualifies William as an epic hero, I would like to quote what one translator of the Aeneid says of Virgil's hero: "It may be that the trouble with him is really the trouble with us. We are not mature enough to accept, as epic hero, a man who is imaginative, sensitive, compassionate . . . in short, civilized: in other words, a paradox."¹⁹ In Book XII of the Aeneid, we can find, as one of the several instances of sensitivity and compassion in Aeneas, his hesitation to kill Turnus. William does have his faults. His political sagacity does not make him immune to "that jealousy of the greatness of France [that] was with him a passion, a ruling passion, almost an infirmity" (V, 392-93). But again, we can quote an authority on epic heroes to explain this characteristic against the characteristic of clemency. Richmond Lattimore says: "Odysseus has strong passions, but his intelligence keeps them under control."²⁰ William has one tremendous handicap, of which Macaulay can sometimes make light: his English is weak, and in that language he can never relax as he can with his Dutch cronies. Macaulay writes that the "poets who wrote Pindaric verses in his praise

complained that their flights of sublimity were beyond his comprehension. Those who are acquainted with the panegyrical odes of that age will perhaps be of opinion that he did not lose much by his ignorance" (III, 51).

William, having lived in England for three years, returns to the Hague in 1691 for a visit, and is greeted with, among other tributes, portrayals of "the glorious actions of his ancestors" as well as of his own history: childhood marriage, heroic landing at Torbay, and a battle scene from the Boyne, and all is "most appropriately inscribed, in the majestic language of Rome, the saying of the great Roman, 'What dost thou fear? Thou hast Caesar on board.'" Perhaps it is more than a coincidence that Macaulay describes these "stations" of William's life portrayed very much as Virgil describes the scenes of Aeneas's history as he finds them portrayed in the shrine of Juno, shortly after his landing in Carthage: ". . . here routed Greeks were chased by Trojan fighters / and here the Phrygian troops pursued by plumed / Achilles in his chariot. . . ."21

Nicely enough, Macaulay supplies us with a mock-heroic counter-example. Castlemaine, of whom we read before, while being entertained in Rome in 1687, has the following greeting: "The front of the Ambassador's palace was decorated on this great day with absurd allegorical paintings of gigantic size. There was Saint George with his foot on the neck of Titus Oates, and Hercules with his club crushing College, the Protestant joiner, who in vain attempted to defend himself with his flail" (II, 259-60).

Like Aeneas, William has to fight. At the Battle of Landen (1693), Macaulay tells us, "the whole greatness of William's character appeared." He plunges into battle, refusing to wear armor or to disguise his rank; he is narrowly missed, then twice grazed by bullets. But it is his military acumen more than his physical courage that Macaulay values:

At Landen two poor sickly beings who, in a rude state of society, would have been regarded as too puny to bear any part in combats, were the souls of two great armies . . . the two feeblest in body were the hunch-backed dwarf who urged forward the fiery onset of France, and the asthmatic skeleton who covered the slow retreat of England.

(IV, 516-17)

Still, I would say William is not disqualified as epic hero. When he arrives in England the first time, he is accompanied by an entourage of soldiers from all sorts of exotic places, soldiers who are catalogued in much the way the Greek soldiers of the Aeneid are.²² "Then came a long column of the whiskered infantry of Switzerland . . . then marched a succession of bands, designated, as was the fashion of that age, after their leaders, Bentinck, Solmes, and Ginkell, Talmash and Mackay. . . . It was affirmed that they were, with scarcely an exception, above six feet high, and that they wielded such huge pikes, swords, and muskets, as had never before been seen in England" (II, 477-78). Here is not by any means the only place in the History where Macaulay uses the device of the epic catalog. In III, he gives us a catalog of the Scottish clans (325); in II, 312ff., another--the noble Lords Lieutenant who refused to be a party to a scheme to pack Parliament with Catholics. And there are others--statesmen (IV, 550ff.), the Cabal (I, 208-210). William and his army enter Exeter in epic style:

. . . attended by forty running footmen, the Prince himself appeared, armed on back and breast, wearing a white plume and mounted on a white charger. With how martial an air he curbed his horse, how thoughtful and commanding was the expression of his ample forehead and falcon eye, may still be seen on the canvas of Kneller. Once those grave features relaxed into a smile. It was when an ancient woman, perhaps one of the zealous Puritans who, through twenty-eight years of persecution, had waited with firm faith for the consolation of Israel, perhaps the mother of some rebel who had perished in the carnage of Sedgemoor, or in the more fearful carnage of the Bloody Circuit, broke from the crowd, rushed through

the drawn swords and curvetting horses, touched the hand
of the deliverer, and cried out that now she was happy.
(II, 477)

In III, James approaches Dublin. His progress is like a parody of William's, above. If William's entry into Exeter is heroic, James's into Dublin is mock-heroic:

Though very few laborers were seen at work in the fields,
the road was lined by Rapparees armed with skeans,
stakes, and half pikes, who crowded to look upon the
deliverer of their race. . . . Long frieze mantles,
resembling those which Spenser had, a century before,
described as meet beds for rebels and apt cloaks for
thieves, were spread along the path which the cavalcade
was to tread; and garlands, in which cabbage stalks
supplied the place of laurels, were offered to the royal
hand. The women insisted on kissing His Majesty; but
it should seem that they bore little resemblance to their
posterity; for this compliment was so distasteful to him
that he ordered his retinue to keep them at a distance.
(III, 170)

Here is a good place to give a description of James's character, as we have for William's. An appropriate epigraph might be taken from the Dunciad, IV: "May you, my Cam and Isis, preach it long! / The Right Divine of Kings to govern wrong."²³ Macaulay concurs with an earlier historian of the period, Oldmixon (and from whom he drew much of his material), who ended his History of the Revolution (1730): "The Fate of King James the Second, which is the Catastrophe of this History, would, like that of a Tragedy, move Pity as well as Terror, if that Prince had been the least sensible of his Misgovernment: But all compassion is taken off by his glorying in the Attempt to bind these Nations in the chains of Spiritual and Temporal Bondage, and his shewing no Sorrow, but for his not being able to accomplish it." Here are just a few samples of Macaulay's characterization of James II:

Though a libertine, James was diligent, methodical,
and fond of authority and business. His understanding

was singularly slow and narrow, and his temper obstinate, harsh, and unforgiving.

(I, 169)

For his nature was haughty and imperious . . . he was almost as much debased by superstition as his brother by indolence and vice . . . James was now a Roman Catholic. Religious bigotry had become the dominant sentiment of his narrow and stubborn mind, and had so mingled itself with his love of rule, that the two passions could hardly be distinguished from each other.

(I, 202)

Happily for England, James was, as usual, his own worst enemy.

(III, 10)

The truth is that the faults of James's head and heart were incurable.

(IV, 493)

More than once Macaulay puts before us a picture of James deriving sadistic pleasure from watching prisoners tortured:

The Scottish Privy Council had power to put state prisoners to question. But the sight was so dreadful that, as soon as the boot appeared, even the most servile and hard-hearted courtiers hastened out of the chamber. . . . The Duke of York, it was remarked, seemed to take pleasure in the spectacle which some of the worst men then living were unable to contemplate without pity and horror. He not only came to Council when the torture was to be inflicted, but watched the agonies of the sufferers with that sort of interest and complacency with which men observe a curious experiment in science.

(I, 267)

Close to the end of the first volume, we start to see more ornamented comments on James's character:

Though vindictive, he was not indiscriminately vindictive. Not a single instance can be mentioned in which he showed a generous compassion to those who had opposed him honestly and on public grounds. But he frequently spared and promoted those whom some vile motive had induced to injure him.

(I, 501)

A last variation on the theme should be enough: "No English sovereign has ever given stronger proof of a cruel nature than James the Second. Yet his

cruelty was not more odious than his mercy" (I, 643-44). Surely by now we can see that William and James are perfectly matched opposites, the one merciful to a fault, the other simply without any mercy at all, one with the imagination to entertain the double vision of what is and what ought to be, the other unable to sustain a single true vision. James sees his world distorted, and therefore dooms himself by behaving inappropriately. James is never called a devil outright as Titus Oates and the Irishman Dundee are, but there is no doubt that he and they are going to the same place.²⁴

If, in the scheme of the History, any specific place can be compared with an underworld, it is seventeenth century Catholic Ireland. It is not that Ireland is scenically ugly--it can be a paradise--but the Catholic indigenes of the seventeenth century built a Hell in Heaven's despair; they lived like pigs, groveled in the mud, and fed on roots and meat half-raw, half-burnt. In talking about the town of Kenmare, Macaulay says:

The southwestern part of Kerry is now well-known as the most beautiful tract in the British isles. The mountains, the glens, the capes stretching far into the Atlantic, the crags on which the eagles build, the rivulets brawling down rocky passes, the lakes overhung by groves in which the wild deer find covert, attract every summer crowds of wanderers sated with the business and the pleasures of great cities. The beauties of that country are indeed too often hidden in the mist and rain which the west wind brings up from a boundless ocean. But, on the rare days when the sun shines out in all his glory, the landscape has a freshness and a warmth of coloring seldom found in our latitude. The myrtle loves the soil. The arbutus thrives better than even on the sunny shore of Calabria. The turf is of livelier hue than elsewhere: the hills glow with a richer purple: the varnish of the holly and ivy is more glossy; and berries of a brighter red peep through foliage of a brighter green. But during the greater part of the seventeenth century this paradise was as little known to the civilized world as Spitzbergen or Greenland. If ever it was mentioned, it was mentioned as a horrible desert, a chaos of bogs, thickets, and precipices, where the she wolf still littered, and where some half-naked savages, who could not speak a word of English, made themselves burrows in the mud, and lived on roots and sour milk.
(III, 133-34)

Never mind the purpleness; never mind the pathetic fallacies. This is a remarkable passage for several reasons. First, it presents to us a place, as we are now used to having it shown us, as it was in 1848, and as it was in the seventeenth century, but in this case, it is not technology--paved streets and smoking factory chimneys--that makes the difference, it is a habit of mind: the place is both heaven and hell. William's pronouncement again applies: "They were differently situated and necessarily saw the same objects from different points of view." The sun, personified, shines on it "in all his glory," "the myrtle loves the soil." The colors are more intense than elsewhere. To a seventeenth century mind, it's a "horrible desert, a chaos of bogs," etc. And what really makes it a hell are the half-naked savages, "who could not speak a word of English"! Somehow, heaven is a place where English is spoken.

As someone who wanted to place before the English of the nineteenth century "a true picture of the life of their ancestors," Macaulay found the devices of the epic, and especially its comprehensive nature, made to order. Later on, we shall see how he used epic similes. So far already we see evidence that Macaulay considered William an epic hero. He uses catalogs, battle scenes, even gives us a kind of hell and devils; he gives us past, present and future. Whenever he wants to evoke a distant, exotic place, he calls in the Red Indians. For example, in talking about those who fled religious intolerance before the Toleration Act of 1689, he tells us that "thousands of those honest, diligent, and God-fearing yeomen and artisans [were forced] to seek a refuge beyond the ocean among the wigwams of red Indians and the lairs of panthers" (III, 85-86). Or, if he does not refer to Indians, he just names the most exotic place he can think of. By the way, the succinct Ogg seems to have picked up that device from

Macaulay. Compare the following: "To the Londoner of those days Appin [Glencoe] was what Caffraria or Borneo is to us" (IV, 323); "In the first of these tragedies he [William] may have thought that, so far as he was concerned, the Macdonalds of Glencoe were as remote as the tribes of central Africa, . . ."²⁵

As Levine says, Macaulay loved epics. In 1824 he produced a *jeu d'esprit*--his own version of the recipe for an epic poem in Pope's Peri Bathous. Macaulay gives his piece the suitably grand title, "A Prophetic Account of a Grand National Epic Poem, to be entitled The Wellingtoniad, and to be published A.D. 2824." This unbuttoned prank ends with a parody of the Aeneid:

Book XII

Things are now hastening to the catastrophe. Napoleon flies to London, and, seating himself on the hearth of the Regent, embraces the household gods, and conjures him, by the venerable age of George the Third, and by the opening perfections of the Princess Charlotte, to spare him. The Prince is inclined to do so; when, looking on his breast, he sees there the belt of the Duke of Brunswick. He instantly draws his sword, and is about to stab the destroyer of his kinsman. Piety and hospitality, however, restrain his hand. He takes a middle course, and condemns Napoleon to be exposed on a desert island. The King of France reënters Paris; and the poem concludes.

(X, 444)

What Humphries says of epics in general in the introduction to his translation of the Aeneid applies as well to Macaulay's History: "The scope of an epic requires, in the writing, a designed variety, a calculated unevenness, now and then some easy-going carelessness. So the reader will find, here and there, transitional passages, the stock epithet, the conventional phrase, a few lines of vamping, and, in this or that line, what the Spanish call ripios. Over and above these matters of small detail, in the large panorama the reader will find valleys as well as peaks, dry ravines

as well as upland meadows: the landscape is not always the same height above sea level, and its flora and fauna vary more than a little."²⁶ We will be seeing more evidence of these elements as this study continues.

IV. Language

What makes the English people English is not only geography and politics; it is their language. We expect that a historian of England will care very much about the English Language. Macaulay is sensitive throughout the History to how language changes, is enriched. "The noble language of Milton and Burke" is the kind he aspires to write. He notices words that have been lost to the language--Antibirminghams, Abhorrrers--and words that have been added--Mob and Sham, Whig and Tory (I, 252-53). It is sometimes as if he were calling attention to his own good style by setting beside it (or under it, in a footnote), some horrible example of bad taste, or clumsiness, or bumptiousness. There is of course a delight, what he called in Gay "festive malice," Macaulay takes in lambasting these bad examples, but there is also a serious, a tendentious side to that: he is showing us, in its purest form, what poetic justice really is. His writing survives; these dolts' aberrations are revived by him only long enough so that we may laugh at them. Throughout the entire five volume History we find these horrible examples dragged before our eyes, just as we see Jeffreys, the horrible wicked judge, resurrected once or twice so that we may be reminded of how dead he really is, how poetic justice prevails in the world of men as in the world of language.

Macaulay's literary judgments were his bread and butter. He used the book review as a forum to express his own views on literature and writers. In those reviews he had a fearless way of pronouncing on what good prose or

poetry should be, and why. The same holds true in the History. The following is taken from III, 117, n.

A specimen of the prose which the Jacobites wrote on this subject will be found among the Somers Tracts. The Jacobite verses were generally too loathsome to be quoted. I select some of the most decent lines from a very rare lampoon:--

The eleventh of April has come about,
To Westminster went the rabble rout,
In order to crown a bundle of clouts,
A dainty fine king indeed.

.

And then, just to be sure we get the message, Macaulay goes on to say, in the same note:

A Frenchman name Le Noble, who had been banished from his own country for his crimes, but by the connivance of the police, lurked in Paris, and earned a precarious livelihood as a bookseller's hack, published on the occasion two pasquinades, now extremely scarce, . . . In wit, taste, and good sense, Le Noble's writings are not inferior to the English poem which I have quoted.
(III, 118, n.)

The lampoon and the pasquinades are called, respectively, "very rare" and "extremely scarce." Similarly (in III, 552), we find Macaulay writing of "contemporary French libels which have long been forgotten." We can only conclude that Macaulay thinks that bad writing finds its way, as Orwell put it, "into the dustbin where it belongs."²⁷ That is not to say that everything in the dustbin is there because it deserves to be. The historian must be ready to reassess, for its information value, material that has, for whatever reason, been passed over. Macaulay says, "My notions of the temper and relative positions of political and religious parties in the reign of William the Third have been derived not from any single work, but from thousands of forgotten tracts, sermons, and satires; in fact, from a whole literature which is mouldering in old libraries" (III, 12, n.).

What Orwell did in his essay of 1945, Macaulay had done a century before when he wrote: "The English of our services is English in all the vigor and suppleness of early youth." "The diction of our Book of Common Prayer . . . has directly or indirectly contributed to form the diction of almost every great English writer, and has extorted the admiration of the most accomplished infidels and of the most accomplished Nonconformists, of such men as David Hume and Robert Hall." He goes on to ridicule a man named Patrick who, in 1689, "was entrusted with the duty of expanding and ornamenting the Collects in the Liturgy:

In one respect, at least, the choice seems to have been unexceptionable; for, if we judge by the way in which Patrick paraphrased the most sublime Hebrew poetry, we shall probably be of the opinion that, whether he was or was not qualified to make the Collects better, no man that ever lived was more competent to make them longer.²

²I will give two specimens of Patrick's workmanship. "He maketh me," says David, "to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." Patrick's version is as follows: "For as a good shepherd leads his sheep in the violent heat to shady places, where they may lie down and feed (not in parched, but) in fresh and green pastures, and in the evening leads them (not to muddy and troubled waters, but) to pure and quiet streams; so hath he already made a fair and plentiful provision for me, which I enjoy in place without any disturbance."

(III, 469)

Spelling in the seventeenth century and even in the eighteenth was not exactly standardized, and Macaulay knew this as well as anybody, but it still bothered him when he saw a misspelling (or a grammatical error), no matter who made it. In the index to the History, under "Mary, Queen (Princess of Orange)" appears an entry, "specimen of her careless use of the English language"--and what it refers to is this sample: "This book was given the King and I, at our crownation. Marie R." (I, 388, n.). Macaulay's respect for language crosses social and intellectual lines: if

he finds Mary ignorant, so he finds Bunyan, a man of low social standing and scanty education, eloquent. Here is what he says about Bunyan, warbling his native woodnotes wild:

To the name of Baxter and Howe must be added the name of a man far below them in station and in acquired knowledge, but in virtue their equal, and in genius their superior, John Bunyan. . . . He knew no language but the English, as it was spoken by the common people. . . . His spelling was bad. . . . Yet his native force of genius, and his experimental knowledge of all the religious passions, from despair to ecstasy, amply supplied in him the want of learning. His rude oratory roused and melted hearers who listened without interest to the labored discourses of great logicians and Hebraists. . . .

(II, 219-220)

Bunyan, the literary giant of the common man, Macaulay forgives his religious fanaticism because it is eloquent; he does no such thing in the case of George Fox, the Quaker. In explaining how people were persuaded to accept Fox's doctrines, Macaulay writes: "His Journal, before it was published, was revised by men of more sense and knowledge than himself, and therefore, absurd as it is, gives no notion of his genuine style. . . ." (IV, 137, n.2). In the course of speculating about what it is that makes people want to convert to Quakerism or any other faith, Macaulay tells us that "what was most grossly absurd in his theories and practices was softened down, or at least not obtruded on the public: whatever could be made to appear specious was set in the fairest light: his gibberish was translated into English (my italics). . . ." (IV, 140-41). Here and elsewhere, Macaulay calls for both intelligibility and intellect. He has some fun with a certain non-juror, Henry Dodwell, who occupied a Professorship of Ancient History at the University of Oxford, and who "had perused innumerable volumes in various languages, and had indeed acquired more learning than his slender faculties were able to bear. The small

intellectual spark which he possessed was put out by the fuel" (III, 454). After giving us a sample or two of Dodwell's crackpot religious theories, Macaulay concludes with a Swiftian sentence designed to intimidate any foolish writer: "Even in days which Dodwell could well remember, such heretics as himself would have been thought fortunate if they escaped with life, their backs flayed, their ears clipped, their noses slit, their tongues bored through with red-hot iron, and their eyes knocked out with brickbats" (III, 456). Compare this with Swift's from Gulliver's Travels: "Again, Because it is a general Complaint that the Favourites of Princes are troubled with short and weak Memories; the same Doctor proposed, that whoever attended a first Minister, after having told his Business, with the utmost Brevity, and in the plainest Words; should at his Departure give the said Minister a Tweak by the Nose, or a kick in the Belly, or tread on his Corns, or lug him thrice by both Ears, or run a Pin into his Breech, or pinch his Arm black and blue; to prevent Forgetfulness: And at every Levee Day repeat the same Operation, till the Business were done or absolutely refused."²⁸

Dryden, the literary giant of the intellectuals and Tories, is relegated in Macaulay's esteem to a position of dishonor. In several places throughout the History Macaulay holds Dryden up as the example of the gifted poet who perverted his gift for dishonest purposes. Macaulay sees Dryden as a vain, avaricious hypocrite, and he does not want us even to smile at what he sees as Dryden's unfaithfulness, irresponsibility, to his language. First, let us look at Macaulay's judgment on Dryden's vanity: "Dryden, in his *Life of Lucian*, speaks in too high terms of Blount's abilities. But Dryden's judgment was biassed; for Blount's first work was a pamphlet in defence of the Conquest of Granada" (IV, 459, n.2).

Macaulay is in agreement with Samuel Johnson, who, commenting on the same quality in Dryden said: "He may be thought to mention himself too frequently; but while he forces himself upon our esteem, we cannot refuse him to stand high in his own."²⁹

As to Dryden's avarice, Macaulay sees it as Dryden's ruling passion:

Self-respect and a fine sense of the becoming were not to be expected from one who led a life of mendicancy and adulation. Finding that, if he continued to call himself a Protestant, his services would be overlooked, he declared himself a Papist. The King's parsimony speedily relaxed. Dryden's pension was restored; the arrears were paid up; and he was employed to defend his new religion both in prose and verse.

Two eminent men, Samuel Johnson and Walter Scott, have done their best to persuade themselves and others that this memorable conversion of Dryden's was sincere. It was natural that they should be desirous to remove a disgraceful stain from the memory of one whose genius they justly admired, and with whose political feelings they strongly sympathized; but the impartial historian must with regret pronounce a very different judgment. There will always be a strong presumption against the sincerity of a conversion by which the convert is directly a gainer.

(II, 192)

Against the sincerity of Dryden's conversion, Macaulay offers the following proof: that after the conversion, had it been sincere, Dryden "would have looked back with remorse on a literary life of near thirty years, during which his rare powers of diction and versification had been systematically employed in spreading moral corruption,"--and Dryden continued to write drama "in no respect less impure or profane than those of his youth" (II, 193). (By the way, Macaulay admires Jeremy Collier, so we need to temper our judgment about Macaulay's judgment on Dryden.)

When a simpleton like Dodwell abuses language, and says foolish things, and does not suffer the punishment he might--flaying, nose-slitting, and so on--we can laugh, but it is people like Dryden who have the power to cause such suffering, and who even hold the power of life and death:

. . . we must not, in the admiration which we naturally feel for noble diction and versification, forget the great distinctions of good and evil. The spirit by which Dryden and several of his compeers were at this time animated against the Whigs deserves to be called fiendish. The servile judges and sheriffs of those evil days could not shed blood as fast as the poets cried out for it.

(I, 398)

With Chaucer's parson, Macaulay is saying, "That if gold ruste, what shall iren do? / For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste, / No wonder is a lewed man to ruste; . . ."³⁰ Johnson can be quoted again on the same side as Macaulay in the matter of Dryden's irresponsibility to language:

When he has any objection to obviate, or any license to defend, he is not very scrupulous about what he asserts, nor very cautious, if the present purpose be served, not to entangle himself in his own sophistries. But, when all arts are exhausted, like other hunted animals, he sometimes stands at bay; when he cannot disown the grossness of one of his plays, he declares that he knows not any law that prescribes morality to a comick poet. . . .

What he wishes to say, he says at hazard: he cited Gorbuduc, which he had never seen; gives a false account of Chapman's versification; and discovers, in the preface of his Fables, that he translated the first book of the Iliad, without knowing what was in the second.³¹

Sense Imagery

Macaulay draws us into the seventeenth century with his minute, comprehensive rendering of the appearance, actions, speech, and sometimes even the thoughts, of his subjects. But he goes further than the visual, the aural, the cerebral. He appeals to all our senses, outward and inward. We remember the crying and shouting at Monmouth's execution. An echo of that amplified sound occurs as William accepts the crown; he sets off "a shout of joy which was heard in the streets below, and was instantly answered by huzzas from many thousands of voices" (II, 642). We are surrounded by sound; we are part of that crowd. We also smell and

taste the seventeenth century: "at the assizes the lean and yellow culprits brought with them from their cells to the dock an atmosphere of stench and pestilence which sometimes avenged them signally on bench, bar, and jury" (I, 418). In describing the Highlands in 1689, Macaulay thrusts us into a typical Scottish household: "His lodging would sometimes have been in a hut of which every nook would have swarmed with vermin. He would have inhaled an atmosphere thick with peat smoke, and foul with a hundred noisome exhalations. At supper grains fit only for horses would have been set before him, accompanied by a cake of blood drawn from living cows" (III, 301-2). Repeatedly, we are told about food, even its method of preparation or lack of preparation. Repeatedly, we read how the Irish eat meat half-cooked, half-raw. During a wonderfully sped-up slapstick scene of the attempted escape of some conspirators, we find out what kind of picnic lunch they packed:

At dead of night, the last night of the year 1690, Preston, Ashton, and Elliott went on board of their smack near the Tower. They were in great dread lest they should be stopped and searched, either by a frigate which lay off Woolwich, or by the guard posted at the blockhouse at Gravesend. But, when they had passed both frigate and blockhouse without being challenged, their spirits rose: their appetites became keen: they unpacked a hamper well stored with roast beef, mince pies, and bottles of wine, and were just sitting down to their Christmas cheer, when the alarm was given that a swift vessel from Tilbury was flying through the water after them. They had scarcely time to hide themselves in a dark hole among the gravel which was the ballast of their smack, when the chase was over, and Billop, at the head of an armed party, came on board. The hatches were taken up: the conspirators were arrested; and their clothes were strictly examined. Preston, in his agitation, had dropped on the gravel his official seal and the packet of which he was the bearer. The seal was discovered where it had fallen. Ashton, aware of the importance of the papers, snatched them up and tried to conceal them: but they were soon found in his bosom.

(IV, 111-112)

In this passage we have a strong awareness of a sense of haste as well as of a sense of taste. When he talks about the Scottish colonists at Darien, Macaulay brings in the sense of heat and cold, and the sense of physical exertion and pressure. The colonists are "born and bred within ten degrees of the Arctic Circle" and "had never in their lives known what it was to feel the heat of a distressing day, could not endure the labor of breaking clods and carrying burdens under the fierce blaze of a vertical sun" (V, 478). When James watches prisoners tortured, we are audience and victim together. Macaulay subscribes to Horace's dictum in the Ars Poetica: "If you wish to draw tears from me, you must first feel pain yourself." Just one more short illustration: Peter the Great pays a visit to London in 1698. To the English, the Russian delegation is "wild and barbarous." "The ambassador and the grandees who accompanied him were so gorgeous that all London crowded to stare at them, and so filthy that nobody dared to touch them" (V, 335). (The sense of touch is the finishing one.)

I mentioned above Macaulay's recreation of the seventeenth century imagination--the inside sense. For an example, here is the average Englishman of that time thinking what a French invasion could do:

But the French would conquer us: the French would enslave us. The French would inflict on us calamities such as those which had turned the fair fields and cities of the Palatinate into a desert. The hopgrounds of Kent would be as the vineyards of the Neckar. The High Street of Oxford and the close of Salisbury would be piled with ruins such as those which covered the spots where the palaces and churches of Heidelberg and Mannheim once stood. The parsonage overshadowed by the old steeple, the farmhouse peeping from among the beehives and apple blossoms, the manorial hall embosomed in elms, would be given up to soldiery which knew not what it was to pity old men, or delicate women, or sucking children.

(III, 601-2)

Those are homey images--if the English don't have vineyards, they have hopgrounds to provide their national drink; if they don't have palaces all over as the Germans do, they have a commercial center and an alley. Another, similar image set before us--from the inside of the seventeenth century imagination--is, like the above, an apprehension of harm, this time from the Irish in England: the English have heard a rumor that the Irish are planning to move in and wreak desolation: "No Protestant would find mercy. Children would be compelled by torture to murder their parents. Babes would be stuck on pikes, or flung into the blazing ruins of what had been happy dwellings" (II, 550). Macaulay has in at least one place even had the enterprise to re-create a sermon of which no record at all except the text remains, again, by placing himself inside the mind of a seventeenth-century preacher: "His discourse has not been preserved: but its purport may be easily guessed; for he took for his text that noble song: 'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.' He doubtless reminded his hearers that, in addition to the debt which was common to them . . ." etc. (V, 264).

By including palpable examples taken from the everyday life and thinking of the seventeenth century man, Macaulay provides an experience analogous to that provided by the Homeric poems, as they are described by Auerbach: "Delight in physical existence is everything to them, and their highest aim is to make that delight perceptible to us. Between battles and passions, adventures and perils, they show us hunts, banquets, palaces and shepherds' cots, athletic contests and washing days--in order that we may see the heroes in their ordinary life, and seeing them so, may take pleasure in their manner of enjoying their savory present, a

present which sends strong roots down into social usages, landscape, and daily life."³²

Animal Imagery

In The History of John Bull (1712), Dr. Arbuthnot personifies England, France, and Holland as, respectively, a bull, a baboon, and a frog. Macaulay paraphrases a diatribe against William and his people in government by "a coarse-minded and spiteful Jacobite": "Already one of the most noisome of the plagues of Egypt was among us. Frogs had made their appearance even in the royal chambers. Nobody could go to Saint James's without being disgusted by hearing the reptiles of the Batavian marshes croaking all round him . . ." (IV, 590-91). In A Modest Proposal (1729), Swift identifies the Irish with domestic animals. He was probably not the first to present them as such--literally a lower form of life, closer to the soil, of the soil--nor was Macaulay the last. (James Joyce quotes the sentiment that Ireland is "the old sow that eats her farrow.") Macaulay compares the Irish in life to pigs, otters, and hares, and in death, to sheep. Macaulay actually invokes Swift's authority (as he has also done elsewhere): "But neither Molyneux nor Swift, neither Lucas nor Boyle, ever thought of appealing to the native population. They would as soon have thought of appealing to the swine" (IV, 226).³³

No man of English blood then regarded the aboriginal Irish as his countrymen. . . . They had an aspect of their own, a mother tongue of their own. When they talked English their pronunciation was ludicrous; and their phraseology was grotesque. . . . The Englishman felt proud when he compared his own fields with the desolate bogs whence the Rapparees issued forth to rob and murder, and his own dwelling with the hovels where the peasants and the hogs of the Shannon wallowed in filth together.

(II, 416-417)

In the passage above, we had depicted the English view of the Irish

habitat; here is the Irish view: to the native Irishman, "even the heaven dark with the vapors of the ocean [but it is a heaven, not merely a sky], the wilderness of black rushes and stagnant water, the mud cabins where the peasants and the swine shared their meal of roots, had a charm which was wanting to the sunny skies, the cultured fields, and the stately mansions of the Seine" (IV, 50). The Irish Rapparees are outlaws who live by plundering. The term Rapparee is of Irish origin. The Rapparee is almost metamorphic, so naturally does he adapt himself to his native landscape: "Sometimes, when he saw danger approaching, he lay down in the long grass of the bog, and then it was as difficult to find him as to find a hare sitting. Sometimes, he sprang into a stream, and lay there, like an otter, with only his mouth and nostrils above the water" (IV, 184). After the Battle of Aughrim (1691): "One who was there tells us that, from the top of the hill on which the Celtic camp had been pitched, he saw the country, to the distance of near four miles, white with the naked bodies of the slain. The plain looked, he said, like an immense pasture covered by flocks of sheep" (IV, 204).

Seldom are the Scots compared with animals, but in the one reference I noticed, they are compared (by the English) with predatory animals--foxes: ". . . the old fox and his two cubs--so Mac Ian and his sons were nicknamed by the [English] murderers. . ." (IV, 318). In the English sphere, Macaulay uses an avian (negative) simile to disparage the over-ambitious poetry of the statesman Montague:

It has long been usual to represent the imagination under the figure of a wing, and to call the successful exertions of the imagination flights. One poet is the eagle; another is the swan: a third modestly likens himself to the bee. But none of these types would have suited Montague. His genius may be compared to that pinion which, though it is too weak to lift the ostrich

into the air, enables her, while she remains on the earth, to outrun hound, horse, and dromedary. If the man who possesses this kind of genius attempts to ascend the heaven of invention, his awkward and unsuccessful efforts expose him to derision. . . .

(IV, 559)

This same passage can be used to illustrate the principle which Macaulay expounds on elsewhere (for example, when talking about Dodwell's intellectual ambitions, or James's incurable stubbornness), namely the need for self-knowledge, for intellectual honesty, even perhaps for humility. In any of these examples, Macaulay seems deliberately to be padding, vamping. All he needed to say was that the Jacobites hate the Dutch; that the Irish are slothful, dirty, and wild; that the Mac Ians are wily and quick; that Montague is a poor poet. The word padding, not unkindly meant, defines large stretches of Macaulay's History: such padding is an epic device he can be forgiven. Macaulay uses in different ways--linguistically, ideologically, imagistically--large amounts of repetition. Such a practice tends to elicit a stock response, perhaps, provide vividness, of course, but certainly also serve a mnemonic function, just as it does in long epic poems. Macaulay was writing for an audience of nineteenth century Englishmen who more or less knew the outlines of their own history; but in writing for completeness, he had also to provide continuity in addition to the chronological sort they were already used to. In the famous letter to Napier, Macaulay opined that "English history, from 1688 to the French Revolution, is, even to educated people, almost a terra incognita. The materials for an amusing narrative are immense." (See Appendix A.)

Humor

When Macaulay wrote, in the same letter to Napier from which we just quoted, that he proposed to write "an amusing narrative," he surely meant the kind of amusement the dictionary describes as "engagement of one's attention, usually in leisure, by that which engrosses one or keeps one in good humor." A historian like Macaulay, who wants to be comprehensive, must include in some way that element of human nature which can sometimes be credited with keeping us sane--a sense of humor. That Macaulay was sensitive to other writers' humor is attested to in his essay on Addison, where he defines the three types he most admires: Voltaire's, Swift's and Addison's.

Voltaire is the prince of buffoons. His merriment is without disguise or restraint. He gambols; he grins; he shakes his sides; he points the finger; he turns up the nose; he shoots out the tongue. The manner of Swift is the very opposite to this. He moves laughter, but never joins in it.

... The manner of Addison is as remote from that of Swift as from that of Voltaire. He neither laughs out like the French wit, nor, like the Irish wit, throws a double portion of severity into his countenance while laughing inwardly; but preserves a look peculiarly his own, a look of demure serenity, disturbed only by an arch sparkle of the eye, an almost imperceptible elevation of the brow, an almost imperceptible curl of the lip.

... Thus much, at least, is certain that both Swift and Voltaire have been successfully mimicked, and that no man has yet been able to mimic Addison.³⁴

In Macaulay's case, I would agree that he has not succeeded in mimicking Addison's humor, which, he says, is "of a more delicious flavour than the humour of either Swift or Voltaire." But some of Addison's topics, as they appeared in his newspapers, were either directly or indirectly supplied by Swift, so that in matter if not in manner, Addison was a collaborator of Swift. Macaulay's humor, itself, is of several types, all

of which could fit either into the Voltairean mold or the Swiftian. When Macaulay puns, turns an epigram, overstates or understates, when he satirizes, he is by turns like each. When he is didactic, he is himself. Because he is hardly ever subtle, I would class Macaulay's method in part with Voltaire's; but because he so often finds ridiculous the kinds of things Swift found ridiculous, I would also class his method with Swift's.

For our amusement and his own, Macaulay rejoiced in word play, in puns. We can hardly miss the pun twenty-six lines from the beginning of the first volume, where Macaulay talks of England's maritime power, "compared with which every other maritime power, ancient or modern, sinks into insignificance . . ." or the reference to the money that "would have been spent in festivities and diversions on the banks of the Seine" (I, 14). He lets us know later on in the same volume that Monmouth "returned from the Low Countries with a high character for valor and conduct. . ." (I, 247). The conspirators caught at the end of the fourth volume "tried to cajole or to corrupt Billop . . . if he would only let that little roll of paper fall overboard into the Thames, his fortune would be made. The tide of affairs, they said, was on the turn. . ." (IV, 112). One more example: "The signs of a reaction of feeling were discernable both in and out of Parliament. Many men are alarmists by constitution" (V, 427).

From many epigrams of quotable quality, I would choose for admiration two: the first appears in Macaulay's section on the Puritans, where he says, "The Puritans hated bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but, because it gave pleasure to the spectators" (I, 159). Of Lord Halifax, whom in fact Macaulay on the whole admired, he says, "He was slow from very quickness. For he saw so many arguments for and against

every possible course that he was longer in making up his mind than a dull man would have been" (III, 63).

Of overstatement we will never find a lack. The area "between Cambridge and the Wash" is "a vast and desolate fen, saturated with the moisture of thirteen counties, and overhung during the greater part of the year by a low gray mist. . . . In that dreary region, covered by vast flights of wild fowl, a half savage population, known by the name of the Breedlings, then led an amphibious life, sometimes wading, and sometimes rowing, from one islet of firm ground to another" (III, 40). The seventeenth century Scotsman's home is "foul with a hundred noisome exhalations" (III, 301). Anticlimactic understatement is the closest term I can find for such pronouncements as: "Perth, who had stood high in the favor of his late master, both as an apostate from the Protestant religion and as the author of the last improvements on the thumbscrew, took the title of Duke . . ." (V, 539) or, of the Athol men: "They had garrisoned Inverary: they had ravaged Lorn: they had demolished houses, cut down fruit trees, burned fishing boats, broken millstones, hanged Campbells, and were therefore not likely to be pleased by the prospect of a MacCallum More's restoration" (III, 347).

Satire is pervasive in the History. Of Dodwell Macaulay had said, "The small intellectual spark which he possessed was put out by the fuel" (III, 454). This is pleasing by itself, but more pleasing when we know that it is the after-image of a matching statement Macaulay had made about Milton in 1825: "The strength of his imagination triumphed over every obstacle. So intense and ardent was the fire of his mind, that it not only was not suffocated beneath the weight of fuel, but penetrated the whole superincumbent mass with its own heat and radiance."³⁵ In line with

Macaulay's taste for finding outrages on the language, we come across this illustration:

One little volume, entitled the Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence Displayed, had an immense success in the South among both High Churchmen and scoffers, and is not yet quite forgotten. It was indeed a book well fitted to lie on the hall table of a Squire whose religion consisted in hating extemporaneous prayer and nasal psalmody. On a rainy day, when it was impossible to hunt or shoot, neither the card table nor the backgammon board would have been, in the intervals of the flagon and the pasty, so agreeable a resource. Nowhere else, perhaps, can be found, in so small a compass, so large a collection of ludicrous quotations and anecdotes.

(IV, 87)

In writing satire, Macaulay is undoubtedly in debt to Swift, who is one of his heroes: Macaulay credits Swift with "some of the choicest gifts that have ever been bestowed on any of the children of men, rare powers of observation, brilliant wit, grotesque invention, humor of the most austere flavor, yet exquisitely delicious, eloquence singularly pure, manly, and perspicuous" (IV, 476). Numerous footnotes, quoting Swift as an authority on the characters of his contemporaries, on politics, trade and society in Ireland, on public sanitation in seventeenth century England, indicate that Macaulay probably read most of what Swift had written. Macaulay offhandedly refers in his text to two politicians as "projectors worthy to have been members of that Academy which Gulliver found at Lagado" (IV, 599). Macaulay's audience would know instantly who the projectors at Lagado were; Swift has saved Macaulay time, lent him eloquence. The following passage describes the preparations for the treaty negotiations at Ryswick. It is the closest Macaulay can come to mimicking Swift. He lacks Swift's deadpan neutrality--for example, he cannot refrain from commenting on the proceedings as "this childish dispute." (He is a Victorian!) Swift would not be caught committing himself

so; he would put the comment into some persona's mouth--a Houyhnhnm's, Gulliver's. I quote at length because length is part of the joke.

Then several meetings were spent in settling how many carriages, how many horses, how many lackeys, how many pages, each minister should be entitled to bring to Ryswick; whether the serving men should carry canes; whether they should wear swords; whether they should have pistols in their holsters; who should take the upper hand in the public walks, and whose carriage should break the way in the streets. It soon appeared that the mediator would have to mediate, not only between the coalition and the French, but also between the different members of the coalition. The Imperial Ambassadors insisted on having a room to themselves in the building, and on having a special place assigned to their carriages in the court. All the other Ministers of the Confederacy pronounced the demand altogether inadmissible; and a whole sitting was wasted in this childish dispute. It may easily be supposed that allies who were so punctilious in their dealings with each other were not likely to be very easy in their intercourse with the common enemy. The chief business of Harlay and Kaunitz was to watch each other's legs. Neither of them thought it consistent with the dignity of the Crown which he served to advance towards the other faster than the other advanced towards him. If therefore one of them perceived that he had inadvertently stepped forward too quick, he went back to the door, and the stately minuet began again. The ministers of Lewis drew up a paper in their own language. The German statesmen protested against this innovation, this insult to the dignity of the Holy Roman Empire, this encroachment on the rights of independent nations, and would not know anything about the paper till it had been translated from good French into bad Latin.

. . .

(V, 246-247)

And on Macaulay goes for another full page, describing the absurdity of these rope-dancing Lilliputians, until

On the twenty-eighth of June, according to the Old Style, the meeting took place in the neighborhood of Hal, a town which lies about ten miles from Brussels, on the road to Mons. After the first civilities had been exchanged, Boufflers and Portland dismounted; their attendants retired; and the two negotiators were left alone in an orchard. Here they walked up and down during two hours, and, in that time, did much more business than the plenipotentiaries at Ryswick were able to dispatch in as many months.

(V, 251)

Here is Macaulay's equivalent of Swift's benefactor of mankind who "could make two Ears of Corn, or two Blades of Grass to grow upon a Spot of Ground where only one grew before . . ."--the practical man, the Baconian.³⁶

Macaulay's use of the didactic in his humor has already been mentioned; such didacticism usually shows up in footnotes which begin, "It is amusing. . . ." Sometimes, but rarely, Macaulay simply gives us a laugh on the house. Here is what I mean. He is talking about the siege of Edinburgh Castle (1689), which he describes as "languidly conducted," with the Jacobites inside the Castle in constant communication with the Jacobites outside.

Strange stories were told of the polite and facetious messages which passed between the besieged and the besiegers. On one occasion Gordon sent to inform the magistrates that he was going to fire a salute on account of some good news which he had received from Ireland, but that the good town need not be alarmed, for that his guns would not be loaded with ball. On another occasion, his drums beat a parley; the white flag was hung out: a conference took place; and he gravely informed the enemy that all his cards had been thumbed to pieces, and begged to have a few more packs.
(III, 341-42)

V. Disease Metaphor

Macaulay's History is full of examples of literal and figurative diseases--in individuals and in political situations. For convenience, we can limit the basic types of disease to five, which shade into one another, and which are sometimes found in combination: insanity, fanaticism (and foolishness, a milder form of it), passion (and intemperance and voluptuousness), corruption, and physical infirmity. Sometimes Macaulay will cluster several examples of disease together. Within ten pages he mentions the idea of temperance and intemperance in one form or another six times: he refers to Jeffreys's death by saying, "Jeffreys

was grossly intemperate; and his malady was one which intemperance notoriously tends to aggravate" (III, 397); he refers to "intemperate friends of liberty" (III, 398), "the intemperance of Howe" (III, 400), Schomberg's temperate habits and the proper reward of his temperance (III, 407). Chapter XXV, the last in the History, is built around a series of episodes dealing with passion.

Macaulay does not necessarily think that all five types of disease are bad: at times, we perceive them merely as indices to levels of energy, which can be efficiently or inefficiently used, depending on the moral and intellectual powers of their possessors. Dodwell is harmlessly, foolishly insane; his energy runs into entropy. The same is true of the two crackpot "projectors" who advocate a land bank:

A crowd of plans, some of which resembled the fancies of a child or the dreams of a man in fever, were pressed on the government. Preeminently conspicuous among the political mountebanks, . . . [were] two projectors worthy to have been members of that Academy which Gulliver found at Lagado. These men affirmed that the one cure for every distemper of the state was a Land Bank. . . .

(IV, 599)

To Macaulay, the borderline between insanity and fanaticism is a wavy one; but he does seem to see Fox as more insane than fanatical, Bunyan more fanatical than insane. Fox is in his early days "of pure morals and grave deportment, with a perverse temper, with the education of a laboring man, and with an intellect in the most unhappy of all states, that is to say, too much disordered for liberty, and not sufficiently disordered for Bedlam. The circumstances in which he was placed were such as could scarcely fail to bring out in the strongest form the constitutional diseases of his mind" (IV, 136). Bunyan's "mental agony disordered his health. One day he shook like a man with the palsy. On another day he

felt a fire within his breast" (II, 220). Yet both men made contributions of lasting value, Bunyan on his own, Fox with the help of a little ghost-writing.

William's jealousy of the greatness of France, as we have seen, Macaulay sees as "a passion, a ruling passion, almost an infirmity" (V, 392-93). Peter the Great "had a taste for maritime pursuits which amounted to a passion, indeed almost to a monomania" (V, 336). Somerset is a man "in whom the pride of birth and rank amounted almost to a disease" (II, 264). The stock phrasing is obvious; these men are all related, all passionate almost to infirmity, to monomania, to disease--but all are also admirable: William, for obvious reasons, Peter for bringing Russia into the modern world, Somerset for defying an illegal order from James.

Passion is one thing, corruption another--but even corruption has its uses, as Macaulay shows us from the inside of a seventeenth-century politician's mind: "'Nobody,' William answered, 'hates bribery more than I. But I have to do with a set of men who must be managed in this vile way or not at all. I must strain a point, or the country is lost'" (III, 539). As Macaulay explains,

It was natural, it was inevitable, that, in a legislative body emancipated from the restraints of the sixteenth century, and not yet subjected to the restraints of the nineteenth century, in a legislative body which feared neither King nor the public, there should be corruption.

The plague spot began to be visible and palpable in the days of the Cabal. . . .

(III, 536)

As we have seen in William's case, corruption sometimes manipulates people, not they it. The ultimate corruption among politicians is produced by constant oscillation from one polarity to the opposite one caused by

"frequent and violent revolutions and counter-revolutions." Again, energy runs into entropy. A person so affected is described in an epic simile:

He discerns the signs of the times with a sagacity resembling that with which a veteran police officer pursues the faintest indications of crime, or with which a Mohawk warrior follows a track through the woods.

(I, 180)

Corruption in a purer form is embodied in a man named Ferguson: "Long habit had developed in him a moral disease from which people who have made political agitation their calling are seldom wholly free." Macaulay later in the same passage uses an epic simile (with an Indian, again):

The Red Indian prefers his hunting-ground to cultivated fields and stately cities; the gypsy, sheltered by a commodious roof, and provided with meat in due season, still pines for the ragged tent on the moor and the chance meal of carrion; and even so Ferguson became weary of plenty and security, of his salary, his house, his table, and his coach, and longed to be again the president of societies into which none could enter without a password, the director of secret presses, the distributor of inflammatory pamphlets; to see the walls placarded with descriptions of his person and offers of reward for his apprehension; to have six or seven names, with a different wig and cloak for each, and to change his lodgings thrice a week at dead of night.

(III, 546)

Corruption can be the result of fanaticism. Thomas Wharton, one of the Whig chiefs, is the product of an ultra-Puritan upbringing. "The fruits of this education became visible, when, from the sullen mansion of Puritan parents, the hot-blooded, quick-witted, young patrician emerged into the gay and voluptuous London of the Restoration. The most dissolute of cavaliers stood aghast at the dissoluteness of the emancipated precisian. He early acquired and retained to the last the reputation of being the

greatest rake in England" (IV, 562). By a contemporary, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, he is described as "a strange compound of best and worst, of private depravity and public virtue. . ." (IV, 565). Macaulay admires Wharton for his political talents (they are both Whigs) and seems to regard Wharton more as a victim than as an offender.

As we might expect, a cure for corruption--in this example, currency corruption--is described in terms of a surgical operation: "The nation, though still suffering, was joyful and grateful. Its feelings resembled those of a man who, having been long tortured by a malady which has embittered his existence, has at last made up his mind to submit to the surgeon's knife, who has gone through a cruel operation with safety, and who, though still smarting from the steel, sees before him many years of health and enjoyment, and thanks God that the worst is over" (V, 187).

Physical infirmity is a fact, but Macaulay often uses it also in a figurative way. Certainly with Pope's famous letter in mind, he tells us about Somers, a Whig leader whose "life was one long malady: his nerves were weak: his complexion was livid: his face was prematurely wrinkled" (IV, 554). In every other way, intellectually and morally, Somers is pictured as nearly ideal: he is a sound mind in an unsound body. William is another near invalid whose mental and political powers function unaffected by his bodily condition. Lewis XIV is another such. Both William and Lewis are identified with their countries' strength on account of their mental powers. Charles II of Spain is identified with his country's weakness: "Spain and her King had long been sunk so low that it seemed impossible for either to sink lower. Yet the political maladies of the monarchy and the physical maladies of the monarch went on growing, and exhibited every day some new and frightful symptom" (V, 444).

While James is identified with England, both are in awful shape, for James is a disease; he is diseased in every way except physically, and his disease's effect is, again, entropy: "From the palace, which was the chief seat of this pestilence, the taint had diffused itself through every office, and through every rank in every office, and had everywhere produced feebleness and disorganization" (II, 60). That is why it is so ironic that James plays the traditional part of the healer of scrofula: "From Windsor he went on the sixteenth of August to Portsmouth, walked around the fortifications, touched some scrofulous people, and then proceeded in one of his yachts to Southampton" (II, 286). A lengthier example comes from II, 471.

It was known that he [William] was so profane as to sneer at a practice which had been sanctioned by high ecclesiastical authority, the practice of touching for scrofula. This ceremony had come down almost unaltered from the darkest of the dark ages to the time of Newton and Locke. The Stuarts frequently dispensed the healing influences in the Banqueting House. The days on which this miracle was to be wrought were fixed at sittings of the Privy Council. . . .

and so on for four more pages. Macaulay thinks that scrofula is not the only disease in the case: the hypocrisy of the ceremony is a disease. And just as William is the antidote to James, so William's honest sneer at the superstitious ritual is the antidote for the ritual itself--at least temporarily. Macaulay tells the following story: "On one single occasion he [William] was importuned into laying his hand on a patient. 'God give you better health,' he said, 'and more sense'" (III, 473).

Often Macaulay uses the word "voluptuary" to refer to a morally corrupt person. It is a favorite word of his. Torrington, a Rear Admiral, was affected by political events in the following way: "In poverty and exile he rose from a voluptuary into a hero. But, as soon as

prosperity returned, the hero sank again into a voluptuary; and the relapse was deep and hopeless" (III, 427).

VI. What Is History: And Macaulay's Answer

Macaulay's attitude toward the Torrington phenomenon, the Ferguson phenomenon, is a key to his whole attitude toward society and the use of history in society. Again and again he tells us in one form or another that "according to the general law which governs human affairs, prosperity began to produce disunion. . ." (II, 522). "In 1695 adversity and danger had made men amenable to that control to which it is the glory of free nations to submit themselves, the control of superior minds. In 1698 prosperity and security had made men querulous, fastidious, and unmanageable" (V, 383). "Calamity and peril often force men to combine. Prosperity and security often encourage them to separate" (II, 384). To overcome danger, adversity, calamity, peril, requires large amounts of energy properly channeled. Both the individual and the state are affected. Macaulay does not advocate stasis (literally, a standing still), but an energetic tension, homeostasis, "A relatively stable state of equilibrium, or a tendency toward such a state, between the different but interdependent elements and subsystems of an organism of any kind."³⁷

As a historian, Macaulay's energy was directed into giving the reader the literary experience of history, making him aware of his part in it. The historian plays the part of the national memory, sometimes the national conscience, even the healer who administers homeopathic doses to immunize his audience to those real dangers that come with complacency. This is hard when one is living, as Macaulay was, in one of England's most complacent periods. According to Macaulay, the historian's object is "to record the real life of a nation" (IV, 136) and "to supply statesmen with

examples and warnings" (VI, 78). This idea was certainly nothing new with Macaulay. Hume said something very like it in 1762:

History, the great mistress of wisdom, furnishes examples of all kinds; and every prudential, as well as moral precept, may be authorised by those events which her enlarged mirror is able to present to us. From the memorable revolutions which passed in England during this period [the Puritan Revolution], we may naturally deduce the same useful lessons which Charles himself in his later years inferred, that it is dangerous for princes, even from the appearance of necessity, to assume more authority than the laws have allowed them. But it must be confessed that these events furnish us with another instruction, no less natural, and no less useful, concerning the madness of the people, the furies of fanaticism, and the danger of mercenary armies.³⁸

We now have a general idea of what history is for, but we need to ask two more questions: first, what is history? second, what is the ideal historian like? Macaulay answered these questions himself, in prospect and in deed. He wrote an essay entitled "History" in 1828. He summarily replies to the first question: "Facts are the mere dross of history. It is from the abstract truth which interpenetrates them, and lies latent among them like gold in the ore, that the mass derives its whole value" (VI, 247). History cannot be all-inclusive: "Perfectly and absolutely true it cannot be; for, to be perfectly and absolutely true, it ought to record all the slightest particulars of the slightest transactions--all the things done and all the words uttered during the time of which it treats" (VI, 244). The best histories "exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effect of the whole" (VI, 244-245). The perfect historian "considers no anecdote, no peculiarity of manner, no familiar saying, as too insignificant to illustrate the operation of laws, of religion, and of education, and to mark the progress of the human mind" (VI, 280). The "real life of a nation" can include everything, from

battles and coronations, to the gewgaws Mary made it a fashion to collect: "hideous images" and "vases on which houses, trees, bridges, and mandarins, were depicted in outrageous defiance of all the laws of perspective" (III, 55). What is Macaulay's History but an analogue of that world in miniature? Macaulay tells us that he learned about William and his time "not from any single work, but from thousands of forgotten tracts, sermons, and satires; in fact, from a whole literature which is mouldering in old libraries" (In a note (!) III, 112). That is history, too.

We have seen that by using basically a modified Aristotelian, mimetic, approach to history, appropriating to his material the form of the epic, among others, and by using poetic language, Macaulay has placed himself in the position occupied formerly by the poet. "He conceives of history, in the deepest sense, as capable of filling in the modern world the place once held by poetry."³⁹

APPENDIX A

Macaulay's Letter to Napier
of November 5th, 1841.

DEAR NAPIER,--I have at last begun my historical labors; I can hardly say with how much interest and delight. I really do not think that there is in our literature so great a void as that which I am trying to supply. English history, from 1688 to the French Revolution, is, even to educated people, almost a terra incognita. The materials for an amusing narrative are immense. I shall not be satisfied unless I produce something which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies.

* * * * *

Ever yours,

T.B. MACAULAY.⁴⁰

APPENDIX B

Macaulay and the critics and where I fit in

It seems that criticism of Macaulay's History began to appear as soon after the publication of the actual work as possible. Most early criticism was concerned with finding mistakes of fact. An undated bibliography appended to the 1899 edition of the History which I used reviews many of the criticisms that had appeared since 1851, and suggests that many of the mistakes were due to the unavailability to Macaulay of source materials which had since become accessible.

By 1895, George Saintsbury⁴¹ felt that it was already time for a "corrected impression" of Macaulay. He wrote two short, engaging essays in which he said that Macaulay's reputation had sunk soon after his death, and had only started to rise with the publication of his nephew's biography of him. Saintsbury explains first of all that Macaulay had made a lot of enemies--Tories, deeply religious people: "He managed to attract hosts of enemies of the most heterogeneous kinds."⁴² He tells us to value Macaulay's "Pisgah sights" but not to pin our faith on his details; to be wary because, although Macaulay never really lied, he used misleading innuendo. In what is to become a popular formula, Saintsbury says, ". . . of no other period of English history does an idea so clear, vivid, and on the whole accurate exist in so large a number of people," and "this is due to Macaulay. The fact is that the power of making historical periods and transactions real and living is an exceedingly rare power, and that Macaulay had it."⁴³ He is one of the first to say that "in every department of literature he was insensible to, and incapable of recognizing, nuances, half tones, delicate contrasts, subtle gradations."⁴⁴ But

on the whole, Saintsbury thinks the merits of the History outweigh its defects.

George P. Gooch's estimate of Macaulay in 1913 was and remains commonplace. He praises Macaulay for his contribution to the stature of the critical essay: "If Macaulay did not invent the historical essay, he found it of brick and left it of marble."⁴⁵ (Quoting what Suetonius said of Augustus Caesar: "He so improved the city that he justly boasted that he found it brick and left it marble.") Like Saintsbury, Gooch acknowledges that Macaulay "was the first English writer to make history universally interesting."⁴⁶ He enumerates Macaulay's shortcomings as a historian as follows:

1. He knows classical literature, but almost nothing of the Middle Ages, or even of England before Elizabeth, and little about Continental history.
2. He is politically biased in his writing.
3. He is prone to "sledge-hammer brutality. . . . with Macaulay truth is sometimes bartered for a telling phrase or a resounding epithet" (281).
4. He lacks "insight into certain types of thought and character. His downright temper and straightforward nature made it difficult for him to understand complex personalities. . . . He was neither a thinker nor a prophet, but a humane and cultured Philistine" (283).
5. His method is limited to treatment of a short period, "and one in regard to which information is plentiful" (283).
6. He describes better than he explains.⁴⁷

The last point is the one which receives the most emphasis. Gooch

simultaneously praises Macaulay as a "historian of the front rank" and censures him as "blind to the invisible world of thought and emotion," and neglectful in fathoming "the depths on which the pageantry of events floats like shining foam."⁴⁸

Sir Charles Firth's book-length study, A Commentary on Macaulay's History of England appeared in 1938.⁴⁹ In fourteen chapters he reviews the genesis of the History, Macaulay's conception of history, his method, use of authorities, and his use of literature, his treatment of the army and navy, Scotland, Ireland, and foreign affairs, his errors and the characters of James II, Mary and William III. He spends little time on the actual sentence structure, paragraphs, but is quite aware of the overall stylistic devices in the History, including the "might-have-been" mode which Firth considers a way of "making history more real by showing that what actually occurred might have been otherwise--that events were not absolutely fated to take the particular turn they did take."⁵⁰ Firth calls our attention to Macaulay's gift for caricature--of Oates, for example, and of Ferguson. In a discussion of Macaulay's sources, Firth expresses a desire for a fully annotated edition of the History, since Macaulay did not always cite exact page numbers or exact dates. He emphasizes Macaulay's use of contemporary periodicals and especially his use of dramatic artifacts: "Nothing, however, could be of so much use as the dramatic literature of the time, since the object of the stage was to represent men and manners, and its representation of both had been accepted as true by the time itself."⁵¹ Firth reminds us how often Macaulay brings in as witnesses such writers as Sterne, Swift, Pope, Addison, Dryden and others. He does not spare Macaulay's defects, and disparages projects he felt other people had accomplished more

satisfactorily than Macaulay, for example, the parts of the History that deal with military and naval history. What Firth says in his section on Macaulay's Scottish history applies pretty well to many of Firth's other judgments of Macaulay, namely: "It contains many errors, and there are some serious omissions, but he deserves the credit which belongs to a pioneer, and should for that reason be more leniently judged."⁵² Much of what Firth says about Macaulay's characterization of James II, Mary and William III is summarized from the History itself, with almost no qualification, and with extensive quotation by way of illustration.

In 1967, Ronald Weber's article, "Singer and Seer: Macaulay on the Historian as Poet" concluded that Macaulay "formulates for the historian the role of poet-philosopher-prophet in the modern world. It is only the historian, he contends, who can assume the function of singer and seer in an enlightened age."⁵³ I quote elsewhere from this essay.

Essays by William Madden and George Levine, both from 1968, a book by John Clive from 1973, and an essay by Peter Gay from 1974 are all similar in that they are intensely interested in the reasons why Macaulay wrote as he did and about what he did. Their approaches to Macaulay's psyche are mutually influenced and acknowledged as such by the critics themselves. How they differ will appear in the summaries that follow.

William Madden's essay⁵⁴ stresses the histrionic cast to Macaulay's personality, his lifelong delight in playacting, first in reality, with his family, then in his imagination. Madden pursues the idea that the History is a drama and that we are in the front row. His assessment of Macaulay's "might-have-been" mode differs from Firth's; he thinks that "In repeatedly calling the reader's attention to 'what might have been,' Macaulay is not concerned in his History to stress the importance of

individual choice; on the contrary, its effect is to heighten the reader's sense of the fatality of events which have actually occurred."⁵⁵ Because Macaulay failed to integrate his various styles--oratorical, judicious, antithetical and histrionic, Madden says, the History is tiresome. (Perhaps it is naive of me, but I think that Macaulay's various styles serve to keep the work from being tiresome, to keep the audience's attention. The psychoanalytical approach is of interest but it, too, can get tiresome.) Madden suggests that it was a flight from the "real and threatening present" that kept Macaulay from bringing his History up to the date of his original plan, i.e. 1832. It "would have meant leaving that 'past and unreal' world in which he essentially lived in his later years and in which his preconceptions were secure, his emotional life unthreatened, and his histrionic temperament free to exercise itself without restraint."⁵⁶

In 1973, John Clive published Macaulay: The Shaping of the Historian.⁵⁷ Only a few of its 500 pages are given to a discussion of the History itself. The rest, as the title indicates, is devoted to the "shaping of the historian." Clive thinks that Macaulay wrote in order to please his father, then his sisters, and then, when his father and favorite sister died, for the public whose approval was that of a surrogate father. Clive's evidence is quite convincing on this head. He interprets Macaulay's "torrents of talk" as "aggression, let loose against the world." In talking about Macaulay's essay on Bacon, Clive says: "His anti-Coleridgean, anti-Platonic fervor may have come, at least in part, from some secret or unconscious intuition that under the Augustan shell of common sense and no nonsense there existed an area of his personality which, in psychological terms, resembled that of his 'enemies' more than it did that of his hard-headed Baconian allies."⁵⁸

The Baconian philosophy of "fruit" appealed to Macaulay, Clive thinks, "not because he lacked emotion and sensibility, but because he possessed them in excess."⁵⁹

Answering the question of what Macaulay achieved before writing the History, Clive says:

First, one comes away from studying his early life and writings once again impressed both by his energy and his many-sidedness. He was, to be sure, gifted with a phenomenal memory. Still, one cannot but share Hobhouse's amazement at his more or less single-handedly producing a penal code for India, while writing the essay on Bacon, so to speak, with his left hand. Secondly, one should not underestimate the power of his style. There is a tendency nowadays to do so, to use words such as "rhetorical" and "glittering" purely as terms of dismissal, forgetting that parliamentary speeches are, after all, delivered in order to persuade and periodical essays written in order to be read. The most, and possibly the sole, convincing testimonial to an author's style is the survival of his works. Macaulay is still read. And he can still persuade. . . .⁶⁰

Peter Gay's essay on Macaulay in Style in History (1974)⁶¹ is like Clive's book in underlining Macaulay's dependence on his father's approval. Gay identifies Macaulay's feelings for his sisters as "extraordinary in their intensity and erotic in their essence."⁶² These feelings for members of his family were, Gay says, powerful ingredients of Macaulay's inner life. In Macaulay's volubility, Gay sees a neurotic need to be heard. In Gay's opinion, Macaulay saw history as "a vast antithesis." Gay mentions a critic (Madden) who was "convinced that Macaulay's way of losing himself in the past is the product of a psychological malaise, the studied avoidance of troubling emotional problems which Macaulay 'chose not to confront.'" Gay's footnote to this reads, in part: "George Levine agrees: 'He converted history into romance without violating any of the canons of truthfulness, and he

dwelled in the unreal world all the time he argued the superiority of the real world from which he was retreating."⁶³ In closing his essay, Gay says that Macaulay's style fit his time, not ours, and that his "gravest sin" was complacency.

George Levine's essay on Macaulay in The Boundaries of Fiction (1968) is easily the most difficult of the works I have discussed so far. It is the longest essay (84 pages) and full of brilliant observations and explanations. Like Gay and Madden, Levine believes that Macaulay's passionate love for his sisters was what gave the world meaning for him, that his inability to bear separation, permanent or temporary, from them, caused him to avoid "new commitments that would entail, at some inevitable future moment, the pain of loss."⁶⁴ Levine's explanation of Macaulay's volubility is that he was using it as a defense against an exchange of ideas, that it was a form of his rejection of, or anticipated rejection of, negative criticism.

Levine defines his stance in this way: "My concern is not to consider Macaulay as a historian, but rather as an imaginative writer who reflects in his writings struggles similar to those of the great Sages; whose 'failures'--like theirs--are comprehensible as part of a defense erected against the pains of contemporary existence; and whose manner as a writer is deeply influenced by the almost universal attraction of the dominant Victorian form, the novel."⁶⁵ Like earlier critics, Levine sees Macaulay's seeming self-assurance as blinding him to the subtleties in human nature--the same flaw, I would say, that Macaulay saw in James II. (Clive has suggested as much; see above, p. 56.) Because he feared the pain of separation, Levine says, Macaulay escaped into the world of books, where one's acquaintances do not die and do not get in one's way.

A retreat into the world of books had other benefits: "Only in the worlds of fiction and epic poetry could one count again on seeing immediately the justice and certitude unattainable in the short span of a lifetime."⁶⁶

Macaulay "found a way in his History to exploit the past and the traditions of the past to write what might be seen as part epic and part romance."⁶⁷ By placing the reader "inside the experience" Macaulay hoped to create "an imaginative sympathy with his historical figures."⁶⁸

Central to Levine's argument is the statement: "The form is narrative, rather than thematic, and pushes inevitably toward the happy ending."⁶⁹ The "overriding form . . . is the implicit, value-laden contrast between past and present."⁷⁰ (See my Epic section for Levine's formulation of "double vision.") Levine thinks that Macaulay did not force his antithetical view of history, did not wrench events out of proportion to make them fit, but that he to some extent actually saw things that way. The contest between James II and William III is, in Levine's view, a battle between past and present--another version of double vision. Macaulay, although here again criticised as unable to draw three-dimensional characters, is credited by Levine for coming close to making William real; and the reason Levine gives is that Macaulay identified with William, and so could credit him with an inner life, too.

A political approach to Macaulay's History is provided by Joseph Hamburger in Macaulay and the Whig Tradition.⁷¹ Hamburger's thesis, in this book that covers extensively Macaulay's understanding of, participation in, and treatment of politics, is that Macaulay "has been regularly misunderstood as a consequence of an established tradition of interpretation in which he is labeled Whig or liberal Whig." He therefore wants to turn the reader from what he feels has become a stereotypical view of

Macaulay as "a spokesman for the middle class, as a believer in progress, civil liberty, toleration, science and laissez-faire . . . ," as a man whose characteristic attitudes are "said to have been complacent, arrogant, insensitive, optimistic, and materialistic." Hamburger stresses Macaulay's dedication to trimming, and looks at his historical writings as "an excellent source of evidence for his understanding of politics. The way he interpreted the past, even when incorrect, is no less important and revealing a part of his outlook than it would be if he saw the past in a way that is agreeable to contemporary historians."⁷² Macaulay wanted to show, Hamburger says, how continuity and change "were combined and linked together as a means of providing stability. . . ."⁷³

Where do I fit in? First of all, I found all these critics' perceptions valuable--no one person has all the answers. Macaulay knew that stasis is no answer, that homeostasis is. So with the progress of criticism of his History: good thinkers, good readers, will go on discovering patterns, uncovering sources, psychological influences. Even one who attempts to examine the rhetoric apart may find one's self liable to revisionism, as I did, when I had to see Macaulay's double vision as very old. My discoveries most closely agree with Levine's. Levine notices the penchant Macaulay has for the epic as well as for the romance, but does not try to follow through in finding an overall epic form to the History. Where Levine's interest is with familial influence on Macaulay, mine is more with literary influence, including the influence of preceding historians like Oldmixon and Clarendon.

I think the discovery of double vision in Virgil was one not only I, but Macaulay made, and that he used it for the same purpose that Virgil did:

His aim is to praise the present, but the present is too actual, too complex and too familiar to provide the material of his poem. So he joins it to the past and exalts it as the fulfillment of a long, divinely ordained process.⁷⁴

Note:

Like Macaulay, I did not succeed in finishing everything I proposed to do, and among the unfinished business was a plan to write about Macaulay's sentence structure, transitions, paragraphs, and vocabulary. But that task has, fortunately, been done for me, and well. In 1872, just eleven years after the last, posthumous, volume of the History came out, and four years before G. O. Trevelyan's biography of his uncle appeared, a man named William Minto, Professor of Logic and English Literature in the University of Aberdeen, wrote A Manual of English Prose Literature.⁷⁵ Minto's book covers in detail the styles of De Quincy, Macaulay, and Carlyle, and in brief the styles of many authors from Chaucer to Hazlitt. For each of his three principal subjects, Minto follows the same system:

LIFE

CHARACTER

OPINIONS

ELEMENTS OF STYLE--

Vocabulary,
Sentences,
Paragraphs,
Figures of Speech,

QUALITIES OF STYLE--

Simplicity,
Clearness,
Strength,
Pathos,
The Ludicrous,
Melody, Harmony, Taste,

KINDS OF COMPOSITION--

Description,
Narration,
Exposition,
Persuasion.⁷⁶

In the biographical section, Minto made a few mistakes--natural, perhaps, for someone who did not have available to him the materials we have now. For instance, Minto saw none of the inner "castle-building" our more recent critics make so much of, because, probably, Macaulay's letters and journals were not all in print. But his observations on Macaulay's style qua style are pretty accurate, and would hold up today. What I have given in my sections on imagery and humor only slightly overlap with Minto's work. And Minto has filled in for me the treatment of Macaulay's rhetoric.

NOTES

¹John Clive, William Madden, Peter Gay, George Levine. (Also see Appendix B for a review of the criticism.)

²Thomas Babington Macaulay, The History of England from the Accession of James the Second, University Edition, Vols. I-V of The Complete Works (New York: Sully and Kleinteich, 1899). All subsequent references to the History, and to Vol. VI (Critical and Historical Essays, Vol. I) and Vol. X (Miscellanies, Poems, and Letters) of the same edition will appear in the text as volume number, followed by page number: e.g. II, 253.

³Aristotle, Pocket Aristotle, transl. under the Editorship of W. D. Ross, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1963), p. 343.

⁴Aristotle, p. 344.

⁵Aristotle, p. 353.

⁶Aristotle, p. 354.

⁷Thomas Babington Macaulay, Critical and Historical Essays in Two Volumes, arr. A. J. Grieve, introd. Douglas Jerrold (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1961), I, p. 1. Hereafter cited as CHE.

⁸Aristotle, p. 373.

⁹David Ogg, England in the Reigns of James II and William III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 148.

¹⁰David Hume, The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to The Revolution in 1688 in 6 vols. (London: Thomas Davison, 1830), 6, p. 253.

¹¹CHE, I, p. 1.

¹²Aristotle, p. 375.

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- ¹³George Levine, The Boundaries of Fiction: Carlyle. Macaulay. Newman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 126.
- ¹⁴Thomas Stearns Eliot, "Burnt Norton," The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1952), p. 117.
- ¹⁵Sir Walter Scott, Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since, ed. Claire Lamont (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 76.
- ¹⁶The Aeneid of Virgil: A Verse Translation by Allen Mandelbaum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 202.
- ¹⁷Mandelbaum's Aeneid, pp. 209-210.
- ¹⁸Levine, pp. 122-123.
- ¹⁹The Aeneid of Virgil: A Verse Translation by Rolfe Humphries (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. ix.
- ²⁰The Iliad of Homer, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 50.
- ²¹Mandelbaum's Aeneid, p. 17.
- ²²Ibid., pp. 197 ff.
- ²³Alexander Pope, Selected Poetry and Prose, ed. William K. Wimsatt, Jr. (New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1960), p. 432.
- ²⁴Macaulay was not as generous to James in his essay, "Milton" (1828). This is what he had to say then: "In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James, Belial and Moloch; and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race accursed of God and man was a second time driven forth, to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a by-word and a shaking of the head to the nations." CHE, I, p. 184.

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²⁵Ogg, p. 279.

²⁶Humphries's Aeneid, p. vii.

²⁷George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," Shooting an Elephant (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945), p. 92.

²⁸Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels (New York: Norton & Company, 1961), p. 161.

²⁹Samuel Johnson's Literary Criticism, ed. R. D. Stock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), p. 237.

³⁰Geoffrey Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, 2nd ed. by F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), p. 22.

³¹Johnson, p. 243.

³²Erich Auerbach, Mimesis, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 10.

³³The Irish are not alone in being compared to pigs; Peter the Great "lived in his Palace like a hog in a sty" (V. 339).

³⁴CHE, II, p. 491.

³⁵CHE, I, p. 157.

³⁶Gulliver's Travels, p. 111.

³⁷Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1959), p. 395.

³⁸Hume, 5, p. 290.

³⁹Ronald Weber, "Singer and Seer: Macaulay on the Historian as Poet," Papers on Language and Literature, 3, No. 3 (Summer 1967), p. 217.

⁴⁰Selections from Sir George Otto Trevelyan's Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay Together with Macaulay's Speeches on Copyright, ed. Joseph Wayne Barley (New York: Macmillan, 1914), p. 157.

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⁴¹George Saintsbury, Corrected Impressions: Essays on Victorian Writers (London: William Heinemann, 1895).

⁴²Saintsbury, p. 83.

⁴³Saintsbury, p. 92.

⁴⁴Saintsbury, p. 96.

⁴⁵G. P. Gooch, History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), p. 279.

⁴⁶Gooch, p. 279.

⁴⁷Gooch, pp. 281-283.

⁴⁸Gooch, p. 285.

⁴⁹Sir Charles Firth, A Commentary on Macaulay's History of England (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1964).

⁵⁰Firth, p. 43.

⁵¹Firth, p. 91.

⁵²Firth, p. 184.

⁵³Weber, p. 219.

⁵⁴William Madden, "Macaulay's Style," The Art of Victorian Prose, ed. George Levine and William Madden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

⁵⁵Madden, p. 143.

⁵⁶Madden, p. 149.

⁵⁷John Clive, Macaulay: The Shaping of the Historian (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973).

⁵⁸Clive, p. 491.

⁵⁹Clive, p. 480.

⁶⁰Clive, p. 494.

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⁶¹Peter Gay, Style in History (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974).

⁶²Gay, p. 125.

⁶³Gay, p. 137 and 137 n.

⁶⁴Levine, p. 64.

⁶⁵Levine, p. 83.

⁶⁶Levine, p. 99.

⁶⁷Levine, p. 127.

⁶⁸Levine, p. 132.

⁶⁹Levine, p. 139.

⁷⁰Levine, p. 139.

⁷¹Joseph Hamburger, Macaulay and the Whig Tradition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976).

⁷²Hamburger, p. xi.

⁷³Hamburger, p. 180.

⁷⁴C. M. Bowra, From Virgil to Milton (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), p. 15.

⁷⁵William Minto, A Manual of English Prose Literature, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1881).

⁷⁶Minto, pp. xii and 76-129.

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THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND: FORM AND STYLE

by

NAOMI OSSAR

A.B., Brown University, 1962

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
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Beginning with a review of the mimetic principles set down by Aristotle, this study goes on to examine Macaulay's adherence to, and modification of, those principles in his History of England. Although elements of romance, novel, and epic are present in it, it is the last that seems to control the form of Macaulay's sustained and lengthy work. Macaulay commonly uses a technique of double vision--a combination of past and present, or actuality and possibility--in depicting scenes, situations, and attitudes. It is a technique that is as old as Virgil's Aeneid, and which is used for the same purpose: "to praise the present" by joining it to the past and exalting it "as the fulfillment of a long, divinely ordained process." In some detail, this study discusses Macaulay's respect for and power over the English language, which he loves, and toward which he feels protective. His control of sense imagery, animal imagery, and humor reinforce Macaulay's representation of the "real life of a nation." His conscious use of repetition and stock epithets serves the same mnemonic purpose as it would do in an epic. Macaulay's idea of what history is does not radically differ from Hume's, as it is set forth in the latter's History of England of 1762; but Macaulay's method is, because of his manipulation of language, nothing short of poetic, and in fact there is evidence that Macaulay saw his History as an analog of an epic poem.

A short review of recent criticism appears in an appendix to this study.