

UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA -- ÉCOLE DES GRADUÉS

THE INTELLECTUAL MILIEU  
OF LORD MACAULAY

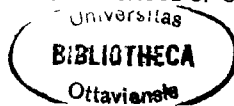
by John R. Griffin

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the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy



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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

John R. Griffin was born March 31, 1937 in Evanston, Illinois. He received the Bachelor of Science degree in English Literature from Xavier University in Cincinnati in 1959. He studied for the Cours de la Civilisation Française at the Université de Paris (Sorbonne), and participated in a seminar at the University of Edinburgh. In 1961 he received the Master of Arts Degree from Xavier University. The title of his thesis was The Literary Reputation of Lord Macaulay.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

We live in a wonderful age; the enlargement of the circle of secular knowledge just now is simply a bewilderment, and the more so, because it has the promise of continuing, and that with greater rapidity, and more signal results.

(John Henry Cardinal Newman, Apologia)

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Victorian scholars and critics are in agreement over few articles or writers in this period (1830-1915); but the rejection of Macaulay from the scope of critical inquiry seems to be definitive and accepted in the highest circles of criticism. Modern criticism, both professional and academic, has shown almost no interest in his works. And while the bibliography of most writers and movements in the Victorian age has swelled to unwieldy proportions, critical and scholarly studies on Macaulay are rare. Nor are the arguments used by literary historians against Macaulay widely varied in their significance. Most find him shallow or superficial, lacking in a deeper philosophy. Recently David Daiches labelled him as an "essentially superficial" critic.<sup>1</sup> Samuel Chew treats the Essays and the History under the

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<sup>1</sup>A Critical History of English Literature, (2 vols.; New York: Ronald Press, 1960), 11, 946.

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heading "Miscellaneous Prose" in The Nineteenth Century And After.<sup>2</sup> The Penguin Series (edited by Boris Ford) has no formal study on Macaulay or his works;<sup>3</sup> nor does Bonamy Dobree, editor of The Victorians and After, consider the prose of Macaulay as worthy of extended inquiry,<sup>4</sup> even though Macaulay was more widely read than any of the other major writers.

Another tradition exists which has proved equally fatal to the literary reputation of Macaulay. This tradition regards the Essays and the History as excellent reading material for the uneducated, the young, or the "philistine." A. L. Rouse defines this attitude very well:

And the Essays are incomparable for young people who are just beginning to take an interest in things of the mind. How many people owe their first intellectual stimulus to the Essays.<sup>5</sup>

This author has the highest regard for Macaulay's History, and yet he, and so many others seem to regard the other

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<sup>2</sup>In A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh, (New York: Appleton-Century-Croft, Inc., 1948).

<sup>3</sup>From Dickens to Hardy, ed. Boris Ford, (Penguin ed.; London, 1960).

<sup>4</sup>(London: the Cresset Press, 1950).

<sup>5</sup>"Macaulay's Essays," in The English Spirit: Essays in History and Literature, (New York, 1946), reprinted in Victorian Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed., Austin Wright, (Oxford, 1961), 209.

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prose works as "showpieces," which, however well-written they may be, are still best enjoyed by the essentially ignorant. The implication of this criticism is that the critic could with little effort supply an essay that was not only better written but better informed.

In the nineteenth century this attitude was given currency by a number of writers. Leslie Stephen, Walter Bagehot, John Morley, Matthew Arnold, and Lytton Strachey<sup>6</sup> are among the principals in this group. The essay of John Morley in Miscellaneous Studies<sup>7</sup> and more especially his essay in the Fortnightly Review give perfect expression to the attitude this thesis is attempting to overcome:

His Essays are as good as a library; they make an incomparable manual...for a busy, uneducated man who has curiosity and enlightenment enough to wish to know about the great lives.<sup>8</sup>

But it is Matthew Arnold who sets this tradition regarding Macaulay as "the prince of philistines." For Arnold was against nearly everything in politics and literature and

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<sup>6</sup>Cf. Hours in a Library, (3 vols.; London, 1892); Literary Studies, (3 vols.; London, 1898); Matthew Arnold, Mixed Essays, (London, 1889); Lytton Strachey, Portraits in Miniature, (London, 1907); also see Macaulay (E. M. LS.; London, 1882) by J. C. Morison.

<sup>7</sup>(London, 1886).

<sup>8</sup>Volume XXV (1876), 499.

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society that Macaulay was for. His attacks on Macaulay were constant, and the sarcasm was without variety. For reasons which can only be vaguely guessed (i.e., for their full meaning and motivation), Arnold, with Carlyle and Ruskin before him, early established himself as the arch-critic of the Victorian universe. His criticism, both social and literary, is generally not great, but his remarks on Macaulay have dominated critical and scholarly thought on Macaulay and the middle-classes:

The Bible and Shakespeare may be said to be imposed upon an Englishman as objects of his admiration; but as soon as the common Englishman, desiring culture, begins to choose for himself, he chooses Macaulay. Macaulay's view of things is, on the whole, the view of them which he feels to be his own also; the persons and causes praised are those which he himself is disposed to admire; the persons and causes blamed are those with which he himself is out of sympathy; and the rhetoric employed to praise or to blame them is animating and excellent. Macaulay is thus a great civilizer. In hundreds of men he hits their nascent taste for the things of the mind, possesses himself of it and stimulates it, draws it powerfully forth and confirms it.<sup>9</sup>

Now intellectual arrogance is certainly not a requisite or expression of this theme "sweetness and light," and Arnold may be justly censured for his indiscriminate criticism of the middle-classes and of Macaulay and the Victorian

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<sup>9</sup> "A French Critic of Milton," in Mixed Essays, (London, 1889), 245-6.

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age. For the period, historically considered, is one of the brightest in English history. Mid-Victorian England (1845-1860),<sup>10</sup> the time of Macaulay's major writings, is one of the happiest periods in all history. Students of economics speak fondly of the internal and overseas expansion which took place during this period. But above all this development, great and important as it was, is the splendid peace and social achievements of the Victorians. To Macaulay the progressive development of civil liberties for the many was of equal importance.

It is from this historical point of view that I wish to investigate the prose works of Lord Macaulay. For I suggest from the beginning that he had a genius, even if only a genius for the "common-sense", that was equal to any of his time, save Newman. His parliamentary record is among the most brilliant and still operative.<sup>11</sup> His faults, moreover, like the faults of Dickens, Arnold, Morley, and others were the faults of his time; and they can be chiefly attributed to a want of experience. Samuel Johnson has

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<sup>10</sup>David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, (Penguin ed.; London, 1950), 221 etseq., 223-29; see also Dean Inge, The Victorian Age, (Cambridge, 1922). Other studies support this theme: Havelock Ellis, The Nineteenth Century: A Utopian Retrospect, (London, 1928); Elie Halevy, A History of the English People, trans. E. I. Watkin, (Penguin ed., London, 1948).

<sup>11</sup>Cf. David Knowles, Macaulay, (Cambridge, 1960), 6; also N. Iyengar, The Indian Penal Code, (Madras, 1929).

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written in support of historical criticism:

Every Man's performances, to be rightly estimated, must be compared with the state of the age in which he lived, and with his own particular opportunities...<sup>12</sup>

Such a comparison should result in an increased appreciation for the particular genius of Macaulay. But it is especially fitting because this was the method he himself used and of which he was the unsurpassed master. Yet this method of analysis might prove incomplete in a study of Macaulay, for he reasoned that history was a continual and evolutionary principle,<sup>13</sup> and it will be seen that he reflects many themes and ideas which were common to an earlier period in English literature. Equally important with this qualification in method are the sobering remarks of Lytton Strachey:

The history of the Victorian Age will never be written: we know too much about it. For ignorance is the first requisite of the historian--ignorance, which simplifies and clarifies, which selects and omits, with a placid perfection unattainable by the highest art. Concerning the Age which has just passed, our fathers and grandfathers have poured forth and accumulated so vast a quantity

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<sup>12</sup>"Preface to Shakespeare," in The Works of Samuel Johnson, (8 vols.; Cambridge: Limited Edition, [n.d.]), 13.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. his discussions on the advantages of modern historians over the ancient in "History" (1828).

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of information that the industry of Ranke would be submerged by it, and the perspicacity of a Gibbon would quail before it.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, it is true that many great scholars have attempted this task.<sup>15</sup> Further, from a study of these histories it is increasingly difficult to sympathize with the vigorous complaints of the "arch-critics" of the age. For the time had many blessings and achievements of which the reader of Carlyle, Dickens, Arnold, and Ruskin would never guess.<sup>16</sup>

Students of these critics may be inclined towards other mistakes concerning the period under discussion. For many the idea of Progress has become synonymous with the bourgeois idealism so common to the middle-classes of this period; and for this reason the history of that idea will be traced through its most illustrious protagonists in the fourth chapter of this study. It will be seen that the idea

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<sup>14</sup>Eminent Victorians, (7th ed.; London, 1918), 1.

<sup>15</sup>Among the works consulted for this study are: B. Croce, History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century, trans. h. Furst, (New York, 1937); Henry Fairchild, The Prodigal Century, (New York, 1950); John. T. Merz, History of European Thought, (4 vols.; Edinburgh, 1906-1914); G. Brun, Nineteenth Century European Civilization, (Oxford, 1960); A. S. Marvin, A Century of Hope, (Oxford, 1919); R. J. Evans, The Victorian Age, 1815-1914, (London, 1950). These works may also be used to extend the argument of n., 10 supra.

<sup>16</sup>Dean Inge has described the period as "the happiest period in human history." Victorian Age, 5; also see n., 10,

15, supra.

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of Progress has a fairly glorious history, and that to a Victorian of 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition, every article of it might seem to be true. It will be noted, however, that Macaulay made a number of highly perspicuous remarks, quite beyond the reach of his most severe critic, which preserved him from the error and most serious flaw in Victorian thinking: the overthrow of Faith by Science.<sup>17</sup>

Macaulay's contributions to historical study are generally unappreciated and criticized in our time (even by those who have not read his History). It may be useful then to investigate and present his theory of history and the historian's task, for at the age of twenty-eight he set forward one of the finest studies ever written on the art and discipline of history. His practice, it will be seen, is even a better expression of this theory; and his use of and evidence for the idea of Progress cannot be fully understood without such an investigation.

The modern world may have rejected the idea of Progress and the idea of history as art, an art which "held the mirror up to nature," but this was not always so. The theme of Progress as an expression of history had many proponents in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. It can

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<sup>17</sup>Every volume of Merz gives this opinion; see especially vols., III, IV; Vol. 3, 86, and Vol. 4, 26-56.

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be stated further that Macaulay's use of this idea in the Victorian era was an expression of this intellectual tradition in the British philosophers. Equally important, in historical terms, is the fact that with the scientific expansion of the nineteenth century<sup>18</sup> and with the increasing growth of civil liberties, the empirical evidence for this idea was very strong. And this is the reason for the optimism and confidence which is so characteristic of Macaulay and the middle-classes.

Arnold's criticism of the middle-classes is not only without charity but also without accuracy. He writes:

Of the three qualities that went to the making up of a "natural, rational life" in the modern world--the love of industry, trade, and wealth; the love of the things of the mind; the love of beautiful things--of these three factors of modern life, your middle class has no notion of any but one, the first.<sup>19</sup>

Yet there is another side of the picture. With all the satire that this group has suffered, it was they who made the Victorian Age the great period in British history that it was;<sup>20</sup> and a defense of the middle-classes must implicate a defense of Lord Macaulay.

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<sup>18</sup>Cf. G. Brun, 8-108.

<sup>19</sup>"Friendship's Garland," in Culture and Anarchy, (1871), 339.

<sup>20</sup>See Roy Lewis and Angus Maude, The English Middle Classes, (New York: Knopf, 1950), 48-72.

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Certainly the puritan ideals of work and thrift and common-sense were to make themselves felt in great measure during this period,<sup>21</sup> and these qualities were to receive emphatic statement in both Carlyle (as part of his doctrine of work) and in Macaulay's "Southey's Colloquies." But the middle-classes via the Reform Bill of 1832 made an even greater contribution to Victorian society, and that was the gift of peace. It was Aristotle who wrote:

Thus it is manifest that the best political community is formed by citizens of the middle class, and that those states are likely to be well-administered, in which the middle class is large, and larger if possible than both the other classes, or at any rate than either singly; for the addition of the middle class turns the scale, and prevents either of the extremes from being dominant. Great then is the good fortune of a state in which the citizens have a moderate and sufficient property; for where some possess much, and the others nothing, there may arise an extreme democracy, or a pure oligarchy; or a tyranny may grow out of either extreme--either out of the most rampant democracy, or out of an oligarchy...and where the middle class is large, there are least likely to be factions and dissensions.<sup>22</sup>

With the above firmly in mind a defense of Macaulay's social position and criticism becomes possible.

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<sup>21</sup>Cf. Ernest Troeltsch, Protestanism and Progress, tran. W. Montgomery, (New York, 1961), 155; the thesis of Weber and Tawney is well known, and it, and the above is the basis for my remark.

<sup>22</sup>Politics, Bk IV, ch. 11, tran. Benjamin Jowett in The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon, (6th ed.; New York: Random House, 1941), 1221.

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It is a mistake to assume that his liberalism was the result of unrestrained self-interest. Macaulay has been ably served by biographers,<sup>23</sup> and one of the dominant characteristics of the man is his almost absurd charity. The contempt which Macaulay expresses so frequently for governmental restraint<sup>24</sup> is not the result of private greed; rather it is the expression of his principal political conviction that the least government is the best government. His mistake and the mistake of his generation and class was the mistake of insufficient experience. It is easy from our position in history to criticize this enthusiasm for liberty, progress, and material welfare; but again, in historical terms, this enthusiasm is eminently just. The period of history described as mid-Victorian is one of the most magnificent eras in all history:

Economically the period was in the main one of previously unthinkable progress. There are troubled times until 1848, for some people, indescribably cruel times that called out the early revolutionary

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<sup>23</sup>Cf. R. D. Urlin, On the Late Lord Macaulay, His Life and Writings, (London, 1860); H. Clements, Lord Macaulay, His Life and Writings, (London, 1860); H. Milman, A Memoir of Lord Macaulay, (London, 1862); F. Arnold, The Public Life of Lord Macaulay, (London, 1862); George Otto Trevelyan, Macaulay's Life and Letters, (2 vols.; London, 1876) - hereafter cited as Trevelyan; in this century R. Beatty, Macaulay: The Victorian Liberal, (Oklahoma, 1931); A. Bryant, Macaulay, (London, 1932).

<sup>24</sup>Cf. "Southey's Colloquies" and "Milton."

spirit. Then, until the late seventies an unparalleled prosperity and an astonishing increase in population carried the nation forward...Yet the later developments, down to Mr. Lloyd George's Old Age Pensions, owed as much to materialism as they did to religion, and still more possibly to the humanitarianism which,..permeated all shades of middle-class opinion in the nineteenth.<sup>25</sup>

Of the various benefits which science brought to Victorian England,<sup>26</sup> none were so important to Macaulay as the liberty derived from economic and religious independence.<sup>27</sup>

Other advances were made in this century which were distinctly moral in character. If we are sometimes annoyed by the excesses of this moralizing tendency in Macaulay and his peers, nevertheless, their contributions (liberal Whigs and Tories, especially the Clapham Sect,<sup>28</sup>) to humanitarian reforms are very real and, historically considered, quite radical. G. M. Trevelyan has written:

The optimistic outlook on the course of human affairs was based not only on the evidence of material advance, but also on moral and intellectual grounds. Macaulay and many of his contemporaries, such as Dickens and Thackeray, saw that their own age was removing many abuses and cruelties that had not shocked their

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<sup>25</sup>Dobree, 38.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. Merz, e.g., I, 23.

<sup>27</sup>Cf. "Machiavelli" and "Southey's Colloquies."

<sup>28</sup>See especially Ernest Marshall Howse, Saints in Politics: the "Clapham Sect" and the Growth of Freedom, (Toronto, 1952).

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ancestors--Negro slavery, cruel laws and punishments and much indifference to suffering. Macaulay, when he voted for factory legislation, observed that the employment of very small children in industry had been approved by the most enlightened philanthropists of the past, for they knew no better.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, both Matthew Arnold and Charles Dickens, writing for two separate but not opposed causes, are not wholly fair to the achievements of their times. "Reform" was as much a vital element in the career of Macaulay, both literary and political, as it was in the fortunes of Dickens, Carlyle, and Arnold.<sup>30</sup> Scholars operating in the tradition of Arnold and his trenchant criticism of the middle classes have gone even further to perpetuate a fairly serious critical error.

There is still another tradition which Arnold has given the modern reader regarding his times. His criticism of the critical journals of his day is well known, and his complaint that criticism was sometimes used for political ends is in some measure just. Yet it is true that the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly Review did serve other functions than political, and to interpret their role as being nothing more than political, is to severely underestimate their achievement. Macaulay, of course, is one of the most

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<sup>29</sup>"Macaulay and the Sense of Optimism," Listener (May, 1948), 259.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Howse, Saints in Politics, passim.

brilliant figures in the history of these quarterlies. It is probably true that his active participation with the Edinburgh Review has added an additional stigma to his reputation, yet it can be demonstrated with little difficulty that his criticism and the criticism of the Review in general is far less "whiggish" than is commonly supposed. The contributions of these quarterlies, and in particular the Edinburgh Review, to the historical and intellectual milieu of Victorian England can perhaps only be estimated in vague terms; but it is both interesting and necessary to trace the extent of influence and direction which Macaulay received from Edinburgh Review. For it can be easily shown that there was a large and pervasive exchange between the Review and its most brilliant contributor. Leslie Stephen remarked of Macaulay:

He assimilated a certain set of ideas as a lad, and never required a new idea in later life. He accumulated vast stores of knowledge, but they all fitted into the old framework of theory.<sup>31</sup>

If this is true, and others besides Stephen have suggested it, it must follow that the Edinburgh Review is fairly important in determining the policy and style of Macaulay's greatest work, the History of England from the Accession of James II. Such an inquiry is necessary to determine just

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<sup>31</sup>Hours in a Library, (3 vols.; London, 1892), 11, 348.

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how "whiggish" was Lord Macaulay, and from this, how "whiggish" is the History. This will be the second chapter of this study.

With this obvious indebtedness to the methods of investigation set forward by Professor Lovejoy,<sup>32</sup> it may be useful to point out in what ways I will differ from him. The idea of History, or the idea of Progress, the idea of Literature and Criticism, even the idea (or ideas) of the Edinburgh Review can be described under Lovejoy's heading, "unit-idea." He writes:

In dealing with the history of philosophical doctrines, for example, it [the study of the history of ideas] cuts into the hard-and-fast individual systems and, for its own purposes, breaks them up into their component elements, into what may be called their unit ideas. The total body of doctrine of any philosopher or school is almost always a complex and heterogeneous aggregate--and often in ways which the philosopher himself does not suspect.<sup>33</sup>

In following chapters it will be seen that many "unit-ideas" find their clearest expression in the prose of Macaulay, that he is not only extremely well studied in various literatures, philosophies, histories, and sciences, but that he himself was able to contribute "new directions" to these

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<sup>32</sup>Cf. The Great Chain of Being, (New York: Harper Bros., 1936, 1960), 3-23.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 3.

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ideas in his own period. For Macaulay was, as much as any man of his time, interested in "things of the mind."

It will be seen that his idea of History and idea of Progress are related and constitute what Lovejoy describes as "unconscious mental habits."<sup>34</sup> At the same time, however, it must be asserted that both of these themes of History, as well as of Progress, were in Macaulay the result of continual deliberation and extensive study. The same is in large measure true of his idea of literature and criticism: his ideas are at once traditional, in that they reflect the spirit and intellectual content of an earlier time, ("whatever is, is right"), and unique, in that the serious Victorian mind was largely in opposition to Augustan rationalism and optimism.<sup>35</sup> Hence it is that Macaulay was somewhat of a "natural child" of both centuries. His scepticism towards the idealism of many in his own time is derived from his study of Burke, Locke, Hume, and the Scotch "Common-Sense" philosophers (e.g., some members of the Clapham Sect).<sup>36</sup> He was not, therefore, a utilitarian though many aspects of his thought, particularly his political thought, appear highly pragmatic

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. Ibid., 288-314.

<sup>36</sup>Cf. Howse, 132.



CHAPTER TWO

MACAULAY AND THE EDINBURGH REVIEW

MACAULAY AND THE EDINBURGH REVIEW

Health to immortal Jeffrey! once, in name,  
 England could boast a judge almost the same;  
 In soul so like, so merciful, yet just,  
 Some think that Satan has resign'd his trust,  
 And given the spirit to the world again,  
 To sentence letters, as he sentenced men.  
 With hand less mighty, but with heart as black,  
 With voice as willing to decree the rack;  
 Bred in the courts betimes, though all that law  
 As yet hath taught him is to find a flaw;  
 Since well instructed in the patriot school  
 To rail at party, though a party tool,...  
 (Lord Byron, "English Bards and Scotch Re-  
 viewers")

In this chapter I hope to show some of the arguments that can be used in defense of Francis Jeffrey, the Edinburgh Review, and Lord Macaulay against the widely established argument that the Review was, in its day, little more than a "Whig-organ." Another popular argument against this publication, closely allied to the preceding, is that its politics gave it a strong inclination to be unfair to the "Lakers" and to other romantics like Byron, Keats, and Shelley. Part of this odium arises from the review of John Wilson on the poetry, particularly Endymion,<sup>1</sup> of John Keats. This critic

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<sup>1</sup>See John Croker Wilson [Christopher North] The Quarterly Review, XIV (1816) and XVIII (1818).

later distinguished himself by a similar attack on the poetry of Lord Tennyson; and they, who feel in the above poem of Byron that the poet is ineffectual, may take a particular pleasure from Macaulay's review of this critic's edition of Boswell.

The celebrated Essays which Macaulay contributed to the Edinburgh Review between the years 1825 to 1843 were not his first or only ventures into essay-writing, but they are assuredly his most important. And in them we can trace the development of that famous style which was to achieve its finest expression in the justly famous History.<sup>2</sup> Before the publication of "Milton" (1825), Macaulay had written and seen published ten essays on subjects as various as Greek history, Italian literature, and Cowley's system of education versus that of Milton.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it will be remembered that his first published essay was a brief defense of the novel as an art form, published in his father's Clapham journal, The Christian Observer. The time was not ripe for

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<sup>2</sup>Rev. Patrick L. Lehane, "Development of Prose Style in Macaulay" (unpublished Master's thesis, English Dept., Catholic University of America).

<sup>3</sup>See, e.g., "On Mitford's History of Greece," (1824); "Criticism of the Principal Italian Writers, No.1, Dante," (1824); "Criticism of the Principal Italian Writers, No.11, Petrarch," (1824); "A Conversation between Mr. Abraham Cowley and Mr. John Milton touching the Great Civil War," (1824). A survey of these essays, as well as the other seven, will give a fair idea of the development of the famous ideas and style of "Milton" (1825).

a defense, however eloquent, for the "likes" of Defoe, Smollett, Fielding, or even Richardson. For the date of that essay was 1814, and the novel was not to be accepted as an art form for many years after, and by the Clapham Sect and its descendents--never.<sup>4</sup>

Still it was to the Edinburgh Review that Macaulay owed for the greater part of his early literary fame. His powers as a conversationalist have been frequently described, but it was "Milton" that first enabled him to mingle in the highest of societies, including the Holland House.<sup>5</sup> And with all that famous strength and courage of expression, so characteristic of his mind and art, the influence of Francis Jeffrey and the patterns of criticism,<sup>6</sup> already established in the Review, cannot be denied. Even if this influence can only be described in conjectural terms, we can be certain of its existence; for Macaulay has written in a letter:

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<sup>4</sup>See Trevelyan's Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay, c. 1; the account of Zachary Macaulay in this first chapter is an important clue in understanding the moral zeal in Macaulay.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Trevelyan 11, 109.

<sup>6</sup>The best description of Jeffrey's critical theory is in Rene Wellek, History of Modern Criticism, (2 vols; New Haven, 1955), 11, 111-120; see also Professor John Clive, Scotch Reviewers: the Edinburgh Review, (Cambridge, 1957); see also Thomas Crawford, The Edinburgh Review and Romantic Poetry, (Auckland, 1955).

Jeffrey is at work on his collection. It will be delightful, no doubt; but to me it will not have the charm of novelty; for I have read, and reread, his old articles till I know them by heart.<sup>7</sup>

No study yet exists of the influence of Jeffrey's criticism on Macaulay; but it may prove useful in an attempt to refute the position of Matthew Arnold to put forward a few remarks on the nature of Jeffrey's achievement and influence. And from Wordsworth to Matthew Arnold this criticism has been severe. As a useful starting point in this discussion the remarks of Matthew Arnold are quoted at some length:

For what is at present the bane of criticism in this country? It is that practical considerations cling to it and stifle it. It subserves interests not its own. Our organs of criticism are organs of men and parties having practical ends to serve, and with them those practical ends are the first thing and the play of the mind the second; so much play of the mind as is compatible with the prosecution of those practical ends is all that is wanted. An organ like the Revue des Deux Mondes, having for its main function to understand and utter the best that is known and thought in the world, existing, it may be said, as just an organ for a free play of the mind, we have not. But we have the Edinburgh Review, existing as an organ of the old Whigs, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that; we have the Quarterly Review, existing as an organ of the Tories, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that; we have the Times... And so on through all the various fractions, political and religious, of our society; every fraction has, as such, its organ of

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<sup>7</sup>Trevelyan, 11, 95.

criticism, but the notion of combining all fractions in the common pleasure of a free disinterested play of mind meets with no favour.<sup>8</sup>

This criticism of the political inclinations of the Edinburgh Review is not altogether false. Jeffrey himself has admitted that, "the right leg of the Review was politics."<sup>9</sup> Still the remarks of Arnold are an untrustworthy guide to the real achievement of such a journal, and the momentous failure in critical standards of certain issues of the Quarterly should not lead us to reject all the journalistic criticism of this period.

The antipathy of Matthew Arnold, closely allied to some of his own political credos, is historically inaccurate. In the period of Jeffrey's tenure several notable Tories were among the principal contributors, including Wilberforce and other Claphams and Sir Walter Scott. Moreover the political criticism of the Review during this early period was as frequently directed against the Whigs as otherwise. Professor Clive has observed:

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<sup>8</sup>"The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," in The Portable Matthew Arnold, (3rd ed.; Viking Library, 1956), 249.

<sup>9</sup>James A. Grieg, Francis Jeffrey and the Edinburgh Review, (London, 1948), 87.

Wilberforce, Scott, and other Tories contributed; discussion of current party questions and personalities was kept down to a minimum; and Jeffrey was able to confine his function to keeping out what he considered to be pernicious sentiments, such as attacks on Catholic Emancipation or on the Abolitionists.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of literary criticism there was even a greater catholicity of taste and expression. The variety of taste in the criticism of Macaulay is material for a later chapter in this study, but it may be useful to point out here that this same variety of taste, so foreign to so many of the Victorians both early and late, was abundantly present in the Edinburgh Review of his time. The popular contention that the Romantic poets were martyrs of their period has been successfully questioned by two scholars, Thomas Crawford<sup>11</sup> and John Clive.<sup>12</sup> The abuse of Keats by Wilson should not lead us to believe that this was a commonplace. Both Crawford and Clive have shown that the criticism of the Edinburgh Review by Francis Jeffrey was essentially laudatory in its appraisal of the Romantics and particularly of Keats. It is

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<sup>10</sup>Clive, 66.

<sup>11</sup>The Edinburgh Review and Romantic Poetry, (Auckland, 1955).

<sup>12</sup>Scotch Reviewers: the Edinburgh Review, (Cambridge, 1957).

true that Macaulay referred to the Prelude as "metaphysical twaddle," but his criticism was essentially favorable to Shelley, and Byron. His famous study on Byron is of course one of the first and most important in the period. Another scholar has recently published a study of the reputation of Pope and Dryden in the early half of the nineteenth century, and he contends, with frequent references to Macaulay, that the Edinburgh Review and other quarterlies still, at that time, regarded these two as great poets.<sup>13</sup>

This same "play of the mind" was evident in Macaulay. If his political views and moral code were early determined, it cannot be said that these "habits of mind" ever influenced his literary criticism; of Jeffrey the same might be said, and we may attribute not a few of these "habits" to the influence of Jeffrey. It is true that Macaulay referred to Johnson as the "most bigoted of Tories," but it was Boswell who established this precedent in particular.<sup>14</sup>

Certain other elements in the milieu of this period must be brought forth in defense of Macaulay and the Edinburgh Review. The lavish abuse which Lord Byron laid upon

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<sup>13</sup>Upali Amasinghe, Dryden and Pope in The Nineteenth Century, (Cambridge, 1962).

<sup>14</sup>A recent book, The Politics of Samuel Johnson, (New Haven, 1961), contests this thesis of Macaulay and others; but one need only refer to the definitions in Johnson's Dictionary of "Whig," "Tory," and "pension," for demonstration of Macaulay's argument.

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the head of Jeffrey, as in the epigraph to this chapter, should not lead us to conclude that Jeffrey or any of his faction were ineffectual triflers. The Edinburgh Review was the most influential journal of its day. Professor Clive has written:

The Edinburgh Review was the "jack-ass"; and Jeffrey rode it for the twenty-seven years. Under his editorial guidance it became the most powerful organ of its kind, the arbiter of literary taste alike for the fashionable world and for those who aspired to that world. Napoleon, we are told, "was not the only monarch who respected the opinions it put forth"; Stendhal's admiration knew no bounds; and Madame de Stael informed Lord Glenbervie in 1815 that "if some being from another climate were to come to this and desire to know in what work the highest pitch of human intellect might be found, he ought to be shown the Edinburgh Review."<sup>15</sup>

The influence of Macaulay with the Edinburgh Review was to increase with each publication of one of his essays. The satire of Matthew Arnold in "A French Critic of Milton" is a partial, if negative, testimony to the extent of his influence. It must be said, however, that the influence of Jeffrey was still an important factor with Macaulay, and we

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<sup>15</sup>Clive, 42; Cf. The Diaries of Sylvester Douglas, Baron Glenbervie, ed. Francis Bickley, (London, 1928), 163; on the remarks of Napoleon see Selections from the Edinburgh Review, ed. Maurice Cross (Paris, 1835), 1, 28; on Stendhal: Doris Gunnell, Stendhal et l'Angleterre, (Paris, 1909), 168.

trace this influence even in the later essays of Macaulay.

Both Professors Crawford and Clive call our attention to the high moral or ethical idealism of Jeffrey, as well as his contempt of servility,<sup>16</sup> and this idealism was reflected in his own criticism. Possibly this influence, along with that of Zachary Macaulay, accounts for the tendency in Macaulay to "out-Jeffrey" Jeffrey; for Macaulay was too much inclined to stress this moral element in the biographical essays.

There is another characteristic in the prose of Macaulay for which this influence can account. The aggressive style and certitude of manner in Macaulay have many parallels in the prose of Jeffrey and of the Review in general. On this Clive writes:

Aggressiveness was as much a hallmark of the first number as its blue-and-buff cover and neither the one nor the other changed.<sup>17</sup>

Additional factors should be used to account for this fairly unpleasant quality in Macaulay. To be certain he was not alone in this fault. Certitude or "cocksureness" is as much a characteristic of Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold, as it is of

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<sup>16</sup>Crawford notes this attitude in Jeffrey (p. 16), and it is a likely source for the almost surly attitude in Macaulay towards Boswell, Addison, Temple, and Cramner (to mention but a few).

<sup>17</sup>Clive, 41.

Macaulay, but what is particularly painful in Macaulay is that he combined this certitude with an extreme, almost terrifying, command of factual data. His knowledge in his own time of English history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was unsurpassed, and his mastery of English literature and drama in the same periods was equally strong. Obviously these are traits of that famous memory, which is the dominant intellectual characteristic of Macaulay. It is hardly necessary to repeat that he knew many of Shakespeare's plays by heart, as well as all of Paradise Lost, the Iliad, the Aeneid by heart, much of Dante and Jane Austen, and the poetry of Pope. And every critic who attacks Macaulay for being superficial must acknowledge that his command of the subject matter can hardly be so great as that of Macaulay.

With this memory and aggressive manner was another habit of mind that has diminished his literary reputation. He has frequently stated in his letters that his contributions to the Review were read only once and then disposed of by the reader.<sup>18</sup> Hence, if he were to make an effect on the reader, it was an effect that must be made after only one reading. We may thus account for some of the occasional

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<sup>18</sup>Macaulay to Napier, Selections from the Correspondence of the Life of Macvey Napier, ed. Macvey Napier, (London, 1879), 262.

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violence of language in his prose. I do not say that he was wrong in his opinions or habitually unjust or extreme in expression; but he has laid himself open to criticism, ironically enough, far more severe than any that he administered. Boswell has more champions in this period than he had in his own lifetime. The same may be said of all the Restoration dramatists; and of Bacon and other famous "victims" of Macaulay this reaction is equally strong. In the same sense the reaction against virtues which Macaulay praised has been equally strong. The champions of Addison, or even of Milton, are not in great number. This need for clarity, then, has brought about a severe decline in his reputation. The fact that he felt his essays to be the subject of but one reading led him to a sometimes almost extreme form of rhetoric, which has ultimately reacted against its creator. Noel Annan said of Macaulay and his critics:

They are right. Macaulay was not only a man of the world but a politician. His religion was the religion of all sensible men, and he used his fabulous memory, stocked with hours of reading not contemplatively to instill his mind with doubt and introspection, but as an arsenal to provide the ammunition which would saturate his opponent's defenses.<sup>19</sup>

It is interesting to note, however, that Macaulay seldom changed an opinion or answered a critic. In his brief

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<sup>19</sup>"Verdict on Macaulay," The New Stateman and Nation, (Feb. 15, 1953), 180.

biography of Samuel Johnson, written for the Encyclopedia Britannica, he reiterates the same arguments against Boswell. His biographer cites some of the criticism against various aspects of the History, and he remarks that the attitude of Macaulay in general towards these critics was one of scorn,<sup>20</sup> but it may be useful to provide an example of this journalistic technique with its faults and with its merits; Macaulay wrote of Johnson:

Johnson grown old, Johnson in the fulness of his fame and in the enjoyment of a competent fortune, is better known to us than any other man in history. Everything about him, his coat, his wig, his figure, his face, his scrofula, his St. Vitus's dance, his rolling walk, his blinking eye, the outward signs which too clearly marked his approbation of his dinner, his insatiable appetite for fish-sauce and veal-pie with plums, his inextinguishable thirst for tea, his trick of touching the posts as he walked, his mysterious practice of treasuring up scraps of orange-peel, his morning slumbers, his midnight disputations, his contortions, his mutterings, his gruntings, his puffings, his vigorous, acute, and ready eloquence, his sarcastic wit, his vehemence, his insolence, his fits of tempestuous rage, his queer inmates, old Mr. Levett and blind Mrs. Williams, the cat Hodge and the negro Frank, all are as familiar to us as the objects by which we have been surrounded from childhood.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Trevelyan wrote: "...Macaulay, at all times and under all temptations, acted in strict accordance with Bentley's famous maxim, that no man was ever written down except by himself." 11, 177.

<sup>21</sup>"Samuel Johnson," in English Prose of the Victorian Era, ed. Charles F. Harrold and William D. Templeman, (3rd ed.; Oxford, 1946), 322--hereafter cited as English Prose.

The reader of Boswell's Life will recognize every article and characteristic described in the above. This passage represents a fairly brilliant summary of any number of the striking features of Johnson described by his biographer. Some may gasp at the technique of Macaulay; the movement and array of precise details are perhaps too hurried; yet the picture presented in the above is historically exact. Every article and adjective in it can be verified through textual knowledge, and, in spite of the severity, the same may be said of his description of Boswell. Yet the strength and the weakness of such a descriptive technique are immediately obvious. The impression of Macaulay and his enthusiasm for the literature become the reader's own; but many will question the accuracy of this impression.<sup>22</sup> Others, particularly after several readings, will object to the strident manner and confidence of Macaulay, and these are the reasons why critics are inclined to regard Macaulay as a superficial writer.

It is certain that the demands of writing for the Edinburgh Review were the occasion for some of the stylistic flaws which we have come to identify with the prose of Macaulay. His clarity and technique of rapid compression have

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<sup>22</sup>Samuel C. Chew, for example, refers to his description of Boswell and Johnson as "flagrant caricatures," in The Nineteenth Century and After, in A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh, (New York, 1948), 1328.

led many to consider him as shallow, but Jeffrey and the Edinburgh Review also made some other positive contributions to the intellectual makeup of Macaulay. For Jeffrey's use of Scotch aesthetics, as Rene Wellek has pointed out,<sup>23</sup> was an important, if secondary, source for the theory of literature and criticism of Macaulay, which I have described in the fifth chapter of this study. It may be best to describe some of Jeffrey's dominant themes in his criticism. His tendency is to constantly employ value-judgments which appeal to the subjective impressions. He writes that the artist must be careful to "employ only such objects as are the natural signs, or the inseparable concomitants of emotions, of which the greater part of mankind are susceptible..."<sup>24</sup> This reflection of the Scotch "Common Sense" school of philosophy in the prose of Jeffrey is a possible source for a similar trait in Macaulay. Both Jeffrey and Macaulay in their evaluations of literature made constant appeal to what Wellek describes as "documentary social truth."<sup>25</sup> It may be objected that this is a dominant theme in the literary criticism of Samuel Johnson, which I have taken to be the primary

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<sup>23</sup>Wellek, 115.

<sup>24</sup>Contributions to the Edinburgh Review, (4 vols.; London, 1844), 1, 75.

<sup>25</sup>Wellek, 115.

source of much of Macaulay's criticism. The effect, then, of Jeffrey was to enforce these traits in Macaulay. Other characteristics of Jeffrey's criticism, "a mild realism, a suspicion of mysticism and metaphysics, and a strict regard for propriety,"<sup>26</sup> find abundant echoes in the prose of Macaulay.<sup>27</sup>

The most important source for the aesthetics of Jeffrey was Archibald Alison's Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste (1790), and his most significant exposition of his own system of aesthetics, which was largely derived from Alison, was the "Essay on Beauty" (1811). It is important to note, therefore, that the criticism by Jeffrey and his successors was not (usually at least) the result of party spirit. His occasional criticism of Wordsworth, as Rene Wellek and Crawford have shown,<sup>28</sup> was the result of critical theory.<sup>29</sup> Wellek traces the criticism of Jeffrey back through Alison to Lord Kames and David Hume,<sup>30</sup> and my study of possible sources for Macaulay's own theory follows

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 115.

<sup>27</sup>See the remarks of Macaulay in "Restoration Dramatists" and "Dryden."

<sup>28</sup>Crawford, The Edinburgh Review..; this author reiterates in greater detail the analysis of Wellek; see also Clive, 152.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Wellek, 113-120.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 114-115.

a parallel route. Unfortunately, Jeffrey, unlike Macaulay, had little taste for the Augustans, though he was to follow several of their critical patterns.

Macaulay has left us no statement of his critical theories. His indebtedness to Jeffrey and Edinburgh Review policy, however, cannot be questioned. It is probable that the area of his subject matter, both literary and historical, led him to a deeper and more serious study of the critical themes, which were particularly characteristic of the Restoration and eighteenth century. But if Jeffrey and Macaulay were in disagreement over the value of the achievement of Pope and Dryden, they were in precise accord in their evaluation of the drama of these periods. Moreover, the reasons for their evaluation were closely in agreement.<sup>31</sup>

Both were keen students and enthusiasts of Elizabethan drama, and tended, perhaps mistakenly, to judge later drama in terms of the Elizabethan achievement. The principle that the task of drama was "to hold the mirror up to nature" was elemental in the criticism of Jeffrey and Macaulay. The complaint of Macaulay with the dramatists of the Restoration

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<sup>31</sup>E.g. both appealed to a moral code in their criticism of the Restoration and eighteenth century drama, and both were insistent upon the moral responsibility of the artist. Jeffrey and Macaulay shared, as well, a contempt of French theater for the same reasons: it lacked life. See Edinburgh Review, XI (1807) and Edinburgh Review, XVII (1811).

is well known, and his complaint of the immoral taste of the artists and the taste for the immoral of the audience had an early nineteenth century precedent in Jeffrey:

...and [the artist's] taste will then deserve to be called bad and false, if he obtrude upon the public, as beautiful, objects that are not likely to be associated in common minds with any interesting impressions.<sup>32</sup>

The appeal to "a strict regard for propriety"<sup>33</sup> in the general criticism of Jeffrey has many echoes in Macaulay. Jeffrey censured Robert Burns' poetry for some of its immorality, as well as the poet's own. Many will argue that Macaulay pursued this moral theme in his practical criticism far beyond the limits of good taste. He could, on the other hand, plead historical precedent, not only in the Edinburgh Review, but throughout the criticism of Samuel Johnson.

The legendary contempt in Macaulay for "things of the mind" possibly has its source in this "suspicion of mysticism and metaphysics,"<sup>34</sup> which Wellek attributes to Jeffrey. Both writers, it is true, used descriptive and concrete criticism to mould opinion and fashion taste. Many,

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<sup>32</sup>Contributions, 1, 77.

<sup>33</sup>Wellek, 115.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 115.

especially critics of the anti-practical school of Matthew Arnold, will object to such a practice. There are at least two schools of thought on the subject, and T. S. Eliot himself has taken a rather firm stand against "autotelic"<sup>35</sup> criticism. Whatever may be our response to Macaulay and his critical milieu, it is difficult to blame them too much. The faults they exhibited were faults of the historical moment. Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and Arnold himself were strongly given to using criticism, historical, literary, and artistic, for the sake of propaganda. Everything considered, Macaulay is among the least of the offenders. The objections that criticism was used for political ends can be refuted by frequent references to the actual writings of Jeffrey,<sup>36</sup> and of Macaulay this is an even more signal measure of his genius. Macaulay was lavish in his praise of certain eminent Tories in the eighteenth century. It will be seen in a later chapter that his enthusiasm for the poetry of Pope and Dryden, among others, is distinguished for its reactionary element in combating critical trends established by Southey, Hazlitt, and Jeffrey. To write laudably and well

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<sup>35</sup>Cf. "The Function of Criticism in the Present Day, in Selected Essays, (3rd ed.; London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1951).

<sup>36</sup>The early studies published in the Edinburgh Review confirm this opinion. The works of Crawford and Ford should also be consulted for a just approximation of his achievement.

on either of these two poets was increasingly rare in the nineteenth century, and if Macaulay was slow to recognize the dramatic genius of Dryden, he was not slow to defend his poetry from a fairly strong core of critical feeling against it.

There is still another aspect in which Macaulay improved upon current practices of the Edinburgh Review. His genius at historical narrative has been frequently disputed, but it is, according to Lord Acton<sup>37</sup> and David Knowles,<sup>38</sup> the greatest of its kind. No study exists which has measured the influence of either Hazlitt or Johnson on the technique of Macaulay, but it can be seen in the structural characteristics of the Essays that Macaulay was very much indebted to the Lives of the English Poets. Yet Johnson seems to have been contemptuous of historical studies and to have concerned himself with biography and "habits of mind." Macaulay, it will be seen, relied heavily upon all three elements in the evaluation of the artist: the history of his times, the history of his person, and the artistic achievement. For better

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<sup>37</sup>Lectures on Modern History, (New York, 1962), 229.

<sup>38</sup>Macaulay, (Cambridge, 1960), 3; Knowles also states: "Two separate parties of historians of the late nineteenth century--Acton, Creighton, and Stubbs, and Acton, Mommsen, Harnack--gave first place to Macaulay," 3.

or worse, Macaulay had no precedent for this technique which he so boldly used.<sup>39</sup>

To measure the extent of influence between the Edinburgh Review, with its editor Francis Jeffrey, and the prose of Lord Macaulay, both early and late, is perhaps impossible. Macaulay certainly gives us no forwarding clues, and the student working after him must content himself with skilled conjecture. In this chapter, by textual and scholarly allusions and citations, we have seen that there was a critical and creative principle behind the critical essays of the Edinburgh Review. We have seen, further, that its political criticism, during the tenure of Jeffrey (and Macaulay) was considerably less "whiggish" than the reader of Matthew Arnold would suppose. It is true, on the other hand, the Review did give support to measures of reform, which have come to be mistakenly identified with Whig politics and liberalism,<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>See Knowles, 8; and Chew, 1326-1330.

<sup>40</sup>Cf. Clive, 86-87; Sydney Smith has written: "...to appreciate the value of the Edinburgh Review, the state of England at the period when that journal began should be had in remembrance. The Catholics were not emancipated, the Corporation and Test Acts unrepealed, the Game Laws were horribly oppressive, Steel Traps and Spring Guns were set all over the country, Prisoners tried for their lives would have no counsel...a thousand evils were in existence, which the talents of good and able men have since lessened or removed; and these effects have been not a little assisted by the honest boldness of the Edinburgh Review." The Works of Sydney Smith, (Boston, 1854), 3-4.

but even a conservative like Cobbett could exclaim:

I cannot say but I have a sneaking kindness for them. They have done a great deal of good in lashing the boobies and bastards that are fastened upon the public...<sup>41</sup>

From a literary point of view several advantages are derived by such an inquiry. We can remove from the Edinburgh Review the stigma of being the "Whig-persecutors" of Wordsworth and others of the Lake School. Thomas Crawford has written:

The early Edinburgh was no mere provincial periodical, nor was its influence confined to the British Isles; after the defeat of Napoleon, it enjoyed over all Europe the prestige of a latter-day Northern Encyclopedie ...Fifty years ago, its literary effects were generally held to have been pernicious. The world of letters in the early nineteenth century was pictured as divided into two irreconcilable camps: on the one hand, the creators--poor, lone, persecuted mountain-eagles; on the other, the "critic-tribe" with the Edinburgh and its editor Francis Jeffrey at their head--surly, vindictive and appallingly mediocre.<sup>42</sup>

This, then, was the climate of opinion in which the young Macaulay was trained, and of which in later years he became the arch-exponent. It is perhaps unfair to Jeffrey and uncharitable to the Edinburgh Review's other contributors to describe this milieu as the "training-ground" for

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<sup>41</sup>Political Register, XII, n. 15 (Oct. 10, 1807), 556.

<sup>42</sup>The Edinburgh Review..., 3.

Lord Macaulay. But it is certainly during this period between 1825 and 1843 that he gained through practice in the various essays which he contributed that supreme mastery of narrative art and factual data that was to make the History the greatest historical achievement since Gibbon.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Cf. Chew, 1326; Wilbur C. Abbott, "Macaulay and the New History," Yale Review, XVIII (1929); J. H. Plumb, "Thomas Babington Macaulay," UTQ, XXVI (1956).

CHAPTER THREE

MACAULAY AND THE IDEA OF HISTORY

## MACAULAY AND THE IDEA OF HISTORY

Think now

History has many cunning passages, con-  
trived corridors  
And issues, deceives with whispering  
ambitions,  
Guides us by vanities. Think now  
She gives when our attention is dis-  
tracted  
And what she gives, gives with such  
supple confusions  
That the giving famishes the craving.  
Gives too late  
What's not believed in, or if still be-  
lieved,  
In memory only, reconsidered passion.  
Gives too soon  
Into weak hands, what's thought can be  
dispensed with  
Till the refusal propagates a fear.  
(T.S. Eliot, "Gerontion")

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In the previous chapter we have seen that the political tendencies of the Edinburgh Review and of its editor, Francis Jeffrey, were not nearly so grievous during the period of Macaulay's contributions as is commonly supposed. The political views of the Review were decidedly liberal, but their influence on the literary criticism published by Jeffrey and others was not great. And it was only when the Lake poets identified themselves with Tory causes that the real wrath of the editor and others was invoked. Of Macaulay this is equally true. His abuse of John Croker Wilson,

just as it was, was prompted by party spirit and personal animus,<sup>1</sup> but in general it may be argued that his literary and historical criticism was not political.

We have seen also that the need for clarity and compression in the Edinburgh Review created certain stylistic demands in the prose of Macaulay, and that the success of Macaulay in fulfilling these demands, particularly of condensation and clarity, has led many to consider him as essentially superficial. It was suggested further that the genius of Macaulay for compression of factual data, of which he was the unrivaled master, actually kept him from being shallow or superficial in his analysis and judgments. With this, it was suggested that we can with extended enquiry demonstrate many of his famous pronouncements, or at least clearly point out the sources or tradition which he was reflecting.

In the first chapter it was pointed out that the historical moment of mid-Victorian England, with all its obvious and celebrated shortcomings, was one of the most brilliant in English history. We have seen that the England of Macaulay was in so many ways better off than the England

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Trevelyan, I, 227; see also Chew, 1328 and R. C. Beatty's Lord Macaulay. For Croker's revenge, see Trevelyan, II, 67.

of Samuel Johnson, which was, in turn, in so many ways better off than the England of John Milton. Such a view was common in Victorian England and was repeatedly enforced by the historical essays of Lord Macaulay in the Edinburgh Review.

These essays give evidence of the second greatest intellectual characteristic of Lord Macaulay: his historical imagination. Moreover, these essays, despite the wide and conflicting criticism that can be brought against each of them, are without parallel in the literature of England. As G. P.

Gooch has written:

If Macaulay did not invent the historical essay, he found it of brick and left it of marble. His articles glitter like diamonds in the dusty pages of the Edinburgh Review. To compare his contributions with those of Sydney Smith, Jeffrey or Brougham is to measure the gulf which separated the old style from the new. What Shakespeare's plays achieved for the fifteenth century, Macaulay's essays accomplished for the seventeenth and eighteenth. He was the first writer to make history universally interesting.<sup>2</sup>

And all this was accomplished by a writer who did not have the highest regard for his own art; he writes in one of his letters:

The public judges, and ought to judge, indulgently of periodical works. They are not expected to be highly finished.

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<sup>2</sup>G. P. Gooch, History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century, (2nd ed. and revised; London: Longman's Green, Co., 1952), 279.

Their natural life is only six weeks. Sometimes their writer is at a distance from the books to which he wants to refer. Sometimes he is forced to hurry through his task in order to catch the post. He may blunder...contradict himself...All this is readily forgiven if there be a certain spirit and vivacity in his style.<sup>3</sup>

It is perhaps useless to point out that the "indulgence" which he anticipated has never come. Still these essays were invaluable to Macaulay as training in historical narration.

The interest of Macaulay in the history and literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is abundantly evident from the area of his subject-material for these various essays. More than twenty years before he retired from public life to begin research on the proposed History, he had published many essays on the discussed period. And it may reasonably be expected that those gifts and flaws of style and manner would find renewed expression in the History. It may also be expected that the political career and interests of Macaulay, generally summed up as "progress," would find expression in the History as well.

As part of the above, there is a general argument against the History that it is, like the Edinburgh Review essays, shallow, and that it is, again like the Edinburgh

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<sup>3</sup>Trevelyan, 11, 58.

Review essays, so political in spirit and expression, as to be non-scientific and therefore without value as history. This view has a remarkable currency, but its origins are scarcely to be credited.<sup>4</sup> Equally unfortunate in a survey of the reputation of Macaulay, has been the rapid rise of scientific historians (e.g., Ranke and his disciples),<sup>5</sup> who are frequently interpreted as the antidote for the "romantic" school of historians (Carlyle, Froude, and Macaulay). Sir Charles Firth expresses this view:

Now, Macaulay goes to the opposite extreme: he forgets the scientific element in history and thinks only on the literary element. The defects of his History are mainly due to this one-sidedness, this underestimate of the importance of one part of the historian's task. Not that he neglected it altogether, but simply that he did not adequately realise its magnitude and difficulty. His mind was too full of the other half of his task, the business of stating to the best advantage the facts he had collected by his investigations. The problems which occupied him most was how to reach the largest possible circle of readers.<sup>6</sup>

And once more we have the view that his clarity and general brilliance of style are the marks of his popularity and of

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. Trevelyan, 11, 175-6, 365-6.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Gooch, 72-121.

<sup>6</sup>A Commentary on Macaulay's History of England, (London: Macmillan Co., 1938), 30.

his superficiality. Arguments against such a view are easily obtained. The most obvious precedent, historically considered, for the practice and style of Macaulay was Gibbon. Equally pertinent is the historical practice of the contemporaries of Macaulay; for the scientific attitude (not practice) towards history was not established in England until the turn of the century.

Most important, however, in establishing the reputation of Macaulay as a scholar or as scientific in his approach to historical research are some private remarks in his notebooks:

On the 8th of February 1849, after the publication of his first two volumes, he writes in his journal: "I have now made up my mind to change my plan about my History. I will set myself to know the whole subject:--to get by reading and travelling, a full acquaintance with William's reign. I reckon that it will take me eighteen months to do this. I must visit Holland, Belgium, Scotland, Ireland, France. The Dutch archives and French archives must be ransacked....I must see Londonberry, the Boyne, Aghrim, Limerick, Kinsale, Namur again, Linden, Stenkirk. I must turn over hundreds of thousands of pamphlets, Lambeth, the Bodleian, and other libraries, the Devonshire Papers, the British Museum, must be explained, and notes made: and then I shall go to work."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Trevelyan, 11, 157-8.

We can see from the above that the research element in the History was as great as human endeavor could make it. Godfrey Davies remarks that certain letters of William III were not available to Macaulay, and that these letters might have added appreciably to his grasp of William's character and motivation.<sup>8</sup> But this complaint might be justly applied to every historical work. In his own century the critics were particularly incensed against the popularity of his style and treatment.

The survival of his reputation as an historian, therefore, has not been without the most severe scrutiny of the work and sharpest invective against the author. For Macaulay had gained through his years as a reviewer and political figure an unhealthy number of enemies. And the History was the opportunity for revenge. John Croker Wilson was foremost among these, but Blackwoods' was not far outdistanced. The criticism of John Paget in his work, The New Examen, was the longest and most scholarly,<sup>9</sup> but most of the contemporary reviews of the work were the result not of scholarly enquiries but of political animus. Other groups arose to defend various figures maligned in the History. Macaulay's

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<sup>8</sup>"The Treatment of Constitutional History in Macaulay's History of England," Huntington Library Quarterly, 11 (1939), 203.

<sup>9</sup>(London, 1861, 1936).

treatment of Penn and Marlborough was to be combated by a generation of scholars.

Far more serious than the criticism of the History in an evaluation of Macaulay's achievement is the fact that the spirit of his age has passed.<sup>10</sup> The optimism and confidence so characteristic of mid-Victorian England were to go into a sharp decline soon after his death, and a work so expressive of that confidence might be expected to share that decline. The epigraph of this chapter -- the "backward devils" of Dante -- is a perfect expression of this shift in sensibilities; and the growth of the scientific attitude towards history has intensified this change.

But it must be realized that the aim of the scientific historians is not in serious opposition to that of the romantic historians. The working motto of Ranke, "wie es eigentlich gewesen," is not in opposition to Macaulay's theory of history. But it is natural that Macaulay in writing English history should also think of it and write of it as an instructive discipline. Von Ranke may have theoretically dissented from such a practice, but Ernest Troeltsch did not:

The first purpose of all history is  
an understanding of the present.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century, ed. cit., 221-24.

<sup>11</sup>Protestantism and Progress, tr. W. Montgomery, (New York: Dover, 1961), 1.

In his celebrated essay "History" (1828), Macaulay wrote that "History is philosophy teaching by examples."<sup>12</sup> His own practice would be in precise accord with this: the uses of the past are in understanding of the present! Macaulay, even while writing on a theory of history and while describing the "perfect historian," had his mind on the uses of history. It is scarcely too much to say that his view was shared by Carlyle, Froude, Lingard, Thomas Arnold, and above all Newman.<sup>13</sup> For the nineteenth century was characterized by a vital, if sometimes tendentious, interest in history. As Dawson has written:

If the 19th century was the age of science and rationalism, it was no less the age of romanticism and imagination. Above all, it was the age of History, when for the first time men set themselves to re-create the past, and sought to enter with imaginative sympathy into the life and thought of past ages and of different peoples.<sup>14</sup>

It is obviously true that the majority of great writers in this period cut their teeth by writing historical sketches; even the novelists showed an abundant enthusiasm for historical narrative, and it is probable that Sir Walter Scott,

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<sup>12</sup>(New York; Sheldon Co., 1904), 377.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Gooch, 301, 310-16, 266, 299.

<sup>14</sup>Progress and Religion, (New York: Sheed and 1960), 28.

more than any other English writer, provided the inspiration for the History of England. Of the historians of this period (1815-1900), Macaulay and Acton enjoy the highest reputations of the profession.<sup>15</sup>

The popularity of Macaulay has, on the other hand, fallen the most severely of all the Victorians. No one could expect that the enthusiasm which greeted the publication of each volume would maintain itself, but critical interest from literary scholars and historians of this period has also declined sharply. Many of the lesser writers and historians share a considerable popularity; but of Macaulay this cannot be said. Much of this decline can perhaps be traced to the general stigma attached to the Essays. Yet it is dangerous to associate the achievement of the Essays with that of the History. For while we have seen that the variations in style or technique of the former works are not appreciably different from those of the latter, the scholarship and artistic pains taken in the writing of the History give it a greater value. The sweep of the narrative, it is true, does not vary from the first to the last published work of Macaulay; further, it may be suggested that for many this gift of narrative and compression is his greatest gift. But in stressing the narrative element in his actual performance, Macaulay

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<sup>15</sup>Cf. Knowles, passim.

was in precise accord with his theory of history. For it can be shown that Macaulay placed the scientific elements of historical writing on an equal plane with the art of narration.

In 1828 he wrote:

A perfect historian must possess an imagination sufficiently powerful to make his narrative affecting and picturesque. Yet he must control it so absolutely as to content himself with the materials which he finds, and to refrain from supplying deficiencies by additions of his own.<sup>16</sup>

It is interesting to note that a great modern historical-theorist, Collingwood, has suggested that Macaulay did not place sufficient attention upon the imaginative faculty in the researching and writing of history.<sup>17</sup> Most critics' complaint with Macaulay lies in the opposite direction.<sup>18</sup>

The genius of Macaulay was in his balance of the two faculties. He wrote, "to be a really great historian is perhaps the rarest of intellectual distinctions."<sup>19</sup> The truly great historian, as we have seen from the above, must tread a

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<sup>16</sup>"History," in Essays, (6 vols.; New York, 1887), 1, 377.

<sup>17</sup>The Idea of History, (Oxford, 1946), 241.

<sup>18</sup>See John Griffin, "Literary Reputation of Lord Macaulay, 1860-1960" (unpublished MA thesis, Dept. of English, Xavier University), ch. 11.

<sup>19</sup>"History," 376.

narrow and intensely difficult line between the realm of science and of art. The province of history is that debatable land, "ill-defined" and "ill-cultivated" between reason and the imagination.<sup>20</sup> History "is sometimes fiction" and "sometimes theory."<sup>21</sup> A perfect historian "must be a profound and ingenious reasoner," but Macaulay added that he must never cast "his facts in the mould of his hypothesis."<sup>22</sup>

In the same essay Macaulay describes and criticizes the practice of the greatest historians from the time of the Greeks to the eighteenth century. The greatest of these, we are told, and the probable inspiration of his own endeavor is Thucydides.<sup>23</sup> With all his obvious admiration for the achievement of Ranke, and his partial imitation of Gibbon, it is the Greek's achievement which is the greatest of all extent history. Sir Charles Firth suggests that his admiration for Thucydides was to dictate his own practice:

Here [in a description of Tacitus' genius for characterization], as in the case of the remarks on Thucydides, Macaulay's admiration for some particular quality in

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 377.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 377.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 377.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, 382-392; and Trevelyan, 1, 416.

the author he estimates reveals his own ideals. The perfect historian must unite the narrative skill of Thucydides with the power of Tacitus to penetrate, to realise, and to depict persons.<sup>24</sup>

Yet with all his characteristic enthusiasm for the Greek historians, Macaulay is not slow to point out the various deficiencies of each. Interest must be maintained by forceful narrative but not by extended fictions as in Herodotus,<sup>25</sup> who had a wonderful gift for telling a story filled with "description and dialogue,"<sup>26</sup> but who had "the faults of a simple and imaginative mind."<sup>27</sup> Macaulay was thus always persistent in his demands for the truth of history.<sup>28</sup> For Macaulay it was Thucydides who represented the beau idéal of all historical writing because in his work there was not only a superb strength of narration but also an ample and disciplined control of material.<sup>29</sup>

But Thucydides himself could not escape the occupational hazard of historical writing:

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<sup>24</sup>A Commentary on Macaulay's History of England, 22.

<sup>25</sup>"History," 377.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 377.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 379.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 389.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 385.

No picture, then, and no history, can present us with the whole truth: but those are the best pictures and the best histories which exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effects of the whole. He who is deficient in the art of selection may, by showing nothing but the truth, produce all the effects of the grossest falsehood.<sup>30</sup>

In the above we have the key to all of Macaulay's prose; not only his History is modeled on this passage but also the Essays. From his practice we can easily see that his defense of his portrait of Boswell, or James II, of Penn, or of Bacon would be that the truths of the parts must give the truth of the whole. Some will object to the "one-sided" manner of such a technique. The inability of Macaulay to portray the various shades of character has been frequently noted. But in so far as he did not think the Essays worth a second perusal the effect of his impression of Boswell or Addison must be made after one reading, and therefore the truth of Boswell's proverbial foolishness must be made to approximate the truth of the whole of his character. With the History the case is directly reversed: he hoped<sup>31</sup> that the work would be read in the year 2000, or even 3000. He therefore wrote in the same elevated style, and his description of characters will always seem exaggerated; but the best histories are those

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 387.

<sup>31</sup>Trevelyan, 11, 53.

"which exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effects of the whole."<sup>32</sup> This is the reasoning behind such a technique; every reader must ultimately decide for himself whether it can be accepted.

Macaulay's use of the analogy between portrait painting and the writing of history gives additional insight into the "idea" which prompted his own technique. He conceived of history as "the rarest of intellectual distinctions" not only because the materials must be gathered via the scientific method, but also because the materials thus gathered must be expressed in an artistic manner. He conceived of history as one of the imitative arts. Its object of course was truth but not the truth of science but of poetry.<sup>33</sup> Such a technique may on first sight seem antithetical to the aspirations and technique of the German school, of Ranke and his disciples; but it is far less opposed to the technique of Bury than most, including Bury, have supposed. Both conceived of history as a discipline, not only to the student but especially to the historian.<sup>34</sup> And like Macaulay, Bury went to great

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<sup>32</sup>Supra, n. 30.

<sup>33</sup>"History," 386.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. John Bury, "The Science of History," (Cambridge, 1903), passim.

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lengths in his career as a lecturer to stress the didactic value of historical study; Bury wrote that history contains

examples and warnings for statesmen; and it was generally regarded in Greece and at Rome as a storehouse of concrete instances to illustrate political and ethical maxims. Cicero called history in this sense magistra vitae, and Dionysius<sup>35</sup> designated it "Philosophy by examples."

Thus Bury, an ardent exponent of history as science, implicitly agrees with the theory and practice of Macaulay. In the History of England it is well known that Macaulay used events and characters, via the arts of selection, as important elements in a nineteenth century Mirror for Magistrates. Many have complained that there is entirely too much of this didacticism in the prose of Macaulay, and that his use of it is generally unfair to the Tory cause. What is of critical importance here is that the English school of scientific historians is not fundamentally different from the so-called "romantic" theory and practice. Every precept of Bury's speech had been said earlier by Macaulay. If it is true that Bury paid little or no formal attention to the art of narration, as did Macaulay, he gave attention to and took his examples of great historians from the same sources as Macaulay: the Greeks and the Latins.

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 15-16.

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Macaulay reasoned that the narrative art of Thucydides eclipsed every other possible fault, but it is interesting to note in a comparison of the two schools of history the different attitudes of each representative towards the Greeks. We have seen that Macaulay censured Herodotus for his artistic fiction.<sup>36</sup> In the case of Thucydides a similar fault is noted, but it is the narrative art of Thucydides which rescues his reputation:

In spite of this great fault, it must be allowed that Thucydides has surpassed all his rivals in the art of historical narration, in the art of producing an effect on the imagination, by skillful selection and disposition, without indulging in the license of invention.<sup>37</sup>

Bury found in Thucydides a model of moral prose, and in general he seems inclined to forgive an historian anything, if the moral value of instruction is sufficiently stressed by the historian.<sup>38</sup> Macaulay, on the other hand, was inclined to censure Xenophone and Livy for their tendency to moralize.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>"History," 380-384.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 389.

<sup>38</sup>Cf. "The Science of History," 16-17.

<sup>39</sup>"History," 394.

It may seem strange to hear of Macaulay's complaint of the practice of modern historians, particularly of the English, up to his own time. Hume is an "accomplished advocate."<sup>40</sup> Both Gibbon and Mitford are censured for ignoring studies and arguments which oppose their own themes, for their tendency to scrutinize with the utmost severity "the arguments of the opponents," "what cannot be denied is extenuated, or passed by without notice...."<sup>41</sup> Macaulay adds:

The practice of distorting narrative into a conformity with theory is a vice not so unfavorable as at first sight it may appear to the interests of political science. ...This is at present the state of history. The poet laureate appears for the Church of England, Lingard for the Church of Rome.<sup>42</sup>

Macaulay was, then, very plainly opposed to history with a thesis. In this he is in precise accord with the attempt of Bury to arm historical scholars with a "disinterested" approach in their research.

Macaulay made another contribution in historical theory which is perhaps his greatest, in practice as well as in theory. As part of his censure of current practices in

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 420.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 420.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 422.

modern historians was his charge that their tendency in re-searching materials had been to show a lofty disdain for "the writers of memoirs."<sup>43</sup> With such a conscious neglect of these materials and similar sources there had been an obvious decline in the art of narration. Not only were the modern historians inclined to be tendentious, but they were equally disposed towards being dull. The perfect historian, Macaulay wrote, must be able to see and describe society on every level:

He must mingle in the crowds of the exchange and the coffeehouse. He must obtain admittance to the convivial table and domestic hearth. He must bear with vulgar expressions. He must not shrink from exploring even the retreats of misery....The perfect historian is he in whose works the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature. He relates no fact, he attributes no expression to his characters, which is not authenticated by sufficient testimony. But, by judicious selection, rejection, and arrangement, he gives to truth those attractions which have been usurped by fiction.<sup>44</sup>

This is the ideal of Macaulay's practice, not only in the History but in the Essays as well--to exhibit the character and spirit of the age in miniature; it is difficult to think of another author in English literature who was more successful in this attempt. The attraction of history for Macaulay was then not so much for its appeal to science and reason, but

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 423.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 427-8.

for its imaginative appeal, the appeal of (say) Sir Walter Scott, who is perhaps as much an inspiration and motivation to Macaulay, as is Thucydides. Yet he is generally in accord with Bury, and the appeal to the reason and the didactic element of History is never forgotten:

The instruction derived from history thus written would be of a vivid and practical character. It would be received by the imagination as well as by the reason. It would be not merely traced on the mind, but branded into it. Many truths, too, would be learned, which can be learned in no other manner.<sup>45</sup>

The discipline of history and historical writing, Macaulay asserted, was in the selection, rejection, and emphasis. The parts must be indicative of the whole. In narration "a due subordination is observed; some transactions are prominent; others retire."<sup>46</sup> The historian cannot, therefore, present his material without a moulding, nearly "esemplastic," force. Macaulay stated that a history could be written in which "every particular incident may be true may on the whole be false."<sup>47</sup> Therefore the ideal expressed in "let the facts speak for themselves" is of little use in the craft and art of history. Macaulay then was one of the

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 431.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 428.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 425.

greatest creative and original theorists in the history of historical writing. The charge that he was superficial, once more, simply does not stand up under investigation.

It may be useful to remark on his success or failure as an historian. The charge that the History is too much inclined to favor Whig measures of reform is not easily disputed. It is likely that much of this criticism is derived from the knowledge that he was an active contributor to the Edinburgh Review, and an eminently successful politician of Whig principles. Macaulay thus is frequently classified as the most brilliant of "Whig-historians."<sup>48</sup> As we have seen from his theory, Macaulay would have eschewed such a title. But such a title has persisted; even a scholar like Gooch has written:

If Hallam was the first authoritative exponent of Whig historical philosophy, Macaulay was its most popular and most eloquent interpreter. It needed some effort to master the three volumes of the Constitutional History, in which comment clogs the narrative, and laws and theories of government overshadow men and women; but everyone could read Macaulay, and those who shirked the stout volumes of the History could distill his views from a dozen sparkling essays. Together they shaped the opinion of the world till Ranke

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<sup>48</sup>Both Gooch and H. A. L. Fisher use this classification. Cf. Fisher, "The Whig Historians," Proceedings of the Brit. Acad., XIV (1928).

and Gardiner lifted the seventeenth century above the strife of Whig and Tory.<sup>49</sup>

We have seen earlier that Macaulay in theory was severely opposed to a "Whig," or "Tory," or "Catholic" version of history; and if the remarks of Gooch are authoritative, it is perhaps useless to inquire further. For the criticism that he is a partisan, even from Tory critics, cannot be reconciled with an evaluation which claims for him the highest honors. The authority on both sides of the argument is strong. The negative school has been strengthened not only by the development of the so-called "scientific" historians. If we look at the critics of Macaulay who admire his achievement in the narrative element as well as the research element, we find a number of great scholars working in the same area as Lord Macaulay. Among these can be included Abbott,<sup>50</sup> Plumb,<sup>51</sup> and Acton.<sup>52</sup> The History itself can be consulted for its scientific and neutral aspects, as well as for its frequent criticism of famous Whigs.

The surest guide to the ideals of Macaulay as historian is his essay. It has been frequently noted in this

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<sup>49</sup>Gooch, 276.

<sup>50</sup>Wilbur C. Abbott, "Macaulay and the New History," Yale Review, XVIII (1929).

<sup>51</sup>J. H. Plumb, "Macaulay," UTQ, XIII (1956).

<sup>52</sup>Cf. ch. VI of this study; also Lord Acton: A Study in Conscience and Politics, Himmelfarb, (University of Chicago Press, 1952, 1963).

chapter that he was severely opposed to history with a thesis; and if Macaulay was not absolutely detached in his approach to the material or in his rendering of it (e.g., the tone), what historian can be put forward as a model? Certainly not Gibbon, not Hume, and not Clarendon. If we examine the practice of his contemporaries, Macaulay will be seen to be among the least venial in this offense.<sup>53</sup> His celebrated prejudices, which Sir Charles Firth so methodically noted, can be partially accounted for by constant reference to his theory. The remarks of Firth can be partly answered. He writes:

Things which are crimes in James II become venial errors in William III....  
 /Macaulay's/ perception of moral defects is much keener in the case of a Tory than in that of a Whig.<sup>54</sup>

There is a distinct element of falsehood in the above, but it serves to illustrate the standard opinion of and approach to Macaulay. This critic goes to a considerable length to give evidence against Macaulay. "Political prejudice," he writes, "exaggeration, and want of real insight," are in obvious abundance throughout the pages of the History.<sup>55</sup> But such a work, disfigured by constant prejudice, cannot begin

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<sup>53</sup>Cf. Gooch, 265-353.

<sup>54</sup>Firth, 261.

<sup>55</sup>Firth, 263.

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to approach the greatness that is frequently claimed for Macaulay. Such an estimation as that of Firth is unduly severe on our historian. He has neglected the scientific and theoretic aspects of Macaulay's History; and he suggests by implication that a better history of the period might be written. Plumb, who has attempted such a history,<sup>56</sup> did not think so.

Abbott suggests another defense of Macaulay. He cites the two views towards historical writing: that of Lord Bacon which reserves judgment for the liberty and faculty of each man; and that of Napoleon which claimed that the historian is a judge, the organ of posterity. Abbott concludes:

It is the task of the historian to make the past alive; to find truth at the bottom of a thousand wells of documents, to bring her to the surface, and to clothe her properly.<sup>57</sup>

Macaulay, as we have seen, would be in accord with such a theme. He has suggested, however, that truth is not so easily defined and circumscribed:

Diversity, it is said, implies error: truth is one, and admits of no degrees. We answer, that this principle holds good only in abstract reasonings. When we talk of the truth of imitation in the fine arts, we mean an imperfect

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<sup>56</sup>History of England in the Eighteenth Century, (Penguin ed.; London, 1950).

<sup>57</sup>"Macaulay and the New History," Yale Review, XVIII (1929), 548.

and a graduated truth....Perfect and absolutely true [history] 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.<sup>58</sup>

The above is of course a long paraphrase of Macaulay's thesis that the historian must exhibit the truth of the parts so that they reflect the truth of the whole. In dealing with characters (historical and literary) or the movements and progress or decline of abstract ideas, such a technique is not always the most successful. His treatment of James II or William III has been frequently criticized as lacking in gradation and shade. Such a charge, as we have seen, can be answered in light of the above. Macaulay may well have been given to undue compression and simplification, but the scholarship which he used to perform these operations was exceedingly thorough.

Several of the more important chapters of Firth's study on Macaulay give close attention to Macaulay's use of sources. H. A. L. Fisher is even more solicitous to point out the extended and energetic method used by Macaulay in culling out his sources.<sup>59</sup> He concludes:

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<sup>58</sup>"History," 386-87.

<sup>59</sup>"The Whig Historians," Proceedings of the British Academy, XIV (1928), 312-315.

If Macaulay was a strong party man, he was free from the worst defects of the partisan spirit. His manly good nature and strong Scottish common sense saved him from the infirmities of the political sectary. He was too great a patriot, too much alive to the splendours of our national inheritance to put the interests of a party before the welfare of a nation. He happened, however, to believe with all the strength of his nature that the Whig revolution of 1688 had been the main source of the happy progress of his country and of its widespread influence throughout the world.<sup>60</sup>

Now the attack on Macaulay has seldom concerned itself with the factual data which he presents. It has been concerned with two aspects of his history: his treatment of various individuals in the History both Whig and Tory and his analysis of movements in the discussed period, particularly one--the growth of England through the spread of civil liberties and increased power of Parliament. Now it is extremely important to note that scholars, even Tory scholars, have not contested this development, and more important--that it was for the most part the result of Whig measures of reform.

Some attention has already been given to the growth of scholars who have come forward in defense of Pitt, Marlborough, and James II (among others).<sup>61</sup> Their success is not

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 315.

<sup>61</sup>Cf. John Rountree, An Inquiry into the Truthfulness of Lord Macaulay's Portraiture of George Fox, (London, 1861); Hugh Miller, Macaulay on Penn, (Boston, 1851); Paget, The New Examen, (Edinburgh, 1861); William Aytoun, Macaulay on Scotland, (Edinburgh, 1861).

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easily measured; but it is important to note that none have come forward to contest his general criticism of the age or his praise of the Whig reform measures and the benefits derived from such measures. The scholarship of Macaulay is remarkably sound.

The narrative genius of Macaulay has never been denied. His most severe critic, John Croker Wilson, admitted that his gift of historical narration was captivating.<sup>62</sup> The wealth of nearly violent Tory criticism which greeted the publication of each volume always paid tribute to this profound grasp in Macaulay of the art of history:

No history, we suppose, ever written or published pretending to be a history, and not a romance or a poem, has ever reached or approached the extent of popularity attained by Mr. Macaulay.... It is not so feeble an influence as this which constrains all the world, the gay and the anxious, the learned and the unlearned, to devour the chronicles of the least agreeable period of English history more eagerly than ever a novel was devoured. ...Everybody reads--everybody admires--but nobody believes....Yet on this ground, dull, sombre, and unattractive, with these men, selfish, scheming, and unscrupulous, Mr. Macaulay has wrought the greatest literary triumph of his time.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Cf. Trevelyan, 175.

<sup>63</sup>Blackwoods' Magazine, 11 (1856), 258-259.

If we recall the insistence of Macaulay upon the need (in truly great history) of skillful narration, we can begin to appreciate his greatness as an historian. The above criticism has a distinct element of truth in it and serves as an introduction to the more penetrating remarks of Bagehot:

The style of Macaulay is very different.... It is a diorama of political pictures. Of its effectiveness there can be no doubt; its agreeableness no one who has just been reading it is likely to deny. Yet it has a defect....It is too omniscient. Everything is too plain. All is clear; nothing is doubtful....The only thing which detracts from the pleasure of reading these volumes, is the doubt whether they should have been written. Should not these great powers be reserved for great periods? Is this abounding, picturesque style suited for contentious history? Are small men to be so largely described? Should not admirable delineation be kept for admirable people?...You do not want Raphael to paint sign-posts....It is a pity to spend such powers on such events.<sup>64</sup>

Thus Bagehot admitted himself to have fallen under "the drowsy spell of narrative."<sup>65</sup> His criticism, with its important qualifications, is ample testimony to the genius of Macaulay. For many the eighteenth century is one of the dullest in human history; the Victorians seemed inclined to regard it as

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<sup>64</sup>Literary Studies, ed. cit., 40-43.

<sup>65</sup>G. M. Trevelyan, Clivo: A Muse, (2nd.; New York: Longman's, Green, & Co., 1913), 15.

a "barren century." Our gratitude, therefore, must be magnified towards one who has made the period so interesting.

The criticism of the above is but a preface to the criticism of the scientific historians. Many of the later historians have come to question whether such a style, or any style at all, was necessary for great history. Bury, it was noted, paid little attention to this aspect of the requirements of history.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, Professor Trevelyan maintains that literary or romantic history has claims which are quite as strong as those of scientific history. He argues that history should not and cannot be merely an accumulation of factual data. It must represent an integration and interpretation of these facts "in their full emotional and intellectual value to a wide public by the difficult art of literature."<sup>67</sup> Trevelyan maintains with Macaulay before him that the view of history as a science, e.g., an exact causal relationship between fact and effect, is absurd.<sup>68</sup> He is not at war with Professor Bury's position which maintains that history is a great discipline, the result of searching inquiry, the methods of which may be approximated

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<sup>66</sup>"The Science of History," (1903), passim.

<sup>67</sup>Trevelyan, 5.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 6.

to those of science. But Trevelyan was insistent upon the deductive truths of the imagination (after thorough investigation).

Macaulay was not of the German school. His theory and practice are not, however, opposed to those of Bury. I have shown that the scholarship of Macaulay was in most cases sound and that his "verdicts" in most cases were just. I have shown that even the negative critics of Macaulay were generally entranced at the loftiness of his style and his ability to sustain this loftiness over a comparatively barren period of history. Macaulay's History is one of the great prose masterpieces of English literature. Few historians have been able to duplicate his capacity to reproduce the emotional and intellectual value of past ages via the "difficult art of literature."

As in every other instance, this merit of reproducing an "intellectual and emotional value" has brought with it severe criticism. The frequently offered charge against Macaulay is "jingoism," and its source is in this capacity of Macaulay to render in meaningful language the aspirations and achievements of several generations. Macaulay was always on the side of what is generally described as progress. His enthusiasm for the strides of industry was great, but

his praise of civil reform and the progressive acquisition of civil liberties was demonstrably greater. Most of these advances were identified with Whig policy. Yet the Tory measures against slavery were also applauded by Macaulay. He was not in a higher sense an historian of ideas, but the History is a study in the application in concrete terms of an ideal and ideas to the "proper study of mankind."

Macaulay stated, with the precedent of Milton before him, that the greatest measure of a nation's achievement was the quality of its liberty. His praise of industry had puritan characteristics in its make-up, but Macaulay felt that the greatest single advantage of a wealthy nation was its liberty. From this were developed the refinements of taste and literature, the progress of criticism and philosophy, as well as the other refinements of an enlightened society. He wrote in 1847:

Now if ever, we ought to be able to appreciate the whole importance of the stand which was made by our forefathers against the House of Stuart. All around us the world in convulsed with the agonies of great nations. It is because we had a preserving revolution in the seventeenth century that we have not had a destroying revolution in the nineteenth. It is because we had freedom in the midst of servitude that we have order in the midst of anarchy.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>History, (6 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1881), IV, 4.

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Hence the enthusiasm of Macaulay for the Victorian moment and the history which produced that moment. The remarks of the above are a fairly broad statement of what is intended in the next chapter as "Progress."

CHAPTER FOUR

MACAULAY AND THE IDEA OF PROGRESS

MACAULAY AND THE IDEA OF PROGRESS

Not in vain the distance beacons.  
Forward, forward let us range,  
Let the great world spin for ever  
down the ringing grooves of change.  
Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep  
into the younger day;  
Better fifty years of Europe than a  
cycle in Cathay.  
(Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Locksley Hall")

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Macaulay's acceptance and use of the idea of Progress is well known, and this acceptance has certainly been instrumental in the decline of his reputation as a thinker and as a writer. It is true that he uses this theme of progress in many of his essays for the Edinburgh Review and in most of the History. By "progress" Macaulay meant anything which tended to relieve the human condition. The parliamentary career of Macaulay is certainly ample testimony to his belief in the role of the state in improving the lot of man. In his History this theme or idea of Progress is continuously in evidence, and it is from the study of history that Macaulay derived his own particular version of this idea. For the idea of Progress is essentially an idea of history. George Hildebrand has written:

The idea of progress is above all a  
conception of history, an organizing

principle for the interpretation and comprehension of the incredibly complicated record of human experience. Progress, as a conception of history, suggests that there is a determinate order in the succession of events in time, that is, a pattern....The notion of progress implies that there is a continuity in human experience.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter I wish to show that Macaulay's conception of this progress was essentially just and not an instance of his bourgeois complacency or shallowness of thought. It is true that the modern world has largely rejected this idea, and even in his own day many of the more notable figures had questioned its conclusions. Matthew Arnold is of course noted for his rejection of the scientific advances of the nineteenth century, but even in his own work we can trace the influence of the idea of Progress and its most dangerous consequence--the overthrow of Faith by Science. Ruskin and Carlyle reflect this problem as well, and we may wonder at the obvious complacency of Macaulay in the face of this fairly serious problem in European thought. It will be seen that Macaulay was neither smug nor shallow in his confidence. Rather, of all the Victorian writers only Newman and he were able to offer a solution to the rival claims of Theology and the natural sciences. I wish ultimately to shift the blame

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<sup>1</sup>F. H. Teggert, The Idea of Progress: A Collection of Readings, (Berkeley, California, 1952), 3.

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which has fallen on Macaulay for his praise of science and wonderful faith in the future of humanity to others who are more largely responsible for the dilemma of modern man.

Since this idea of Progress has fallen into such a general disgrace, it may be useful to point out some of its more illustrious proponents in English and continental writers. It may be even more useful to trace the fairly brilliant history of this idea. For the idea of Progress was the dominating theme of British thought in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> By implication, then, we can attempt to remove much of the stigma that has resulted in Macaulay's frequent use of this theme.

The origin and growth of this idea are among the most interesting in the history of ideas. It has been argued by at least one scholar that this idea and its general promulgation is a fairly recent development in the history of mankind. John Bury states that the idea of Progress was completely foreign to Greek philosophical thought:

Indeed, it might be said that in the mentality of the ancient Greeks there was a strain which would have rendered them indisposed to take such an idea

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<sup>2</sup>See the four volumes of Merz for confirmation of this idea; see also Brun's Nineteenth Century European Civilization, (Oxford, 1961).

seriously, if it had been propounded. No period of their history could be described as an age of optimism.... We can see now how it was that speculative Greek minds never hit on the idea of Progress. In the first place, their limited historical experience did not easily suggest such a synthesis; and in the second place, the axioms of their thought, their suspiciousness of change...suggested a view of the world which was the very antithesis of progressive development.<sup>3</sup>

Macaulay may have had a similar intent when he criticized the then current practice of eulogizing the Greek civilization, saying that some historians wrote "as if we had learned nothing new since the Greeks."<sup>4</sup> Macaulay would have agreed with Bury's dating of the growth and spread of the idea during the period of the Renaissance and Reformation:

The civilised countries of Europe spent about three hundred years in passing from the mental atmosphere of the Middle Ages into the mental atmosphere of the modern world. These centuries were one of the conspicuously progressive periods in history, but the conditions were not favourable to the appearance of an idea of Progress, though the intellectual milieu was being prepared in which that idea could be born.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The Idea of Progress, (New York: Dover, 1955), 18.

<sup>4</sup>"History," 427.

<sup>5</sup>Bury, 29.

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In his essay "Ranke's History of the Popes," Macaulay expresses the same theme and dating of the idea:

We see that during the last two hundred and fifty years the human mind has been in the highest degree active; that it has made great advances in every branch of natural philosophy; that it has produced innumerable inventions tending to promote the convenience of life; that medicine, surgery, chemistry, engineering, have been very greatly improved, that government, police, and law have been improved, though not so great an extent as the physical sciences.<sup>6</sup>

Yet it is true that Macaulay does not give his reader a suitable definition of the idea. We can, however, see from the above that he considered not only the empirical sciences as tending towards constant improvement, but the sciences of law and government as well. This was his version of political liberalism, and it is well to remember the distinction between this liberalism (political) and the liberalism described by Newman as the anti-dogmatic principle.<sup>7</sup> It will be seen that even Matthew Arnold failed to make this distinction, and that the value of his social criticism is accordingly less. The definition of Bury is the most useful for our purposes:

The idea of human Progress then is a theory which involves a synthesis of the past and a prophecy of the future. It is based on

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<sup>6</sup>Works, 11, 466.

<sup>7</sup>Apologia Pro Vita Sua, ed. A. Dwight Culler, (Boston: Riverside Press, 1956), 269-278.

an interpretation of history which regards men as slowly advancing...in a definite and desirable direction, and infers that this progress will continue indefinitely.<sup>8</sup>

To a modern the idea of Progress may mean nothing more than the spread of the "new urban-mechanical civilization," "more cinemas" and "motor cars for all,"<sup>9</sup> but historians of the idea, including Dawson, have usually been fairly lofty in their celebration of the ends of the idea of Progress. Moreover, whatever the idea may mean to the modern, its origins are sufficiently philosophic to merit the attentions of Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold. The idea of Progress involves three principles: a belief that history follows an orderly and continuous course, and that the course is the effect of a "regularly operating casual law,"<sup>10</sup> and that this course of change has brought and will continue to bring renewed benefits to mankind. The pragmatic characteristics of such an attitude towards history are obvious. Nevertheless, the idea is not part of the philistine complacency with which it is usually associated.

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<sup>8</sup>Bury, 5.

<sup>9</sup>Dawson, Progress and Religion, (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 15.

<sup>10</sup>Teggert, 4.

It may seem hardly necessary to illustrate Macaulay's use of this definition in his own History, for the idea of Progress does not change throughout the prose of Macaulay:

...the general effect of this chequered narrative will be to excite thankfulness in all religious minds, and hope in the breasts of all patriots. For the history of our country during the last hundred and sixty years is eminently the history of physical, of moral, and of intellectual improvement.<sup>11</sup>

His use of a similar theme occurs in most of the other essays. It is fair to note that while Macaulay and Bury are in agreement on the problem of dating the entrance and increased importance of this idea in European thought, their attitudes towards the idea were not alike. Bury was the more cautious; and it cannot be shown from his work that he believed in the idea of Progress. We have seen that Macaulay accepted the idea with only a few significant qualifications.

Macaulay was not what we consider as an idealist. This may seem especially strange when we consider his historical position: a contemporary of Carlyle, Ruskin, and (very nearly) Arnold. This strangeness is intensified when we consider that moral advancement was as much a part of the idea of Progress as scientific.<sup>12</sup> Yet Macaulay would have none of it.

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<sup>11</sup>Works, V, 1.

<sup>12</sup>See Bury, 235-38.

He was a moral man himself, and one of the most frequent criticisms of his prose is that it is prudish, but we cannot trace in his works any theme which would give evidence of ethical or moral idealism. This distinction between moral progress and scientific progress takes on additional significance when we consider the later careers of the above three, and their legacy to modern man. It was far more the burst of Arnold's idealism than of Macaulay which has given the twentieth century this attitude of disillusionment. The decline of Baconian optimism is of far less significance to modern philosophy than the overthrow of that ethical idealism, so characteristic of nineteenth century humanism.<sup>13</sup>

It is necessary to remark, however, that Dawson, like Lord Macaulay, treats the idea of Progress as an ontological reality. Unlike the Victorian, Dawson traces the idea back to its Christian beginnings; and he considers historic Christianity in its entirety as the germinal source of this theme:

...it is in historic Christianity, far more than in any purely rational creed, that the Religion of Progress finds its satisfaction. For here we have not an

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<sup>13</sup>Cf. T. E. Hulme, Speculations, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Co., 1928), esp. ch 1; Hulme fails, however, to distinguish between "kinds" of continuity.

abstract intellectualized progress, but the emergence of new spiritual values in a concrete historical sense. A new kind of life has inserted itself into the cosmic process at a particular point in time under definite historical circumstances and has become the principal of a new order of spiritual progress. The creative process which has reached its end in man starts off again from man in a second ascent, the possibilities of which are as yet unrealized, and which are to be grasped not by Reason, which lives on the systematization of the past, but by Faith, which is the promise of the future.<sup>14</sup>

It is obvious, then, that he accepts the essential verity of the idea: man has and will continue to make progress. Bury neither accepts nor rejects the truth of the idea of Progress; he merely states its history. Lord Macaulay's works, taking them as a whole, present a curious blend between Dawson and Bury. For while he accepted the empirical and ontological reality of the idea, he dated the spread of the idea and its "fruits" from the period of the Reformation.

The weight of authority seems to favor the view of Macaulay and Bury. The work of Professors Tawney and Weber, as well as many others working in their tradition, confirms this theme of Macaulay; and the sanction of Troeltsch rests upon the whole of it. This general thesis is that one of the

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<sup>14</sup>Dawson, 193.

results of the Reformation was to revise the idea of history and the idea of man's role on earth. If we recall the external characteristics of the "chosen," the thesis of Weber, Tawney, and Troeltsch is made more obvious. The force of Protestantism was, on the whole, one of Progress; it "has resulted in economic expansion...social developments, science and art."<sup>15</sup> In the nineteenth century this theme of Protestantism and Progress was illustrated in the leading countries of Europe. Those which were Protestant were well in front (on every level) of those which were not.<sup>16</sup> Macaulay justly remarked on this phenomenon in many of his essays, notably "Von Ranke" and "Charles V."

This theme of economic and scientific progress became thematic in eighteenth century philosophy in England. The ideals of Bacon had born fruit in Newton. Locke's version of the negative influence of government was enforced by the Wealth of Nations, and these views of the function of government and economists in promoting the wealth for the "civilisation and happiness of mankind"<sup>17</sup> were unfortunately

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<sup>15</sup>Troeltsch, 155.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. G. Brun, 74-195.

<sup>17</sup>Bury, 221.

adopted by the Utilitarians. From an historical viewpoint, however, we can see that nineteenth century enthusiasm for progress is not of necessity utilitarianism. History was employed to confirm this trend in philosophic thought. The works of Priestley uses this theme:

All knowledge will be subdivided and extended; and knowledge, as Lord Bacon observes, being power, the human powers will, in fact, be increased; nature, including both its materials, and its laws, will be more at our command; men will make their situation in this world abundantly more easy and comfortable; they will probably prolong their existence in it, and will grow daily more happy each in himself, and more able (and, I believe, more disposed) to communicate happiness to others. Thus, whatever was the beginning of this world, the end will be glorious and paradisaical, beyond what our imagination can now conceive.<sup>18</sup>

This concept of man's ultimate victory over his environment made itself felt in other areas of eighteenth century thought. It became the descriptive element in the liberal political thought of Macaulay's time, but many of its conclusions had been tried and accepted before the Victorian age. Locke, Russell, and Sidney accepted and promulgated in varying degrees the idea of Progress.<sup>19</sup> Adam Smith both as moral

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<sup>18</sup>Essay on Government, (1768), 6.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, (Boston: Beacon, 1961), 194-96.

philosopher and economist pointed out similar conclusions to this idea of Progress.<sup>20</sup> Lois Whitney wrote of Edmund Burke:

Indubitably the idea of progress embodies Burke's political and moral philosophy, and if he did not preach the doctrine as noisily as some of his contemporaries it was only because he was too occupied with refuting their notion of progress and methods which they were advocating for attaining it.<sup>21</sup>

On the continent the support for a philosophic view of the idea of Progress is even stronger. Abbe de Sainte Pierre, Condorcet, Turgot, the Encyclopedists in France supported with modifications the idea of Progress. In Germany Fichte, Lessing, Leibnitz, Herder, Schiller, and Kant discussed this theme with individual modifications.<sup>22</sup> Even with these modifications, the enthusiasm for the ideal was uniform in European thought of the later eighteenth century.

Thus when we come to the nineteenth century, particularly the period after 1825, we may expect to find ample evidence of this idea in the popular and serious prose of

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<sup>20</sup>The best individual study on this is a doctoral dissertation by George B. Strong, Adam Smith and the Eighteenth Century Concept of Social Progress, (St. Louis: Eden Co., 1932).

<sup>21</sup>Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, (John Hopkins Press, 1934), 205.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Teggert's Readings for individual chapters on each of these figures; also Bury, passim.

of the period. Hence it is that we find in Macaulay's works a continual reiteration of this theme of progress. As I have said, Macaulay's use of the term meant all measure of reform, legislative, as well as scientific. But there was a distinction, which Bury has described, in these variations of the idea of Progress which Macaulay and his contemporaries used; and this distinction becomes a characteristic "division" in nineteenth century thought; Bury writes:

Theories of Progress in the eighteenth century are thus differentiating into two distinct types, corresponding to two radically opposed political theories and appealing to two antagonistic temperaments. The one type is that of constructive idealists and socialists.... The development of man is a closed system; its term is known and is within reach. The other type is that of those who, surveying the gradual ascent of man, believe that by the same interplay of forces which conducted him so far and by a further development of the liberty which he has fought to win, he will move slowly towards conditions of increasing harmony and happiness. Here the development is indefinite; its term is unknown, and lies in the remote future. Individual liberty is the motive force and the corresponding political theory is liberalism.<sup>23</sup>

Needless to say perhaps, Macaulay belonged to this second class. Bury is quite accurate in describing the division

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<sup>23</sup>Bury, 236-7.

and resultant antagonism. This antagonism would extend to the following century, and is the source of much of the criticism, political in character, of Macaulay, which has continued to our time. As a major part of his idea and ideal of progress, Macaulay constantly urged the virtues of a practical, temporizing, expediential politics, a politics that would find freedom in a judicious mixture of authority, tradition and experience. Many who know the political career of Lord Macaulay, Gladstone and Lord Acton for example, are inclined to look upon Macaulay as one of the greatest figures in the Victorian age. It can be easily observed that the modern world of England and America has a greater debt to Macaulay than almost any other important figure of the time. One of Lord Acton's biographers described his proposed History of Liberty as the "greatest book that was never written,"<sup>24</sup> and it is eminently just to refer to the prose of Macaulay (Speeches, Essays, and History) as the greatest monument to Liberty ever written.

In an earlier chapter it was pointed out that the time of Macaulay's major writings (1825-1860) was one of Protestant England's greatest. Qualifications were to be made of course, but the period has few rivals in the annals

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<sup>24</sup>Gertrude Himmelfarb, Lord Acton, (Chicago, 1962), 2.

of English history. Optimism was the key to the future. It was reasoned that the reform measures of the Victorian age were indicative (from one point of view) of the great future that was England's. The role of Macaulay and of the Edinburgh Review was a major factor in introducing these measures which are to be identified in the milieu of the Victorian Whig or liberal as "progress." Once more this is not an instance of Victorian jingoism; nor is it a reiteration of Utilitarian theory of government and ethics; it was the historical fulfillment of expectations of earlier centuries. The Victorian age was, much more than it was willing to admit, largely dependent on the achievements of earlier periods. Macaulay was almost alone in his estimation of the achievements of the preceding century:

Seeing these things, seeing that, by the confession of the most obstinate enemies of innovation, our race has hitherto been almost constantly advancing in knowledge, and not seeing any reason to believe that, precisely at the point of time at which we came into the world, a change took place in the faculties of the human mind, or in the mode of discovering truth, we are reformers: we are on the side of progress. From the great advances which European society has made, during the last four centuries, in every species of knowledge, we infer, not that there is no more room for improvement, but that, in every science which deserves the name, immense improvements may be confidently expected.

But the very considerations which lead us to look forward with sanguine hope to the future prevent us from looking back with contempt on the past. We do not flatter ourselves with the notion that we have attained perfection, and that no more truth remains to be found. We believe that we are wiser than our ancestors. We believe, also, that our posterity will be wiser than we. It would be gross...to talk of us with contempt, merely because they may have surpassed us....<sup>25</sup>

Throughout his work, Macaulay made continual references to the achievements of the earlier century. Milton and Burke were his particular heroes, and with all his ill-concealed rejoicings in the Victorian moment, he was never slow to recognize its debt to these figures. If we consider his prose from this point of view, we are in a better position to appreciate his qualities of mind, or what Lovejoy refers to as "unconscious mental habits."<sup>26</sup> And it may be said that the idea of Progress represented the conscious or unconscious mental habits of a whole century. It is a puzzling anomaly to consider that only Newman and Macaulay seemed to have considered the various achievements worth consideration (apart from the positivists and the Utilitarians), and Newman has written:

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<sup>25</sup>Works, 11, 97-98.

<sup>26</sup>The Great Chain of Being, 7.

Almost day by day have we fresh and fresh shoots, and buds, and blossoms, which are to ripen into fruit, on that magical tree of Knowledge which he/Bacon/planted, and to which none of us perhaps, except the very poor, but owes, if not his present life, at least his daily food, his health, and general well-being. He was the divinely provided minister of temporal benefits to all of us so great, that, whatever I am forced to think of him as a man, I have not the heart from mere gratitude, to speak of him severely. And, in spite of the tendencies of his philosophy, which are, as we see at this day, to depreciate, or to trample on Theology, he has himself, in his writings, gone out of his way, as if with a prophetic misgiving of those tendencies, to insist on it as the instrument of that beneficent Father....<sup>27</sup>

We may reason, therefore, that the idea and forms of progress were obvious to others besides Macaulay; but it would be difficult to support such a conjecture from the prose of Carlyle, Arnold, or Ruskin. Newman's remarks are strong and enthusiastic. We might reasonably expect a much stronger phrasing from Macaulay. The climate of opinion in his period eagerly supported this form of the idea of Progress,<sup>28</sup> but once more, this milieu is neither an instance of chauvinism or materialism. The expression of this idea and ideal was frequently literary and philosophical. Macaulay may well have been trying to phrase his own ideals in

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<sup>27</sup>Idea of a University, (London, 1947), 104-5.

<sup>28</sup>Cf. Wallis, Culture and Progress, (New York: McGraw, 1930).

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an uncomplicated language, "...out of the closets, and into the coffee-houses," but other figures, especially after Macaulay, were to take up this theme.

I have tried thus far to show that Macaulay's use and qualification of the idea of Progress were not only plausible but just. The evidence of the achievements during this period gave strong support to this fairly constant thesis of Macaulay. The growth of civil liberties and other far-reaching measures of reform also contributed to the support of this theme. We have seen that the "intellectual pedigree" of the idea was as elevated and continental as the most abstemious critic could desire, and that the future of the idea of Progress in 1860 (as well as the future of England) was sufficiently rosy to justify the most extravagant claims of Macaulay and his peers. It is true that social ills of the most serious nature existed then, as they had existed before, and as they exist now; but it is equally true that Macaulay did as much as any public figure then alive to relieve this blight.

The history of the other half of this idea of Progress is equally interesting, but it is traced with greater difficulty. The advances of science were for many of that time an occasion of despair. It was commonly reasoned that

in the immediate future Science would overthrow Faith. The literary beauties of the Bible were attended to with increasing devotion by men like Ruskin and Arnold, but the material contained therein was taken with diminishing seriousness. The affair of Bishop Colenso, as well as Arnold's reaction to it, is a meaningful instance of this Victorian dilemma, which has since become our own. Why do we find so few traces of this problem in Macaulay? Why did not the career of the mature Macaulay follow that of Arnold, Ruskin, or of Carlyle? And why, with his obvious enthusiasm for all science, did he not follow the path of the Positivists or of Huxley? It is in the works of these men, taken as a whole, that we find the seeds of modern despair.

Macaulay was in middle age when he came to review the magnificent work of Von Ranke. In this work he gives us the clue to his own confidence and optimism which, historically considered, appears nearly abnormal. Macaulay wrote:

We see that during the last two hundred and fifty years the human mind has been in the highest degree active; that it has made great advances in every branch of natural philosophy; that it has produced innumerable inventions tending to promote the convenience of life....We cannot...feel confident that the progress of knowledge will necessarily be fatal to a system which has, to say the least, stood its ground in spite of immense progress made by the human race in knowledge since the days of Queen Elizabeth...with

theology the case is very different. As respects natural religion (Revelation for the present altogether left out of the question), it is not easy to see that a philosopher of the present is more favourably situated than Thales or Simonides....Natural Theology, then, is not progressive science. That knowledge of our origin and of our destiny which we derive from Revelation is indeed of very different clearness and of a very different importance. But neither is Revealed Religion of the nature of a progressive science.<sup>29</sup>

Such a distinction may seem commonplace in our time, but it was a distinction beyond the grasp of many of Macaulay's severest critics. The necessity of such a distinction is not immediately obvious, but its general effect was, as Newman has pointed out,<sup>30</sup> to protect Theology from the encroachments of Science, and to make distinct the two methods of approach. Arnold did not make such a distinction, and from his prose we can deduce his own attitude towards the permanence of Revelation:

I persist in thinking that the prevailing form for the Christianity of the future will be the form of Catholicism; but a Catholicism purged, opening itself to the light and air, having the consciousness of its own poetry, freed from its sacerdotal despotism and freed

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<sup>29</sup>Works, 11, 466-69.

<sup>30</sup>"Christianity and Physical Science" in The Idea of a University, ed. cit., passim.

from its pseudo-scientific apparatus of superannuated dogma. Its form will be retained, as symbolizing with the force and charm of poetry a few cardinal facts and ideas, simple indeed, but indispensable and inexhaustible, and on which our race could lay hold only by naturalizing them.<sup>31</sup>

This progressive attitude towards religion is urged in other of Matthew Arnold's major essays; and this attitude towards the progress of dogma, which Macaulay spurned, is what Newman decried as "liberalism."<sup>32</sup> And it is in this "anti-dogmatic" force that we find the seeds of the Oxford Movement, not in the liberalism of Macaulay, which was only scientific and political in character, and which was to number Lord Acton as well as Newman among its adherents.<sup>33</sup>

Other writers of prominence urged this anti-dogmatic principle. Carlyle, Ruskin, Huxley, Mill, and Morley, among many others were to urge this form of liberalism, and its damaging effect on modern civilization far outweighs any other movement of the period. Indeed, it has been argued that the "fruits" of the political liberalism of the period were of a highly desirable order. The intellectual heirs of Macaulay have proven to be eminently sound. A modern liberal

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<sup>31</sup>"Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism," Works, (15 vols.; Oxford, 1903), X, 316.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Apologia, ed.cit., 197.

<sup>33</sup>Cf. Himmelfarb, 120, et. seq.

has written:

During the last century, European religion has been passing through the great crisis of its history. The Tractarians were the contemporaries not only of Arnold and Hampden and Stanley, but of Strauss and Feuerbach and of Comte and Renan! The real religious issue before the age was not whether High Church or Low Church views should prevail in the Church of England, but whether the Christian religion should preserve its spiritual identity, or whether it should be transformed by the spirit of the age and absorbed into a secularized culture of the modern world.<sup>34</sup>

The position of Macaulay, then, in light of the above, is of a far greater intelligence and meaning than that of Arnold. But Carlyle is not the less guilty, as we see from a letter of Cardinal Newman:

I had hope he [Carlyle] might have come round right, for it was easy to see he was not a believer, but they say that he has settled the wrong way. His view is that Christianity has good in it, or is good as far as it goes, which, when applied to Scripture, is of course a picking and choosing of its contents. Then again you have Arnold's school, such as it is, (I do hope he will be frightened back) giving up the inspiration of the Old Testament, or of all Scripture....<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Christopher Dawson, The Spirit of the Oxford Movement, (London, 1933), 132-133.

<sup>35</sup>A. Dwight Culler, The Imperial Intellect, (New York: Yale University Press, 1958), 244.

Newman, and Macaulay before him,<sup>36</sup> by an appeal to the different methods of knowledge, resolved this apparent conflict of the claims of scholarship and the claims of Faith by showing that no conflict actually existed.<sup>37</sup> Macaulay working through various means, chiefly historical, arrived at the same answer; hence he could rejoice at the various and multiple attainments of his age without being either materialistic (Utilitarian) or "philistine" in his enthusiasm. He could rejoice at the attainments of all science and still preserve his Clapham confidence.

The final charge that rests against Macaulay is equally difficult to describe and to refute. We have seen that the intellectual tradition of Macaulay's liberalism was definitely not of a philistine character; it is less easy to present reasons why he cannot be considered as a Utilitarian or a materialist. He seems to have had a Utilitarian concept of education (though this may be attributed to many others including Milton), and the quest for liberty is usually identified with John Stuart Mill. Moreover, if we recall his praise of Lord Bacon, it will be seen that he rejoiced in Bacon's capacity to draw "fruit" from learning.

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<sup>36</sup>Cf. "Von Ranke," supra, n. 29.

<sup>37</sup>The essay in particular to which I am referring is "Christianity and Physical Science" in which Newman explores the methods employed for the attainment of knowledge.

Finally, there is a tendency of those who see the idea of Progress in its historical perspective to group all the adherents of this idea in one school. G. M. Young has written:

To articulate the creed of progress, to state its evidences and draw out its implications, was the mission of that remarkable group of men variously known as the Utilitarians, or the Philosophic Radicals. In discipleship or reaction no young mind of the thirties could escape their influence.<sup>38</sup>

It is strangely true, however, that in the period Young describes, Macaulay was contesting with some brilliance the position and reasoning of the Utilitarians.<sup>39</sup> In answer to the original study by Macaulay on the Utilitarians the Westminster Review published a series of essays attempting to refute the position of Macaulay. The controversy extended over several issues; and it is obvious that however we may think of Macaulay as a Utilitarian, John Stuart Mill and his father did not consider him to be of their party:

At this juncture appeared in the Edinburgh Review, Macaulay's famous attack on my father's Essay on Government. This gave me much to think about. I say that Macaulay's conception of the logic of politics was erroneous; that he stood up for the empirical mode of treating political phenomena, against the philosophical.... But I could not help feeling, that though

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<sup>38</sup>G. M. Young, Victorian England, (Oxford, 1961), 8.

<sup>39</sup>See Works, 1, 450-560.

the tone was unbecoming (an error for which the writer, at a later period, made the most ample and honourable amends), there was truth in several of his strictures on my father's treatment of the subject; that my father's premises were really too narrow, and included but a small number of general truths, on which, in politics, the important consequences depend...I was not at all satisfied with the mode in which my father met the criticisms of Macaulay.<sup>40</sup>

Yet the description of Macaulay's (and Burke's) theory of empirical politics is close to the truth, and both of these figures were strongly against philosophies, especially theoretic philosophies, of government.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from Jeffrey, the natural influence of the Claphams, and the influence of Burke, there is one other great figure in English literature and history that was to have a dominant influence on the political and ethical thought of Lord Macaulay. This was "that grand whig" Milton.<sup>42</sup> We can begin to understand the heated manner of Macaulay's famous essay "Milton" (1825) only after we have investigated

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<sup>40</sup>John Stuart Mill, Autobiography, (New York: Collier Press, 1903), 103-104.

<sup>41</sup>Cf. E. J. Caravan, The Political Reason of Edmund Burke, (Duke University Press, 1962).

<sup>42</sup>G. G. Sensabaugh, That Grand Whig Milton, (Columbia University Press, 1952) treats this theme in great detail, and he explains the weight and horror of the tradition that was instigated by the Tories.

the intellectual relationship of the pair. Both were enthusiasts of liberty. Macaulay addressed the poet as "the great martyr of English liberty," and followed his political thought with only the slightest qualifications. Macaulay supported Catholic Emancipation, abolishment of slavery, and the exclusion of Jews from government. Milton's position was less well defined, but Macaulay made ample apologies for the position of Milton. Moreover, Macaulay waged strong warfare with the historical tradition put forward by Hume<sup>43</sup> and the critical tradition put forward by Samuel Johnson.<sup>44</sup> It was these two forces that Macaulay was contesting (at twenty-five); both of which were adamantly Tory and of considerable influence, and Macaulay's defense of regicide is the best illustration of his empirical system of politics,<sup>45</sup> and it can only be fully understood if we understand the weight of tradition against it and against Milton's role in defending the execution of Charles the First. Both were for the liberty of the people and against the despotism of the King.

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<sup>43</sup>Cf. Pieter Geyl, Conversations with Historians, (The Hague, Holland, 1955).

<sup>44</sup>See the direct allusions to Johnson in "Milton" (1825).

<sup>45</sup>Macaulay supported the principle of regicide, but was against it because it did not work. Cf. "Milton" and History, Vol. 1, chs. 1, 11.

In this study it has been continuously stated that this liberty for Macaulay was the most important element in his interpretation of the idea of Progress. Though the same idea is ill-defined in Milton, there is the same enthusiasm for the intrinsic merit of liberty; in the History of England, but indeed throughout most of his prose, he writes:

But because the gaining or loosing of libertie is the greatest change to better or to worse that may befall a nation under civil government, and so discovers, as nothing more, what degree of understanding, or capacitie, what disposition to justice and civilitie there is among them.<sup>46</sup>

The above remarks were nearly doctrinal with Macaulay; and if we are perhaps inclined to regard them with Matthew Arnold as "anarchic," we can at least make provision for the intellectual tradition of this version of liberty. It was, as Macaulay pointed out in "Milton," an experiment, hitherto untried in English history. For many the achievement of this liberty (e.g., Catholic and Jewish emancipation) and all its ramification was the most signal instance of England's greatness.

This version of liberty was articulated and strengthened by the idea of Progress.<sup>47</sup> The freedom of inquiry was

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<sup>46</sup>History of England, in The Works of John Milton, (10 vols.; Columbia University [n.d.]), X, 317.

<sup>47</sup>Cf. Bury, 217-237.

extended in all directions. The results of this scientific and economic inquiry and progress are revolutionary, and the results of the political inquiry are even more pronounced and significant to the modern age in England and America.<sup>48</sup>

Even an anti-philistine like Shaw would write on the Reform Bill:

Take the Reform Bill of 1832 as an example of a conflict between two sections of educated Englishmen concerning a political measure which was as obviously necessary and inevitable as any political measure has ever been or is ever likely to be. It was not passed until the gentlemen of Birmingham had made arrangements to cut the throats of the gentlemen of St. James's parish in due military form. It would not have been passed to this day if there had been no force behind it except the logic and public conscience of the Utilitarians. A despotic ruler with as much sense as Queen Elizabeth would have done better than the mob of grown-up Eton boys, who governed us then by privilege, and who since the introduction of practically Manhood Suffrage in 1832, now govern us<sup>49</sup> at the request of proletarian Democracy.

Yet the Reform Bill was essentially a middle-class achievement. Any celebration of its necessity and genius must involve another, more tolerant, appraisal of the English middle-classes and of Lord Macaulay. We are perhaps too much inclined to look upon the Reform Bill, Catholic Emancipation,

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<sup>48</sup>See Himmelfarb, VII and 129-169.

<sup>49</sup>Plays by George Bernard Shaw, (New York: New American Library, 1960), 421-422.

the laws against slavery and child labor, as well as a hundred other experiments of that age in liberty, as being but an illustration of "common-sense." But they were, historically considered, revolutionary, and the peace which was insured by these reforms was as instrumental to Victorian prosperity (on every level) as any scientific progress. The social criticism of Macaulay must, therefore, be of greater significance than is commonly allowed.

The nineteenth century was, then, a period of progress. Its limitations were abundant and obvious; but literary criticism has tended to focus on these limitations, both social and literary, and to neglect the obvious advancements of the period and the literature which recognized these advancements. David Thomson has written:

It is not surprising that the period of our study is one of strenuous activity and dynamic change, of ferment of idea and recurrent social unrest, of great inventiveness and expansion. The whole meaning of Victorian England is lost if it is thought of as a country of stuffy complacency and black top-hated moral priggery. Its crinolines and dingy hansom cabs...concealed a people engaged in a tremendously exciting adventure--the daring experiment of fitting industrial man into a democratic society.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> England in the Nineteenth Century, (Penguin ed.; London, 1950), 33.

It is useless to point out just how limited so much of the social criticism of men like Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin, and Thomas Carlyle actually was, but it has been the argument of these few chapters that Lord Macaulay was more frequently right than most of his critics. We find many of his innovations more compatible with the modern mind, but his Scotch common-sense and genius for the practical is too often neglected. Once more the political liberalism of the nineteenth century, which became defined and articulated by the Edinburgh Review, was one of the greatest "inventions" and most important examples of progress that the century was to provide.

It is true that the liberal habits of inquiry were to provide some fairly unhealthy results, not in politics (on the whole) or in science, but in Theology. And it is abundantly true, though not so obvious as scholarship might desire, that the liberalism which Newman was contesting was not the political liberalism of Macaulay (except in a secondary sense<sup>51</sup>) but the religious liberalism of men like Arnold, Ruskin, and Carlyle. There can be little question, therefore, when we examine the "fruits" of liberalism and of progress that some distinctions are to be made of a

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<sup>51</sup>Cf. Himmelfarb, 156.

highly important order. Macaulay in the tradition of Bacon placed Theology outside the laboratory, and he did not bother further with it. We may consider this as an instance of his celebrated contempt for things of the mind; but the very fact that he did not choose to meddle, and that in his prose we find no instance of this anti-dogmatic principle, so characteristic of Carlyle and Arnold, preserved him from the far more serious errors of his generation. If we examine with attention the eighteen points of liberal doctrine that Newman was fighting, we can exempt, chiefly by default, Macaulay from every one of them.<sup>52</sup>

The criticism of poetry which we find in the prose of Macaulay is not widely esteemed in our time. We are accustomed, as Matthew Arnold has observed,<sup>53</sup> "to make allowances for it." Nevertheless, Macaulay never confused poetry and religion as did several other critics of his generation. His theory of literature and criticism, moreover, are illustrations of this theme of progress. It has been frequently remarked in this chapter that Macaulay's remarks on progress and the illustrations of it in Victorian society were uncommonly just. Literary figures are

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<sup>52</sup>Cf. Apologia, Culler ed., 269-278.

<sup>53</sup>The Portable Matthew Arnold, (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), 331.

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notoriously incompetent at making valid suggestions as to the ordering of life and society. From Wordsworth to Lawrence we have illustrations of this. Macaulay was able to avoid this tradition. Yet if Arnold or Wordsworth, Carlyle, Ruskin, or Lawrence were generally unable to make any penetrating but useful commentary on Victorian life and ethics, they were to achieve reputations as artists and critics. It is more than a difficult task to attempt in a single investigation a "revaluation" of Macaulay as both writer, thinker, and critic; and in this study my concern has been principally with the second of these.

His theory of literature is, however, an interesting extension and qualification of this idea of Progress. His theory of criticism is also an important extension of this theory of literature and the idea of Progress. It will be seen that among the other reasons for rejoicing at the achievements of the Victorian age was an aesthetic motivation.

CHAPTER FIVE

MACAULAY'S THEORY OF LITERATURE AND CRITICISM:  
ITS PLACE IN THE TRADITION

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In the fourth chapter attention was centered on the number and variety of philosophers, historians, and literary figures who were active in varying degrees in the promulgation of the idea of Progress. It was noted that David Hume was one of the leading proponents of the idea; and his enlargements or amplifications of it are especially interesting, for the final implication which he draws from the idea of Progress is clearly aesthetic: as commerce, liberty, and science must have periods of rise and decline, so will literature, the arts, and taste; moreover, their movements are inextricably united. The theory of literature and criticism, as well as their method and historical position, which were Macaulay's clearly reflects Hume and many others of his century.

Now it is true that no study of length has ever been made on Macaulay's theory of literature and criticism, though one element in his theory of criticism has been frequently lamented and satirized, and interpreted as synonymous with Victorian prudery: I mean of course his moral criticism.

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There will be further remarks on this element of his criticism, but at the very beginning it is important to note that the idea of Progress was an integral part of this theory of literature and criticism.

In the tradition of Dryden and Addison, Macaulay looked upon criticism as a progressive science which must therefore tend towards and attain a higher level of perfection. In his essay on Dryden he wrote:

It is some consolation to reflect that this critical school of poetry improves as the science of criticism improves; and that the science of criticism, like every other science, is constantly tending towards perfection. As experiments are multiplied, principles are better understood.<sup>1</sup>

Dryden suggests the same idea. In his "Essay on Dramatic Poesy" he has written:

We draw not therefore after their lines, but those of Nature; and having the life before us, besides the experience of all they knew, it is no wonder if we hit some airs and features which they have missed. I deny not what you urge of arts and sciences, that they have flourished in some ages more than others; but your instance in philosophy makes for me; for if natural causes be more known than in the time of Aristotle, because

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<sup>1</sup>Macaulay, Works, 1, 243.

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more studied, it follows that poesy and other arts may, with the same pains, arrive still nearer to perfection.<sup>2</sup>

In the same manner, though not so explicitly, Addison supported this idea of criticism as a science, and the idea was familiar to continental criticism as well.<sup>3</sup> To quote Bury once more:

In other words, all the increases of human experience, from age to age, all the speculative adventures of the intellect, provide the artist, in each succeeding generation, with more abundant sources for aesthetic treatment. As years go on, life in its widest sense offers more and more materials....<sup>4</sup>

The arguments in the above are part of the famous and enduring quarrel of the eighteenth century: the Ancients versus the Moderns, but while Macaulay was a keen student of the modern literature, his attitude towards the historical position of criticism was, historically considered, "ancient"; for while he held that critical thinking was a worthy endeavor, he suggests in no uncertain terms that it was of necessity an instance of decline in the creative faculty:

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<sup>2</sup>Eighteenth Century Poetry and Prose, ed., Louis J. Bredvold, Alan D. McKellop, and Lois Whitney (2nd ed., New York: Ronald Press, 1956), 195.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. John Bury, The Idea of Progress, (New York: Dover Press, 1955), 123-6.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 124.

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In process of time, the instruments by which the imagination works are brought to perfection. Men have not more imagination than their rude ancestors. We strongly suspect that they have much less. But they produce better works of imagination. Thus, up to a certain period, the diminution of the poetical powers is far more than compensated by the improvement of all the appliances and means of which those powers stand in need. Then comes the short period of splendid and consummate excellence. And then, from causes against which it is vain to struggle, poetry begins to decline. The progress of language, which was at first favorable, becomes fatal to it, and, instead of compensating for the decay of the imagination, accelerates that decay, and renders it more obvious.<sup>5</sup>

It is important to note that Macaulay was illustrating his arguments from the literatures of six different countries and more than twelve different periods of literature. He explains this process of decline:

As the development of the mind proceeds, symbols, instead of being employed to convey images, are substituted for them. Civilized men think as they trade, not in kind, but by means of a circulating medium. In these circumstances, the sciences improve rapidly, and criticism among the rest; but poetry, in the highest sense of the word, disappears. Then comes the dotage of the fine arts, a second childhood; as feeble as the former, and far more hopeless. This is the age of critical poetry, of poetry by courtesy,

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<sup>5</sup>Macaulay, Works, 1, 242.

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of poetry to which the memory, the judgment, and the wit contribute far more than the imagination. We readily allow that many works of this description are excellent: we will not contend with those who think them more valuable than the great poems of an earlier period. We only maintain that they belong to a different species of composition, and are produced by a different faculty.<sup>6</sup>

Now Macaulay in the above, as in other instances, was reflecting a milieu of ideas which were, in general terms, common to the eighteenth century, especially to its criticism. Samuel Johnson, Thomas and Joseph Warton, and a number of the Scotch primitivists suggested that after Pope's achievement literature must necessarily enter into a state of decline. In the History of English Poetry (throughout) Thomas Warton traces the rise of English poetry. In the first chapter he writes:

In an age advance to the highest degree of refinement, that species of curiosity commences, which is busied in contemplating the progress of social life, in displaying the gradations of science, and in tracing the transitions from barbarism to civility.

That these speculations should become the favorite pursuits, and the fashionable topics, of such a period, is extremely natural. We look back on the savage condition of our ancestors with the triumph of superiority; we are pleased to mark the steps by which we have been

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<sup>6</sup>Macaulay, Works, 1, 243-44.

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raised from rudeness to elegance: and our reflections on this subject are accompanied with a conscious pride, arising in great measure from a tacit comparison of the infinite disproportion between the feeble efforts of remote ages, and our present improvements in knowledge. On these principles, to develop the dawnings of genius, and to pursue the progress of our national poetry, from a rude origin and obscure beginnings, to its perfection in a polished age, must prove an interesting and constructive investigation.<sup>7</sup>

Macaulay knew the works of Thomas Warton, and he accepted with others of the eighteenth century that poetic technique and prosody had made "progress" beyond the achievements of earlier centuries. His comments on the rise of eighteenth century poetic technique through the experimentation of Waller, Denham, and Dryden were in precise keeping with much of the criticism which the literary figures of the Restoration and Enlightenment made on themselves. Pope was the acknowledged master of the heroic couplet, and Macaulay writes of his achievement:

The heroic couplet was then the favorite measure. The art of arranging words in that measure, so that the lines may flow smoothly, that the accents may fall correctly, that the rhymes may strike the ear strongly, and that there may be a

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<sup>7</sup>Thomas Warton, History of English Poetry, (4 vols; London, 1790), 1, 4.

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pause at the end of every distich, is an art as mechanical as that of mending a kettle or shoeing a horse, and may be learned by any human being who has sense enough to learn. But, like other mechanical arts, it was gradually improved by means of many experiments and many failures. It was reserved for Pope to discover the trick, to make himself complete master of it, and to teach it to everybody else.<sup>8</sup>

The state of poetry, therefore, once having achieved a level of perfection must then go into a process of decline, slow but inevitable, and this idea of the decline in literature was common to the critical temper of the eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup> We have seen the influence of Hume on other aspects of Macaulay's thought. His participation and promulgation of the idea of Progress have been widely recognized, and attention was called to this in Chapter III. But in Hume and in Lord Macaulay this idea of Progress had further ramifications which were aesthetic, in significance and which have been largely ignored.

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<sup>8</sup>Works, 111, 16.

<sup>9</sup>The best treatment of this subject is an article by John D. Scheffer, "The Idea of Decline in Literature," MP, XXI (1933); in this study the author traces the prevalence of this theme in the literature of the eighteenth century and relates it to the primitivist movement in that century.

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Hume's essay "The Rise and Progress of the Arts" is not widely known, and it may be useful to summarize its principal arguments. He reasons that (1): "...it is impossible for the arts and sciences to arise, at first, among any people, unless that people enjoy the blessing of a free government," and that (4) "...when the arts and sciences came to perfection in any state, from that moment they naturally or rather necessarily decline, and seldom revive in that nation, where they formerly flourished."<sup>10</sup> We can see from these remarks that the relationship, at least in Hume's mind, between the rise of poetry and the rise of commerce and science could not be dissolved. His verdict on the inevitable decline of poetry, moreover, is not a happy remark on the literature of the late eighteenth century, and Macaulay was able to improvise with some success upon these themes of Hume.

With this idea of decline in literature came a whole school of critics and historians described as the primitivists, "the Scotch primitivists" to be exact. They held too that literature, or at least some types of literature, was in decline. The general argument or thesis of this

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<sup>10</sup>David Hume, "Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," in Works; Essays, Literary, Moral, and Political, (London: Routledge and Sons, [n.d.]), 66.

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school is that the first men were all poets, and that poetry made its greatest achievements in the times before civilization.<sup>11</sup> William Duff was in common agreement when he wrote:

While the works of Homer and Ossian are in our hands, these, without any other examples, will be sufficient to establish the truth of the first part of our assertion, that in the early periods of society, original Poetic Genius will in general be executed in its utmost vigour.<sup>12</sup>

Lord Monboddo,<sup>13</sup> John Ogilvie,<sup>14</sup> James Parson,<sup>15</sup> as well as a number of scholars and critics in the early part of the

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<sup>11</sup>The best single study of the Scotch primitivists is an unpublished doctoral dissertation of Lois Whitney: Primitivistic Theories of Epic Literature, (Chicago, 1921). Much of this study is summarized in her article by the same title, MP, XXI (1924).

<sup>12</sup>An Essay on Original Genius, (London, 1767). Cf. also his Critical Observations on the Writings of the Most Celebrated Original Geniuses in Poetry, (London, 1720).

<sup>13</sup>The Origin and Progress of Language, 6 vols., (Edinburgh, 1773-1792).

<sup>14</sup>An Essay on the Lyric Poetry of the Ancients, (London, 1769).

<sup>15</sup>Remains of Japhet: Being Historical Enquiries into the Affinity and Origins of European Languages, (London, 1767); also in this list should be included Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, (Edinburgh, 1783), and Thomas Pinkerton's Dissertation on the Oral Tradition of Poetry, (Edinburgh, 1767).

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nineteenth century<sup>16</sup> can be included in this tradition. And it is this school to which we trace Macaulay's famous praise of Milton.

Paradise Lost was the greatest epic of modern times, Macaulay believed, and the praise of this poem must not only include the magnificence of its conception and performance, but that its creation took place in an age hostile to the imagination.<sup>17</sup> Dryden, on the other hand, was in perfect harmony with his time; and the poetry of Dryden and Pope reflects the growth of the critical spirit, and criticism might be expected to flourish in such a climate. Without invoking the heresies of Coleridge or Arnold, Macaulay suggested that the critical faculty was almost invariably at odds with the creative. He did not consider Dryden and Pope as writers of prose, but he held that the imitative arts and the critical faculty could never achieve the greatest excellence of spontaneous genius:

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<sup>16</sup>In this list should be included not only Peacock's The Four Ages of Poetry, (1824), but also, in part, Shelley's "Defense of Poetry," David Mallet's Northern Antiquities, (Edinburgh, 1809) and Thomas Percy's An Essay on the Ancient Minstrels in England, (Edinburgh, 1823).

<sup>17</sup>Cf. "Dryden," in Works, 1, 242-245.

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In time men begin to take more rational and comprehensive views of literature. The analysis of poetry, which, as we have remarked, must at best be imperfect, <sup>18</sup> approaches nearer and nearer to exactness.

The achievement of Milton was then of an even greater imagination, for Milton, as every biographer has noted, was one of the most learned men of his day. Macaulay contended that Milton, to become a great poet, had to "unlearn," to dispense with much of his knowledge:

He [Milton] knew that his poetical genius derived no advantage from the civilization which surrounded him, or from the learning which he had acquired; and he looked back with something like regret to the ruder age of simple words and vivid impressions.<sup>19</sup>

The same theme of civilization versus poetry receives its most explicit statement in the essay "Milton." The study of two years later on Dryden reflects the same theme:

Everything about Milton is wonderful; but nothing is so wonderful as that, in an age so unfavorable to poetry, he should have produced the greatest of modern epic poems. We are not sure that this is not in some degree to be attributed to his want of sight. The imagination is notoriously most active when the external world is

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 243.

<sup>19</sup>"Milton," in Works, 1, 151.

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shut out. In sleep its illusions are perfect. They produce all the effect of realities. In darkness its visions are always more distinct than in the light. Every person who amuses himself with what is called building castles in the air must have experienced this...<sup>20</sup>

Thus, Macaulay contends, the growth of civilization, the rise of science and of criticism come at the expense of the imaginative and the creative faculty. The sources of this viewpoint have been noted. Much of it is part of the romantic critical theory. Two scholars have traced this indebtedness to Peacock's Four Ages of Poetry. Frederick L. Jones has written:

How Macaulay came to read the single number of a relatively obscure periodical, I cannot say; but that he did is a virtual certainty. It should be apparent that Macaulay's and Peacock's theories are almost identical, except for the artificial classification of poetry into ages.... Macaulay and Peacock are alike in these main points: (1) semi-civilized people are by their nature and conditions of life poetical; (2) their language is crude but poetical (Macaulay says it is concrete and vivid; Peacock that it is ornamental and figurative); (3) language loses its poetical character with the advance of civilization; (4) poetry is essentially contrary to truth

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<sup>20</sup>"Dryden," Ibid., 252.

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and cannot be produced in a cultivated age unless the poet somehow assumes a semisavage point of view; (5) increasing knowledge stifles the imagination and makes poetry more and more useless.<sup>21</sup>

An essay of earlier date by P. L. Carver suggests a similar interpretation.<sup>22</sup> It is not necessary to quarrel with either of these. The likelihood of Macaulay's use of Peacock is remote, and since he alludes to Lord Hume in several of the essays, as well as some of the Scotch Primitivists in parts of the History of England, we might reasonably look to the fairly well-known figures of the eighteenth century for this source. Macaulay does not tell us..

Unlike so much of the romantic criticism, Macaulay suggests that "the critical and poetical faculties are not only distinct, but almost incompatible."<sup>23</sup> His argument is illustrated from the literatures of six different countries; and while he could not rejoice in the apparent decline of literature, he was quite aware of the "dignity" of the practice of criticism. His praise of Johnson's Lives of the

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<sup>21</sup>"Macaulay's Theory of Poetry in 'Milton'," Modern Language Quarterly, XIII (1952), 359-361.

<sup>22</sup>See P. L. Carver's "The Sources of Macaulay's 'Essay on Milton'," Review of English Studies, VI (1930), 49-62.

<sup>23</sup>"Dryden," in Works, I, 245.

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English Poets and Dryden's achievement was very much in earnest. In terms of nineteenth-century this was very rare.

We have seen that Macaulay's overt rejoicing in the growth of Victorian prosperity had aesthetic implications. Hume's arguments that literature and taste flourish where there is a free and progressive society were taken by Macaulay. These arguments are used throughout many of the essays, but they receive their most perfect statement in "Machiavelli":

Thus liberty, partially indeed and transciently, revisited Italy; and with liberty came commerce and empire, science and taste, all the comforts and all the ornaments of life. ...The operations of the commercial machine were facilitated by many useful and beautiful inventions. We doubt whether any country of Europe, our own excepted, have at the present time reached so high a point of wealth and civilization as some parts of Italy had attained four hundred years ago....The progress of elegant literature and of the fine arts was proportioned to that of the public prosperity....Knowledge and public prosperity continued to advance together.<sup>24</sup>

Macaulay early recognized one of the most neglected facts concerning the Renaissance: its reliance on economic developments; and while he was not an enthusiastic critic of romantic literature,<sup>25</sup> he could rejoice in the supposed growth

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<sup>24</sup>Works, 1, 199-201.

<sup>25</sup>See below (n. 28).

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of taste and learning that were characteristic of his period.

These then are the principal themes of his theory of literature and criticism: (1) Primitivism; he stated that:

In a rude state of society men are children with a greater variety of ideas. It is therefore in such a state of society that we may expect to find the poetical temperament in its highest perfection. In an enlightened age there will be much intelligence, much science, much philosophy, abundance of just classification and subtle analysis, abundance of wit and eloquence, abundance of verses, and even good ones; but little poetry. Men will judge and compare; but they will not create.<sup>26</sup>

(2) Literature is subject to periods of rise and to periods of decline. In "Dryden" he has stated that:

The same remark will apply equally to the fine arts. The laws on which depend the progress and decline of poetry, painting, and sculpture, operate with little less certainty than those which regulate the periodical returns of heat and cold, of fertility and barrenness.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, poetry once having obtained a high level must tend to decline. Macaulay felt that this decline was most abundantly obvious in the attempts of the romantics:

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<sup>26</sup>Works, 1, 153.

<sup>27</sup>Works, 1, 233.

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We have seen in our own time great talents, intense labors, and long mediation, employed in this struggle against the spirit of the age, and employed, we will not say absolutely in vain, but with dubious success and feeble applause.<sup>28</sup>

(3) Language, as the vehicle of poetry, was subject to the same laws of rise and decline:

In a barbarous age the imagination exercises a despotic power. So strong is the perception of what is unreal that it often overpowers all the passions of the mind....The machinery, by which ideas are to be conveyed from one person to another, is as yet rude and defective. Between mind there is a great gulf. The imitative arts do not exist.<sup>29</sup> The progress of language, which was at first favorable, becomes fatal to it, and, instead of compensating for the decay of imagination, accelerates that decay....Civilized men think as they trade, not in kind, but by means of a circulating medium.<sup>30</sup>

(4) Criticism, Macaulay contended, was a progressive science which tended towards perfection; but the very exercise of the critical faculty, whether in an individual or generation, was a symptom of a decline in the imaginative or the critical faculty:

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<sup>28</sup>"Milton," Works, 1, 154.

<sup>29</sup>"Dryden," Works, 1, 241.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 242.

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The first victory of good taste is over the bombast and conceits which deform such times as these. But criticism is still in a very imperfect state. What is accidental is for a long time confounded with what is essential. General theories are drawn from detached facts....In time men begin to take more rational and comprehensive views of literature. The analysis of poetry, which, as we have remarked, must at best be imperfect, approaches nearer and nearer to exactness.<sup>31</sup>

(5) The faculty for criticism is only infrequently combined to the creative faculty. "We have said," wrote Macaulay, "that the critical and poetical faculties are not only distinct, but almost incompatible."<sup>32</sup>

(6) The capacity of criticism is, following from the above, not to be looked for in minds of original genius, for this genius is usually developed at the expense of every other faculty:

A man of great original genius, on the other hand, a man who has attained the mastery in some high walk of art, is by no means to be implicitly trusted as a judge of the performance of others. The erroneous decisions pronounced by such men are without number....The very excellence of a work shows that some of the

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 243.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 245.

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faculties of the author have been developed at the expense of the rest; for it is not given to the human intellect to expand itself widely in all directions at once, and to be at the same time gigantic and well proportioned. Whoever becomes pre-eminent in any art, nay, in any style of art, generally does so by devoting himself with intense and exclusive enthusiasm to the pursuit of one kind of excellence. His perception of other kinds of excellence is therefore too often impaired....Thousands, who have no spark of the genius of Dryden or Wordsworth, do to Dryden the justice which has never been done by Wordsworth, and to Wordsworth the justice which, we suspect, would never have been done by Dryden.<sup>33</sup>

This last theme of Macaulay's theory of criticism is closely related to his own operation in what I. A. Richards would call, "practical criticism." Arnold's objections to Macaulay's critical practice are well known, but Arnold was essentially misinformed as to what Macaulay was attempting in his works.

The historical method of criticism has been severely criticized and generally rejected by the new linguistic approach to criticism. Since Macaulay was one of the greatest practitioners of this school, he has suffered much more than

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<sup>33</sup>"Madame D'Arblay," Works, ll, 736-737.

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was his share in this general rejection of Victorian criticism. The characteristic method of Macaulay's Essays is to give first the facts of a person's life, then an account of the quality of his mind, and then a criticism of the works. The precise lines between these three operations are not easily drawn. The interest of Macaulay and of the reader is effectively divided between the various factors that were responsible for the work of art, the power of the man and the power of the moment.

Without engaging in any critical judgments, it is important to realise the authoritative sources of the historical school. The Lives of the English Poets is the greatest example of its performance, and is the probable model for the various essays on literary subjects of Macaulay. But Macaulay's fluent command of English history in the seventeenth and eighteenth century is almost without rival even in this day. More will be said later on certain infamous characteristics of his history; but his facts are usually incontestably sound, and his renderings, fair. Thus some of the most interesting parts of his essays on literature are his brilliant historical settings. The description of Samuel Johnson's times is elemental in understanding some of the vagaries of his life, which is, in turn, elemental in

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understanding Rasselas and "The Vanity of Human Wishes." The same is even more important for an appreciation of some of Swift's minor works, and Tale of a Tub, "A Modest Proposal," and Battle of the Books. Our appreciation of Fanny Burney is certainly enhanced through some of historical aspects of "Madame D'Arblay." But, whatever may be our own opinion of this practice and its relation to the critical performance, it is important to realise that this technique was widely used.

The interest in psychology is another striking feature of the Essays and of the History; and the often-heard charge of superficiality in Macaulay's treatment fades before his success in this form. Thus he writes of Dryden:

Never was so able a critic so free from fastidiousness. He loved the old poets, especially Shakespeare. He admired the ingenuity which Donne and Cowley had so wildly abused. He did justice, amidst the general silence, to the memory of Milton....It was probably to this turn of mind, rather than to the more disgraceful causes which Johnson has assigned, that we are to attribute the exaggeration which disfigures the panegyrics of Dryden. ....this was not, we suspect, merely interested servility: it was the overflowing of a mind singularly disposed to admiration,--of a mind which diminished vices, and magnified virtues and obligations.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>"Dryden," Works, 1, 265.

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In "Lord Bacon" his remarks are equally penetrating. Again in "Addison" this method is pursued with considerable success and greater fairness to him than has since been his fortune to enjoy.<sup>35</sup> His remarks on Boswell require further notes, but for the moment, we can see in them the same interest in "the proper study of mankind." He did not shrink from showing the various sides of character, or to offer strongly phrased objectives where he saw fit.

The above technique is not changed throughout the Essays, and a moral criticism is an important characteristic of it. Many object to this practice. Tennyson's favorite remark, "What business has the public to know about Byron's wildnesses? He has given them fine work and they ought to be satisfied,"<sup>36</sup> marks the return of Victorian hagiography. But Macaulay's habit would have been defended by Johnson and Boswell. This habit of moralizing was an important theme in his historical presentation, but it is also a central article in his criticism. His remarks on Restoration drama bear another quotation:

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<sup>35</sup>For the contrary opinion to Macaulay's esteem of Addison see T. S. Eliot's study on Dryden in Selected Essays (London, 1951).

<sup>36</sup>Hallam Lord Tennyson, Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir, (New York, 1897), 363.

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Morality is not at all interested in the question of changing tastes in language. But morality is deeply interested in this, that what is immoral shall not be presented to the imagination of the young and susceptible in constant connection with what is attractive....during the forty years which followed the Restoration, the whole body of the dramatists invariably represented adultery, we do not say as a peccadillo, we do not say as an error which the violence of passion may excuse, but as the calling of a fine gentleman, as a grace without which his character would be imperfect.<sup>37</sup>

The above manner is not common to Macaulay, but it is an important aspect of his drama criticism, for he argued that insofar as drama held the mirror up to nature, it could not be true to its role and ignore this dominant characteristic of that nature:

In the name of art, as well as in the name of virtue, we protest against the principle that the world of pure comedy is one into which no moral enters. If comedy be an imitation, under whatever conventions, of real life, how is it possible that it can have no reference to the great rule which directs life, and to feelings which are called forth by every incident of life.<sup>38</sup>

In terms of practical or applied criticism, Macaulay was a good critic of the drama. He was, moreover, in the truest

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<sup>37</sup>"Leigh Hunt," in Works, 11, 504-505.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 508.

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sense a continental student or critic of the drama. In various essays he comments with a high level of acuteness on the drama of seven different countries, with as many different periods of the drama included. But his principal affection was the English drama:

No species of fiction is so delightful to us as the old English drama. Even its inferior productions possess a charm not to be found in any other kind of poetry. It is the most lucid mirror that ever was held up to nature...The excellence of these words is in a great measure the result of two peculiarities, which the critics of the French school consider as defects,--from the mixture of tragedy and comedy, and from the length and extent of the action. The former is necessary to render the drama a just representation of a world in which the laughers and the weepers are perpetually jostling each other,--in which every event has its serious and ludicrous side.<sup>39</sup>

For better or worse, he judged all drama in accord with this first and only principle: the function of all drama is to hold the mirror up to nature. Macaulay writes:

The real object of the drama is the exhibition of human character. This, we conceive, is no arbitrary canon, originating in local and temporary associations, like those canons which regulate the number of acts in a play, or of syllables in

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<sup>39</sup>"Dryden," in Works, 1, 247.

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a line. To this fundamental law every other regulation is subordinate. The situations which most signally develop character form the best plot. The mother tongue of the passions is the best style.<sup>40</sup>

In accord with the above Macaulay was not slow to criticize certain aspects of the Greek theater, as well as the dominant characteristic of the French theater, its "stiff attitudes."<sup>41</sup> His praise of the English drama was not without reservation. His criticism of Congreve and Sheridan may strike us as archaic or absurd, but they were derived from the first and only canon which he applied to drama:

No writers have injured the Comedy of England so deeply as Congreve and Sheridan. Both were men of splendid wit and polished taste. Unhappily, they made all their characters in their own likeness...There are no delicate touches...the whole is lighted up with a universal glare...Every fop, every boor, every valet, is a man of wit.<sup>42</sup>

Macaulay compares the use of wit in Shakespeare to the "prodigality" of the Restoration dramatists. He does not say (in this instance) that the dialogue is not delightful, but that

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<sup>40</sup>"Machiavelli," in Works, 1, 213.

<sup>41</sup>"Dryden," in Works, 1, 247.

<sup>42</sup>"Machiavelli," in Works, 1, 213.

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it has no basis in real life. Its very brilliance destroys its effects. The love-scenes, which Dryden exhibits, are not censured because they could not exist in a society of savages or in a harem, but because they could no exist anywhere.<sup>43</sup>

In general, however, he was singularly untheoretical in his dramatic criticism. His principal axiom of judgment was based on one simple and established rule. His method of argument and demonstration involves, above all, an ample use of concrete illustration. He compares the drama of the Restoration and the eighteenth century with, in his opinion, the unsurpassed achievement of the Elizabethans. Yet he is not slow to point out some of Shakespeare's weaker moments. He points out the obvious use of a "moral-sense" in Johnson, Fletcher, Massinger, and Shakespeare; and shows that even with their vagaries of language and situation elemental norms of morality and society are held intact:

In general we will venture to say that the dramatists of the age of Elizabeth and James the First either treat the breach of the marriage-vow as a serious crime, or, if they treat it as matter for laughter, turn the laugh against the gallant.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Cf. "Dryden," in Works, 1, 255-264.

<sup>44</sup>"Leigh Hunt," in Works, 11, 505.

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This criticism, however "Victorian" it may sound, was still subordinate to the first law of drama. It was by neglecting the moral aspects of the drama, Macaulay contended, that the aesthetic effect was destroyed.

It [Restoration drama] is clever, indeed, and very entertaining;...Its indecency, though perpetually such as is condemned not less by the rules of good taste than by those of morality, is not, in our opinion, so disgraceful a fault, as its singularly inhuman spirit....The hero intrigues just as he wears a wig; because, if he did not, he would be a queer fellow, a city prig, perhaps a Puritan. All the agreeable qualities are always given to the gallant. All the contempt and aversion are the portion of the unfortunate husband.<sup>45</sup>

Without evaluating his judgments, I think it is difficult to dismiss the critical essays as "superficial." We may or may not like the theater of this period, but Macaulay's remarks that the gallant is the hero and the cuckold is the fool are, in terms of the texts, true. Nor is Macaulay's command of the various texts to be questioned. He illustrates his thesis with references to innumerable plays.

If the themes of Macaulay's dramatic criticism strike a foreign sound to modern tolerance, his novel criticism

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 505-506.

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should attract a greater appreciation. He was one of the first critics in the language to recognize the novel as an art-form. Indeed his very first experience as a writer was a defense of the novels of Smollett, Defoe, and Fielding which he published anonymously in his father's Clapham periodical. The results were disastrous. Many of the subscribers canceled their subscriptions, and his father likened novel-reading to "dram-drinking before breakfast."<sup>46</sup>

His essays which treat the novel are not many. "Madame D'Arblay" is perhaps the most important. In it he traces the decline of Fanny Burney's style under the tutelage of Samuel Johnson; more important is the probing analysis and comparison of the art of Jane Austen with that of Fanny Burney. Of the latter he writes:

There are undoubtedly persons, in whom humors such as Ben describes have attained a complete ascendancy....Seeing that such humors exist, we cannot deny that they are proper subjects for the imitations of art. But we conceive that the imitation of such humors, however skilful and amusing, is not an achievement of the highest order;... We are, therefore, forced to refuse

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<sup>46</sup>George M. Trevelyan, The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay, (2 vols.; New York: Longman's, Green, and Co., 1931), 1, 44.

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Madame D'Arblay a place in the highest rank of art.<sup>47</sup>

The artistry and genius of Jane Austen is of another kind:

Shakespeare has had neither equal nor second. But among the writers who, in the point which we have noticed, have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen, ... She has given us a multitude of characters, all, in a certain sense, commonplace, all such as we meet every day. Yet they are all as perfectly discriminated from each other as if they were the most eccentric of human beings.<sup>48</sup>

Macaulay extends his prose simile in comparing Ben Jonson to Fanny Burney and Shakespeare to Jane Austen. This is more just than might first be recognized. Jane Austen did as much herself in Northanger Abbey in her insistence upon the novelist's art. The artist's task was, for Macaulay, to hold the mirror up to nature. In his treatment of Rasselas<sup>49</sup> and the Vicar of Wakefield<sup>50</sup> the censure or enthusiasm is derived from this axiom. From this we may possibly account

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<sup>47</sup>"Madame D'Arblay," in Works, 11, 771-772.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 770.

<sup>49</sup>Cf. "Samuel Johnson," in Works, 111, 298.

<sup>50</sup>Cf. "Goldsmith," in Works, 111, 273.

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for his lack of interest in the novels of Horace Walpole. His comments on Addison's potential as a novelist are perhaps of too speculative a nature to be of great value. Macaulay's famous analysis of Pilgrim's Progress did not admit it to be a novel, as it has more recently been treated. But his investigation of its "fable" shows an important characteristic of his criticism of the novel. With some hesitancy he notes a few of its inconsistencies; the same is true in his brief treatment of The Vicar of Wakefield. He is not, however, pedantic. His praise or censure invariably depends upon that first principle, frequently noted in this chapter. One element of the praise which he bestows so liberally on The Pilgrim's Progress has a strangely modern quality to it: a critique of language.

In his practical criticism Macaulay was a severe critic of writers of all varieties who introduced a foreign idiom or vocabulary into their works. His praise of Bunyan describes this attitude:

The style of Bunyan is delightful to every reader, and invaluable as a study to every person who wishes to obtain a wide command over the English language. The vocabulary is the vocabulary of the common people. There is not an expression, if we except a few technical terms of theology, which would puzzle the rudest peasant....Yet no writer has said more exactly what he meant to say....There is no book in our literature on which we

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would so readily stake the fame of the old unpolluted English language, no book which shows so well how rich that language, is in its own proper wealth, and how little it has been improved by all that it has borrowed.<sup>51</sup>

The style, idiom, and vocabulary of Samuel Johnson is, on the other hand, censured for its excessive latinisms.<sup>52</sup> His censure of the style and idiom of Horace Walpole is in the same direction; but it is the French style which corrupted Walpole:

Walpole judged of French literature after the same fashion. He understood and loved the French language. Indeed, he loved it too well. His style is more deeply tainted with Gallicism than that of any other English writer with whom we are acquainted. His compositions often read, for a page together, like a rude translation from the French.<sup>53</sup>

To Macaulay there was an even more pressing reason for censuring these instances of idiosyncracies of style. He felt that Johnson had ruined the style of Fanny Burney.<sup>54</sup> He illustrates his thesis with sufficient comparisons between Evelina and Cecilia. The two different memoirs of the

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<sup>51</sup>"John Bunyan," in Works, 1, 570.

<sup>52</sup>Cf. "Samuel Johnson," Ibid., 680.

<sup>53</sup>"Horace Walpole," in Works, 11, 14.

<sup>54</sup>Cf. "Madame D'Arblay," in Works, 11, 775-776.

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subject are an even better example, Macaulay reasons, of this decline:

We could not forget the fate of the Memoirs of Dr. Burney, which were published ten years ago. That unfortunate book contained much that was curious and interesting. Yet it was received with a cry of disgust, and was speedily consigned to oblivion. The truth is, that it deserved its doom. It was written in Madame D'Arblay's later style, the worst style that has ever been known among men. No genius, no information, could save from proscription a book so written.... We soon, however, discovered to our great delight that this Diary was kept before Madame D'Arblay became eloquent. It is, for the most part, written in her earliest and best manner, in true woman's English, clear, natural and lively.<sup>55</sup>

The praise of Byron's letters is in precise accord with this insistence upon correctness and naturalness. In some of his works, Macaulay writes of Byron, there has been "a constant view to effect,..."<sup>56</sup> but the "Letters, at least those which are sent from Italy, are among the best in our language."<sup>57</sup> Macaulay praises epistolary style of Byron for providing an "admirable instance of that highest art which cannot be distinguished from nature."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 729.

<sup>56</sup>"Samuel Johnson," in Works, 1, 659.

<sup>57</sup>"Moore's Life of Lord Byron," Ibid., 611.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 611.

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There is, then, in the criticism of Macaulay a constant reference to nature, to that which is "natural." Now these words were (and are) bandied about with an alarming carelessness. It may be remarked at the beginning that he was not in league with the romantic poets. In Macaulay "nature" and "natural" have definitely Augustan connotations.

Considering the "provincial" aspect of what many of us associate with "Victorianism," this vocabulary and outlook of Macaulay is extremely rare. His interest, clarification, and extension of another theme (organically linked to the above) of Augustan poetry and criticism, the theme or idea of "correctness", strengthens my suggestion that he was using critical theories which we associate with the eighteenth century. Yet he is archly critical of any statements which appear to dogmatize on the theme of "correctness" in English poetry. He admires without reservation the genius of Pope, but he does not accept the criticism of the eighteenth century's minor critics on what constituted "correctness." The couplets of Pope,

First follow Nature, and your judgment frame  
By her just standard, which is still the same:  
Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,  
One clear, unchanged, and universal light,  
Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,<sup>59</sup>  
At once the source, and end, and test of Art.

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<sup>59</sup> Essay on Criticism, ll, 68-73.

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represent without deviation the critical views of Macaulay. In this context "Nature" has none of its romantic connotations; it refers here and in Macaulay to human nature and to "proper studies."

This point is not so easily made. In the essay "Moore's Life of Lord Byron" Macaulay explores the use and meaning of the word "correctness," and he concludes, using Augustan principles of criticism, that many of the writers of that century were among the most incorrect in the literature.<sup>60</sup>

Unlike Pope, however, Macaulay used four models of correctness:

A writer who describes visible objects falsely and violates the propriety of character, a writer who makes the mountains "nod their drowsy heads" at night, or a dying man take leave of the world with a rant like that of Maximin, may be said...to write incorrectly. He violates the first great law of his art. His imitation is altogether unlike the thing imitated. The four poets who are most eminently free from incorrectness of this description are Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton.<sup>61</sup>

In the discussed essay Macaulay gives an excellent survey of

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<sup>60</sup>"Moore's Life of Lord Byron," in Works, 1, 621.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 620.

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English poetry. He shows just how variously this principle of imitation, the one categorical law of criticism and art, has been misinterpreted or ignored. He continues in the same study a satire on criticism which is one of his own most significant contributions:

It would be amusing to make a digest of the irrational laws which bad critics have framed for the government of poets. First in celebrity and in absurdity stand the dramatic unities of place and time. No human being has ever been able to find any thing that could, even by courtesy, be called an argument for these unities, except that they have been deduced from the general practice of the Greeks. It requires no very profound examination to discover that the Greek dramas, often admirable as compositions, are, as exhibitions of human character and human life, far inferior to the English plays of the age of Elizabeth. Every scholar knows that the dramatic part of the Athenian tragedies was at first subordinate to the lyrical part.<sup>62</sup>

Macaulay continues his satire on the various critics who find fault with Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Coleridge; yet unlike so many of his century he was able to see and rejoice in the achievements of the eighteenth century:

If we were to lay down these canons, and to call Pope, Goldsmith, and Addison incorrect writers for not having complied

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 621.

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with our whims, we should act precisely as those critics act who find incorrectness in the magnificent imagery and the varied music of Coleridge and Shelley.<sup>63</sup>

In one final aspect, less easily defined than the above, Macaulay shows his Augustan training. As part of his general insistence on the fidelity of art to nature, and his insistence upon the naturalness of expression, he was a severe critic of the metaphysical poets, particularly of Donne. To a modern critic this may seem intolerable, but the criticism of Macaulay took its inspiration from the Life of Cowley, which he described as one of the greatest of the Lives.<sup>64</sup> The imagery of Donne, his conceits, and his droll allusions are rejected in no uncertain terms as "quaint." But the insistence of Macaulay upon the natural is the source of this criticism.

This then is the criticism of Macaulay, theoretical and practical. He represents one of the leading and most

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 623.

<sup>64</sup>Cf. "Samuel Johnson," in Works, 1, 674. Cf. also his remarks in "John Dryden," in Works, 1; Macaulay remarks (describing the state of court poetry): "The infection which had tainted lyric and didactic poetry had but slightly and partially touched the drama. While the noble and the learned were comparing eyes to burning-glasses, and tears to terrestrial globes, councess to an enthymeme, absence to a pair of compasses, and an unrequited passion to the fortieth remainderman in an entail..," Ibid., 247.

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learned proponents of the school of criticism known as "historical." He is recording not only his own reaction to the literature but also his knowledge of the times which helped to produce it. The historical aspects of his essays on literary subjects rely in great measure upon biography. Yet he discusses with equal fluency the historical moment of the subject as well as the politics. Macaulay does not hesitate to give moral criticism in his studies; these are, it may be admitted, sometimes well removed from the text at hand, but Macaulay argued that this was essential in understanding the works themselves.

In various essays we can trace the influence of Scotch primitivism; in his studies on Milton and on Dryden this influence is obvious. There is another aspect of this school of criticism which influenced Macaulay. His remarks on "the progress and decline" of literature reflect the studies of Hume and the later and more expressive critics of the primitive school. But like Hume, Macaulay suggested that the growth of a national taste and the proper cultivation of its creative geniuses was in a large sense dependent upon the natural wealth. His remarks on the heroism of Johnson is a negative statement of the exchange of influence between the wealth of a nation and its derivative, patronage (public or private) and the welfare of the artist.

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The influence of Hume and others can be found in Macaulay's mixed praise of Alexander Pope. For while he held that Pope was a very great poetic talent, he held that the influence of Pope was usually for the worse: that after Pope literature, having attained its zenith, must have gone into a state of decline. This was part of the great achievement of Byron: he restored to poetry part of its lost vigor.

For all his practice and deliberation on criticism, Macaulay seemed to regard criticism as a highly limited science. Criticism, Macaulay argued, can never really describe or define poetry or poetic genius; and rules of criticism and of literature seem only to reflect the narrowness of mind of their creator. Macaulay used only one which was taken from Shakespeare and reaffirmed by Samuel Johnson; the imitative arts must bear a resemblance to the thing imitated; poetry (and the novel) must hold the mirror up to nature. Sentiment, imitation, and expression (in terms of vocabulary and phrasing) must be faithful to that nature. And, as we have seen, Macaulay was quite explicit as to how that nature was followed.

Macaulay was equally explicit in demonstrating who shall criticize. "A man of great original genius"<sup>65</sup> was not to be trusted; nor were the multitudes. A good critic would

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<sup>65</sup>See "Madame D'Arblay," Works, 11, 736.

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be a figure such as Samuel Crisp who had the qualities of "sense, taste, and reading...,"<sup>66</sup> but men of eminent talent of their own were too inclined towards narrowness.

Up to this point any criticism of my own has been withheld. I have been content to show the workings of a rather complex, yet amply illustrated, critical theory which Macaulay was using throughout the various essays on literary subjects. It is a theory which has its deepest roots in the critical practice of the preceding century. Yet, Macaulay was able to make certain amplifications and clarifications of the theory of primitivism and the theory of decline. His criticism, however, was in the deepest sense traditional in its themes. His one unique theme in his analysis of man, his society, and his literature was the dependence of literature (or at least the creator of literature) upon the state's political and material well-being. Hume, it is true, first laid this relationship down as a law:

That it is impossible for the arts and sciences to arise, at first, among any people, unless that people enjoy the blessing of a free government.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 737.

<sup>67</sup>"Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," ed. cit., 66.

## MACAULAY'S THEORY OF LITERATURE AND CRITICISM:

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That nothing is more favourable to the rise of politeness and learning, than a number of neighbouring and independent states, connected together by commerce and policy.<sup>68</sup>

But Macaulay was able to enlarge upon this axiom and to illustrate his arguments with references to the histories and literatures of several different countries. Thus his idea of Progress and his idea of History have aesthetic implications which I have attempted to trace in this chapter. The next chapter will present some of the direct answers to critics of Macaulay which have been thematic to this point.

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 68.

CHAPTER SIX

A CONCLUSION AND A CRITICISM

## A CONCLUSION AND A CRITICISM

Having traced the history of several of the ideas and themes which are common to the prose of Macaulay and having shown that he was actually using a traditional theory of literature, common to the Scotch philologists and critics, it may be useful to trace out his original contributions to English literature, history, and life. Macaulay was a brilliant historian. His capacity for sustained coherent narrative has few rivals in the whole of English literature. His research techniques, as described by his biographer,<sup>1</sup> were equally brilliant. In this chapter, then, some positive criticism of the History and of the Essays will be cited; and I will attempt to show just how "right" or accurate Macaulay was in much of his writing. Some comment on his positive contributions to English political and social thought will also be given, for the themes of religious and political tolerance, so foreign to most of the Victorian writers, were among the truly mantic contributions of Macaulay to the modern world.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Trevelyan, Life and Letters, (London, 1816), II, 157-8.

Macaulay was from middle-class stock, and in several measures he supported middle-class interests (e.g. The Reform Bill of 1832). But there is another sense in which he was even more decidedly part of the philistine tradition. He was writing the Essays and the History as an ardent Protestant and Englishman. From a contemporary view, as well as historical, he was very much opposed to the growth of ultramontanism. He was not anti-Catholic, but he seems to have regarded the Roman Catholic Church with deep suspicion. He rejected as "useless" medieval philosophy. Again he was following a tradition established by Erasmus, St. John Fisher, Milton (and many others).

As part of this, Macaulay lacked what has been described by Cardinal Newman as "the Illative Sense." He was mildly contemptuous of mysticism as well as more overt manifestations of Faith. And while he had the greatest possible praise for St. Francis and the missionary activities of the Church,<sup>2</sup> he feared the political endeavors of that Church. His prejudices were not nearly so severe as those of Mill, Carlyle, Ruskin, or Arnold, for he saw the Church then to be an active force in the world and the remarks of Macaulay against Rome were confined to its acquisitive tendencies.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>See his essay, "Von Ranke," in Works, lll.

<sup>3</sup>See, e.g., "Von Ranke" and "Charles V" for an ample illustration of his view and scholarship to support it.

Newman, as we have seen earlier, bestowed high praise on Macaulay's "Von Ranke's History of the Popes."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, many of the prejudicial remarks of Macaulay can be traced to the original subject. Once more, Macaulay is among the very least of the offenders. The "Noetics," Matthew Arnold and Carlyle, pursued this anti-dogmatic theme to greater limits than he, for the tolerance of Macaulay<sup>5</sup> is a Victorian landmark of coherent social reformation. In the third chapter I remarked that the growth of liberty and its derivative benefits was the principal cause for his celebrated optimism. Most of the more famous writers of the period resented in one way or another, and in varying degrees, this growth of democratic ideals. Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, Newman, (among others) were opposed to the reform measures supported by the liberal Whigs and Macaulay. Arnold wrote of The Reform Bill of 1832:

Liberalism prevailed; it was the appointed force to do the work of the hour; it was necessary, it was inevitable that it should prevail....But what was it, this liberalism, as Dr. Newman saw it, and as it really broke the Oxford Movement. It was the great middle-class Liberalism, which had for the

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<sup>4</sup>Cf., "Christianity and Physical Science"; it is true, however, that Newman in the Apologia takes exception to certain remarks in the discussed essay by Macaulay.

<sup>5</sup>Macaulay's speeches on Jewish Disabilities, as well as Catholic Exclusion against figures like Gladstone have been appreciatively studied by men like G. M. Young, Essays in Victorian Studies, (Oxford, 1960).

cardinal point of its belief the Reform Bill of 1832, and local self-government, in politics; in the social sphere, free-trade, unrestricted competition, and the making of large industrial fortunes; in the religious sphere, the Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant Religion.<sup>6</sup>

We may turn a deaf ear to Matthew Arnold's political criticism for the above reason. It was religious liberalism not political reason<sup>7</sup> which Newman and others of the Oxford Movement were opposing. It was, as we have seen, the religious liberalism of men like Matthew Arnold that motivated the later writings of Newman. Arnold has attributed to the philistines and to Macaulay much for which he himself (and his theory of poetry and religion) was responsible. The liberalism which Newman and Pusey were fighting was the religious liberalism and humanism of men like Dr. Thomas Arnold, Matthew Arnold, and the "Noetics." Newman is quite explicit in describing the "anti-dogmatic" principle which was to nerve the Oxford Movement.<sup>8</sup>

Other critics of Macaulay (Ruskin, Morley, and Gladstone) and of the period have failed to substitute political liberalism with a superior method of government.

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<sup>6</sup>Culture and Anarchy, (New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1923), 62.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Charles F. Harrold, John Henry Newman: An Expository and Critical Study of His Mind, Thought, and Art, (New York: Longman's, Green & Co., 1945), 163-191.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Apologia, ed. cit., ch. 4.

Moreover this Whig version of government was synonymous with the greatness of England in the mid-Victorian period. David Thomson has remarked, "The three phases of Victorian development coincide respectively with the growth, supremacy, and decline of Liberalism as the operative political creed of most Englishmen."<sup>9</sup>

This historical milieu is the background and reason for the resplendent confidence of Macaulay. It is difficult to ignore the implications. When we find, therefore, a writer of such obvious talent as that of Macaulay rejoicing in certain aspects of Victorian development, it is necessary to search out the source of that confidence and optimism, before we dismiss him as superficial or naive.

This political background is behind many of the Essays and the History; as Lord Acton has written:

Macaulay, at least, was not an aristocrat. He had done more than any other writer in the literature of the world for the propagation of the Liberal faith, and he was not only the greatest, but the most representative Englishman then living.<sup>10</sup>

Macaulay, for all his faults of dialectic and style, was one of the most coherent and skilled critics of his age. We must

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<sup>9</sup>England in the Nineteenth Century, (Penguin Books, 1960), 224.

<sup>10</sup>Historical Essays and Studies, (London: Macmillan Co., 1907), 482.

not confuse his relatively temperate manner with "smugness." Hardly another writer of the period was able to make such penetrating comments on the various problems of the time as we find in the prose of Macaulay. Of the novelists, Dickens was the most popular, and is the key to the Victorian era for too many a student and critic.

Earlier in this chapter I made the remark that the social criticism of Macaulay was somewhat isolated from that of men like Dickens and Ruskin, Carlyle and Arnold by the very reason of its coherence and good sense. Another good novelist of the period described or satirized Carlyle as "Dr. Pessimist Anticant" and wrote of him:

But the doctor mistook the signs of the times and the minds of men, instituted himself censor of things in general, and began the great task of reprobating everything and everybody, without further promise of any millennium at all.<sup>11</sup>

Trollope is correct when he suggests that the real attraction of Carlyle is in his "vague, mysterious, and cloudy"<sup>12</sup> style and that "when he becomes practical, the charm is gone."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Anthony Trollope, The Warden, (New York: Random House, 1950), 136.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 136.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 136.

Trollope is equally discerning with the social criticism of Dickens.<sup>14</sup> T. S. Eliot points out similar lapses in the social commentary of Arnold, Carlyle, and Ruskin:

As Mr. J. M. Robertson has well pointed out in his Modern Humanists Reconsidered, Arnold had little gift for consistency or for definition. Nor had he the power of connected reasoning at any length....Nothing in his prose work, therefore, will stand very close analysis, and we may well feel that the positive content of many words is very small. Culture and Conduct are the first things we are told; but what Culture and Conduct are, I feel I know less well on every reading.<sup>15</sup>

and again:

Culture and Anarchy is on the same side as Past and Present or Unto This Last. Its ideas are really no clearer;--one reason why Arnold, Carlyle, and Ruskin were so influential, for precision and completeness of thought do not always make for influence.<sup>16</sup>

Thus we find that the popularity which these arch-critics of the Victorian world enjoyed was not untouched with a strong element of confusion which persists to this day.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 139-140.

<sup>15</sup>Selected Essays, (New York, 1948), 238.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 240.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. "Ruskin" and "Thomas Carlyle: The Rembrandt of English Prose" in Victorian Literature, ed. Austin Wright, (Oxford University Press, 1961).

On the other hand, the supreme clarity of style in the works of Macaulay has left him severely open to criticism. One of the characters of Meredith is described as a person whose faults "were fatally calculated to obscure his merits." So it is with Macaulay. His gift of rhetoric, characterized by examples drawn from both popular and recondite sources, antithesis, and strident language has led many to consider him as essentially a superficial writer and critic. In the above and in the earlier chapters, particularly one, two, and five, I have argued that Macaulay was a rather acute critic of his times and that his personal contribution in this area was greater than many of his contemporaries.

The literary and historical criticism of Macaulay, I contend, has a similar value. Scholars working in various areas are continuously affirming many of the findings of Macaulay. It may be useful to investigate some of the better known essays of Macaulay and see just how "right" he was.

"Milton" is a youthful work. It is, in its way, a classic study of "enthusiasm." Some of the critical themes, which are common to Macaulay, have their clearest expression in it. But Macaulay was also contesting a strong and growing sentiment, promulgated by Hume and Johnson, which tended to obscure the faults for which Charles I was executed (which Milton supported). The extended comparison between Dante

and Milton has many echoes in modern criticism. The study of the historical milieu of Paradise Lost in "Milton" has been copied by Basil Willey.<sup>18</sup> C. S. Lewis, in describing the effects of reading Paradise Lost comes to conclusions very much like those of Macaulay.<sup>19</sup>

If "Milton" (1825) represents a youthful enthusiasm, we might be led to expect a mature style and method in a work composed almost twenty years later. "Croker's Life of Samuel Johnson" (1841) has proved even more controversial than "Milton." With all this controversy and with the striking clarity of Macaulay the arguments of the essay are not fully understood. Macaulay states that Boswell's work, The Life of Samuel Johnson, is one of the greatest works ever written and easily the greatest biography in the world. Macaulay adds, however, that Boswell was able to write such a great work because he was such a great fool. From the beginning, it is important to recognize that Macaulay was not just using an antithetical argument for sake of clarity; he repeats his verdict on Boswell in "Samuel Johnson" (1856) written for the Encyclopedia Britannica.

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<sup>18</sup>Cf. Seventeenth Century Background, (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1953), 207-257.

<sup>19</sup>See A Preface to Paradise Lost, 40, 41, 42 (Oxford, 1942); also see Douglas Bush's Paradise Lost in our Time, (New York, 1950) for further demonstration of this comparison between Dante and Milton which Macaulay uses.

Again, Macaulay wrote with a better command of his subject matter than most have been able to achieve in a lifetime.<sup>20</sup> What is so frequently ignored is that most of Johnson's and Boswell's colleagues shared the same opinion of Boswell. Macaulay knew this, but many of the critics of Macaulay do not. Mrs. Thrale would have heartily agreed with Macaulay, so would Fanny Burney, David Garrick, Beauclerk, and John Hawkins. On one occasion Mrs. Thrale wrote:

This [speech of Johnson] I thought a thing so very particular, that I begged his leave to write it down directly, before any thing could intervene that might make me forget the force of the expressions: a trick, which I have however seen played on common occasions, of sitting steadily down at the other end of the room to write at the moment what should be said in company by Dr. Johnson or to him, I never practised myself, nor approved of in another, there is something so ill-bred, and so inclining to treachery in this conduct, that were it commonly adopted,

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<sup>20</sup>It is important to note that the Malahide papers were not discovered at the time of Macaulay's essay. The authors of The Scholar Adventurers are of the opinion that this discovery confuted the verdict of Macaulay. On the contrary, whether we will or no, this discovery enforces greatly the thesis of his study. My own gratitude must here be extended to Loyola University of Chicago for their kind permission to "dip" freely into their collection of Boswelliana. Those who wish to refute Macaulay (or me) might begin with a close examination of these private papers, Hawkins' Life of Samuel Johnson, Thraliana; the Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale, 1776-1809, (Oxford, 1942), Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, 1778-1840, Boswell (Piozzi ed.)--The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D; also see the Memoirs of David Garrick, and the Notes of Hannah More.

all confidence would soon be exiled from society, and a conversation assembly-room would become tremendous as a court of justice....there will be ever found ways of playing fairly or unfairly at, which distinguish the gentleman from the juggler.<sup>21</sup>

Mrs. Thrale makes more than one remark, as did Dr. Burney after her, on the insensibility of Boswell to reproof.<sup>22</sup>

We know of Boswell's anger with his wife because she refused to look into Johnson's Diary while the "Pair" were visiting the Highlands. This is what Macaulay meant when he called Boswell a "Paul Pry," and Boswell confirms this by his own attempt to steal the Diary. Dr. Campbell suggests a similar verdict on Boswell:

It is ridiculous to pry so nearly into the movements of such men, yet Boswell carries it to a degree of superstition. The Doctor it appears has a custom of putting the peel of oranges into his pocket, and he asked the Doctor what use he made of them; the Doctor's reply was, that his learned friend should not know that. This had made poor Boswell unhappy, and I verily think he is as anxious to know the secret as a green sick girl.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Life of Samuel Johnson reprinted in G. B. Hill's Johnsonian Miscellany, 2 vols., Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1897), 175-6.

<sup>22</sup>See, e.g., *ibid.*, 351.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 45; see also the remarks of Fanny Burney in The Diary of Madame D'Arbly, 4 vols. (London, 1893), 1, 384.

But what is the secret of the Biography? Is it not this incessant curiosity of Boswell? Added to this curiosity was an unhealthy mixture of sycophancy which enabled him to endure all measure of insults from Johnson, who more than once referred to him or called him outright a "fool."

It was Thomas Gray who first suggested the relation between fool and artist. After the publication of Boswell's Account of Corsica, Gray wrote to Walpole: "This pamphlet proves what I have always maintained, that any fool may write a most valuable book by chance,..."<sup>24</sup> The reasoning of the above is that Boswell wrote well inspite of his foolery. Macaulay took it a step further and said Boswell's greatness as a writer derives from his foolery.

Modern scholars have not been slow to castigate Macaulay for such a view; most, however, only succeed in confirming it.<sup>25</sup> Joseph Wood Krutch in his work Samuel Johnson attacks Macaulay in several passages of his book, but he himself is puzzled by the anomaly of a great artist and a foolish man fused in one person. Krutch resolves the problem

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<sup>24</sup>Letters of Gray, ed., John Beresford (Oxford, 1925), 241.

<sup>25</sup>See, e.g., Chester Norman's Mr. Oddity: Samuel Johnson, LL.D., Krutch's Samuel Johnson, Fr. Knox's "Dr. Johnson" in Literary Distractions, (New York, 1958).

in terms which are much more uncharitable than those of Macaulay. He describes Boswell as a neurotic:

The old debate over the question whether Boswell was a genius or a fool began more than a hundred years before his Private Papers were brought to light....Boswell was not a fool, though he did and said many incredibly foolish things. But he was, as he boasted in a series of periodical essays published between 1777 and 1783, a hypochondriac--which is, of course, one of the eighteenth-century terms for what we call a neurotic, or a man who lives in a world of sick imagination....A fool cannot become on occasion a great artist. A normal man who is also an artist cannot on occasion sink to the imbecile level of work like the poem No Abolition of Slavery, or The Universal Empire of Love, which Boswell published about a month before the Life of Johnson and of which he was very proud. But a neurotic can do both....<sup>26</sup>

But these are the remarks of Macaulay in paraphrase. If we quibble about what is meant by "fool" and "neurotic," the argument loses its force. Both writers see that there is a conflict, and both suggest resolutions which are very much alike.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> p. 229, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World Inc., 1944, 1963).

<sup>27</sup> Other elements of this book by Krutch suggest a striking similarity to the essay of Macaulay. For example Boswell's quest for a "name" to attach himself to is brought out with force and scholarship by Krutch; so is the estimation of Boswell's character by his contemporaries. Samuel Johnson also uses some of Garrick's notes and Hannah More's which were also used by Macaulay. The effect is to enforce the judgments of Macaulay.

But the description of Boswell in Macaulay's essay is only one of the elements in the study. Macaulay had high praise for the criticism, especially the Lives of the English Poets, of Johnson. In our own time this may not seem to be important because Johnson has had such a tremendous revival. In the period discussed, however, both Pope and Johnson were having to endure some fairly trenchant criticism which would endure to the time of Pater.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, the charge of "whiggism" so often applied to the criticism and History of Macaulay does not stand up if we evaluate the praise given to Johnson the man. Macaulay was severe with Boswell, but he reserved the highest praise for the greatness of Johnson, which greatness is only now coming into its full appreciation.<sup>29</sup>

Macaulay's study of Francis Bacon and his philosophy is possibly even more controversial than the two already discussed essays of Macaulay. To many "Lord Bacon" (1842) represents the supreme inability of Macaulay to treat a philosophical subject (Bacon's work). Others resent his extended remarks on the moral turpitude of Bacon; and still others

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<sup>28</sup>Carlyle's description of Johnson should be discounted for several reasons, principally because it is not critical, and because the remarks of Johnson's philosophy of life show his ignorance of much of Johnson's poetry and prose.

<sup>29</sup>See Walter Jackson Bate's The Achievement of Samuel Johnson, (Oxford, 1961).

resent his remarks on the philosophy of Plato and the Roman stoic philosophers.

James Spedding took two volumes in an attempt to clear Bacon's name from the severe criticism of Macaulay. Those who have read Spedding may judge whether or not he was a success, but he used no new material; nor did he contest the sources of Macaulay. A similar method was used in 1949.<sup>30</sup> But Professor Anderson reiterates the charges of Macaulay, and his own analysis does not differ from that of Macaulay.<sup>31</sup>

Cardinal Newman states quite explicitly that he concurs with the interpretation of Bacon offered by Macaulay. The Fifth Discourse of the Idea of a University is based on his reading of Macaulay. Newman writes:

It will be seen that on the whole I agree with Lord Macaulay in his Essay on Bacon's Philosophy. I do not know whether he would agree with me.<sup>32</sup>

Certainly the description of what is meant by Liberal Education (i.e. non-religious and non-utilitarian) which is presented in the Idea takes its negative definition from Bacon's

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<sup>30</sup>Cf. Edward D. Johnson, "Francis Bacon versus Lord Macaulay," in Bulletin of the Baconian Society, (London: Lopworth & Co., 1949). Both Johnson and Spedding do not contest the interpretation of Bacon's philosophy by Macaulay.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. Fulton H. Anderson, The Philosophy of Francis Bacon, (University of Chicago Press, 1948), 5, 6, 8.

<sup>32</sup>(New York: Longman's, Green, & Co., 1947), 104.

insistence upon the "ends" or purpose of philosophy and knowledge. Professor Dwight enforces my argument:

....yet Bacon was himself one of the great synthetic intelligences. In the celebrated essay by Lord Macaulay, which Newman had before him as he wrote, it was said that "the art which Bacon taught was the art of creating arts. The knowledge in which Bacon excelled all men, was a knowledge of the mutual relations of all departments of knowledge." Curiously enough, the former phrase is a precise description of philosophic prima as Bacon defined it, and the latter of the same science as defined by Newman.<sup>33</sup>

Thus if Macaulay was mistaken in his analysis and interpretation, the mistake was ultimately perpetuated in the highest and most critical circle. It is not easy in this instance, as well as in every other, to escape the conclusion that many of Macaulay's most virulent critics are, at best, ill-acquainted with his work.

Newman agreed with him in all but one point of his study on Bacon. I have shown that while so many critics reject and castigate Macaulay for his analysis and treatment of Boswell, many will unconsciously "demonstrate" his conclusions. None, even with the finding of the Malahide Papers, have been

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<sup>33</sup>The Imperial Intellect, (Yale University Press, 1955), 187. The point on which Newman disagreed with Macaulay and others is that he, unlike Macaulay, did not think that the end of learning was virtue. Cf. Idea...esp. Discourse V et seq; or see Culver's remarks on page 260.

able to surpass his command of the subject matter. Of Milton the same is true. Thackeray described Macaulay as the greatest biographer of Addison and had high praise for the various essays. And it was he who first directed attention to the highly informed (i.e. masterly use of factual data) style of Macaulay.<sup>34</sup> Christopher Dawson described "Southey's Colloquies" as a product of genius.<sup>35</sup>

If we compare the remarks of Matthew Arnold on the person and poetry of Byron or Milton with the same of Macaulay, it might be difficult to say whose are the more valuable. Moreover, the catholicity of taste which we find in Macaulay was quite beyond the confines of Arnold's theory of literature. "Dryden" (1828) and the various remarks on Pope sprinkled throughout the essays were quite foreign (in general) in their fairness to the scope of romantic and Victorian critics.

Macaulay's objection to the Restoration Drama has been the object of continual sport for men like Bonamy Dobree. And the popularity of works by Congreve, Wycherly, Etheridge, and others of this period indicate the error of Macaulay's

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<sup>34</sup>The Four Georges, (New York: Collier, 1902), 150-54.

<sup>35</sup>Christopher Dawson, The Spirit of the Oxford Movement, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1933), 28.

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puritan criticism. But was he wrong in his evaluation? Are the Restoration dramatists a good influence not only on the audience but also the theater which followed? And is it not true that the villain is the hero of Restoration Comedy?

Samuel Johnson would have agreed with Macaulay:

The wits of Charles found easier ways to  
fame,  
Nor wish'd for Jonson's art, or Shakespeare's  
flame:  
Themselves they studied, as they felt, they  
writ;  
Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit;  
Vice always found a sympathetick friend;  
They pleas'd their age, and did not aim to  
mend.  
Yet bards, like these, aspir'd to lasting  
praise,  
And proudly hop'd to pimp in future days.  
Their cause was gen'ral, their supports were  
strong;  
Their slaves were willing, and their reign  
was long:  
Till shame regain'd the post that sense  
betray'd,  
And virtue call'd oblivion to her aid.  
Then, crushed by rules and weaken'd, as  
refin'd,  
For years the pow'r of tragedy declin'd;  
From bard to bard the frigid caution crept,  
Till declamation roar'd, while passion slept;  
Yet still did virtue deign the stage to tread,  
Philosophy remain'd, though nature fled.<sup>36</sup>

I have suggested continuously in this study that Macaulay was essentially an Augustan by temperament. Spiritually, he was a disciple of the Enlightenment. Even before he

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<sup>36</sup>"Prologue to the Opening of the Drury Lane Theater, 1747."

came to write his opus magnum he had been extremely well acquainted with the achievement of the eighteenth century. In itself this sympathy is a rare achievement, for the Victorians were a notoriously insular generation.

The faults of Macaulay in style and in methods of investigation are in large part the faults of this generation. Most of the critics of the period were too much given to historical criticism, and Macaulay was not least among these. He had a constant recourse to what is described as "Hegeliz- ing" artists and figures of genius. One of the important themes of his historical technique is thus expressed:

For, in fact, it is the age that forms the man, not the man that forms the age. Great minds do indeed re-act on the society which has made them what they are; but they only pay with interest what they have received. We extol Bacon and sneer at Aquinas. But, if their situations had been changed, Bacon might have been the Angelical Doctor, the most subtle Aristotelian of the schools; the Dominican might have led forth the sciences from their house of bondage. If Luther had been born in the tenth century, he would have effected no reformation. If he had never been born at all, it is evident that the sixteenth century could not have elapsed without a great schism in the church. [Macaulay's remarks on Voltaire, Pascal, Locke, Copernicus, Newton, and Columbus continue on this theme.]<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> "Dryden" in Works, 1, 232-233.

Still this technique is an important clue to the enthusiasm of Macaulay for the Victorian moment. For it was obvious that in his time a cultural and scientific milieu would propagate even greater refinements in taste and learning.

Macaulay's History of England in its day outsold the popular fiction; in our own time it is more widely criticized than read. In treating the Essays I made the remark that Macaulay's great gift of style, his striking clarity, had been a principal factor in his decline of reputation: he appears to over-simplify literary or historical problems. Of the History this criticism is even more widely used. Its justness may be questioned.

Macaulay retired from public life and began to study for the writing of the work in 1842. This indicates that he spent seven years in preparation for the first volume. It is wrong, therefore, to suggest that he was either unprepared or unscientific in his preparation or writing. The ease of style which he exhibits has led some critics to dismiss him as superficial. But as Mark Pattison has written:

The wonderful style of the narrative hides effectively the wealth of scholarship which underlies every sentence.<sup>38</sup>

Lord Acton's endorsement of Macaulay has already been cited,

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<sup>38</sup>Memoirs, (London: Macmillan Co., 1885), 284.

and Acton was an historian of great reputation. Both writers shared a common enthusiasm for the spread of liberty: the extension of Liberal doctrines of progress and civil liberty; in parliamentary government; in material welfare; and above all in toleration. Macaulay, therefore, was naturally inclined to chronicle those events which had made these acquisitions possible, but his antipathy to the Tories is not nearly so pervasive as most have supposed. D. C. Somervell (an historian) has observed:

The History is unsparing in its condemnation of numerous Whig politicians from Shaftesbury (of Charles II's reign) onwards, and often justifies the Tories against the Whigs on particular issues. He held a Whig philosophy but he was anything but a dutiful henchman of the old Whig party.<sup>39</sup>

Other groups, both religious and political, found reason to complain of Macaulay's abuse. His description of the seventeenth century Highlander would not have been amiss for a North American Indian. His criticism of the Quakers and of the Scotch clergy in the discussed period was bound to attract criticism. But the reader of Swift will find Macaulay comparatively temperate; moreover when he was criticized by a group of Quaker clergymen (in a visit to his

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<sup>39</sup>English Thought in the Nineteenth Century, (London Historical Society Pamphlet, No. 107), 92.

house), he produced his scholarly documents and offered to have them published. The clergymen departed quickly and held their silence.<sup>40</sup>

The Anglican clergy were equally enraged at some of his Latitudinarian remarks on the origins of the Anglican church; one of them wrote a book-length attack of certain arguments of Macaulay:

The Author, in presenting to the public, at the suggestion of several friends, a Second Edition of his strictures on that portion of Mr. Macaulay's History of England, which relates to the Reformation, feels some degree of satisfaction, in reflecting that the statements which he advanced in the first edition remain unre-  
futed.<sup>41</sup>

But the judgment of the above is wrong. From principle Macaulay never answered his critics. In this respect his

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<sup>40</sup> Lord Greville records this incident in his Diary: "The sect of Quakers had been in high dudgeon with Macaulay, for what they considered an unjust attack upon Penn in his History. They demanded an interview, which he at once granted, and they remonstrated with him....Quakers denied the facts, but Macaulay produced all the official documents...they were floored. Macaulay offered to print the documents...,but they were in no hurry to accept this proposal." Leaves from His Diary, ed. Enfield (1849), 320.

<sup>41</sup> The Reformers of the Anglican Church and Mr. Macaulay's History of England, (2nd ed.; London, 1850), 2.

habit reminds us very much of that of Johnson, for the argument of the pair was that this refutation gives immortality to the critic. Advocates of William Penn and Marlborough have also found much to complain of in the History. But though the strictures of Macaulay are phrased in the strongest possible language, they are usually just and have stood the severest scrutiny.<sup>42</sup>

There are then three bodies of detractors: those who combed his work for errors, those who did not like the spirit of his work (those who claimed he was not scientific or scholarly), and those who objected to his treatment of their heroes. As in the instance of the Essays, the critics of the History have been mainly concerned with his positiveness and assertive qualities of style. Many feel the historian is to be cast in the role of a jurymen not an advocate or Judge and have accordingly objected to the tone of the History. But the scholarship of the work has stood the severest tests of its quality.

Most scholars of the Victorian age are forced to deal with the problem of explaining the popularity of Macaulay. There is a better test in measuring a writer's importance and achievement. Professor Abbott has observed:

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<sup>42</sup>Among the most severe critics of Macaulay on particular points of his History must be included: Hugh Miller, Macaulay on Scotland, (Boston, 1857); William Aytoun, Lays of Ancient Cavaliers, (Edinburgh, 1858).

There is a better test than numbers or longevity; it is the test of quality as revealed by taste and knowledge; and between these two, historians' reputations are in parlous state. Macaulay would seem to have chosen the feeblest of foundations for enduring fame. Halfway between a science and an art, history has three potent enemies--the finding of new facts, a changing taste in style, and an alteration in the spirit of the world. Works of imagination, poems, novels, plays, suffer no loss by new discoveries; scientific works have little style to lose; but history, however grand its style, may be displaced by new found documents; however unassailable its facts, its style may make it quite unreadable; and even the change in men's outlook may make it distasteful to them.<sup>43</sup>

More than any other single factor, "the change of men's outlooks" has effected the decline of Macaulay's reputation.

The famous "third chapter," with all its controversial and disagreeable characteristics, is a perfect statement of this change in men's outlooks. In it of course Macaulay draws out elaborate descriptions, comparisons, and contrasts between the seventeenth century and the time of his day.

Again this is not an instance of Victorian "smugness" or self-satisfaction. The purpose of this chapter is to aid the understanding of the modern reader by contrasting the geography and achievements of earlier periods with those of the present

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<sup>43</sup>"Macaulay and the New History," Yale Review, XVIII, (Spring, 1929), 547.

day.<sup>44</sup> Clarity was the first end of all Macaulay's writings

The first rule of all writing--that rule to which every other is subordinate is that the words used by the writer shall be such as most fully and precisely convey his meaning to the great body of his readers.<sup>45</sup>

For many readers, accustomed to the prose of Ruskin, Arnold, and Carlyle, this clarity has been the instigation of some highly unfair criticism. In the History he obtains this clarity by endless detail of every variety. His knowledge of politics, no doubt, gave him assistance in describing court room scenes (e.g. Oates' trial); and while the narrative is brilliant a certain tedium is unavoidable. But again the charge of partisanship or superficial scholarship is useless, in this instance, against Macaulay.

The theme of progress in the commercial, political, and military spheres is present in abundance. Above all these advances is the progressive acquisition of civil liberties.<sup>46</sup> For it was in the possession of these liberties that England, during the time of Macaulay, led every European

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<sup>44</sup>Cf. Samuel Chew's treatment of the History in The Nineteenth Century and After in A Literary History of England, ed. Albert Baugh, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc., 1948), 1329.

<sup>45</sup>Letter, April 18, 1842 in Trevelyan, 11, 164.

<sup>46</sup>Cf. History: "The Second Parliament" and "King William in Ireland," 111.

nation.<sup>47</sup> His confidence, therefore, from an historical point of view--both of times past and time present--was not misplaced.

This confidence combined with the elaborate clarity of Macaulay is one of the striking features of his prose style. In historical terms it is generally just. In terms of literature and the critic's task, some will find it painful, even when he is right or "just" in his estimation. The student of literature may not be interested in the vagaries of Byron, Boswell, Johnson, or Addison, which Macaulay displays with an unflinching moral confidence. Cardinal Newman has written:

There are surely many things a man may hold, which at the same time he may feel that he has no right to say publicly, and which it may annoy him that he has said publicly. The law recognizes this principle. In our own time, men have been imprisoned and fined for saying true things of a bad king. The maxim has been held, that, "The greater the truth, the greater the libel."...No one is at liberty to speak ill of another without a justifiable reason, even though he knows he is speaking truth, and the public knows it too.<sup>48</sup>

A reader might justly complain of Macaulay, not that he was

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<sup>47</sup>Cf. Brun's second chapter in Nineteenth Century European Civilization, (Oxford, 1960).

<sup>48</sup>Apologia, ed.cit., 195.

inaccurate or shallow or superficial, but that he was too just and too stridently moral. One critic has observed:

Granting that some of the reflections on Boswell's character are true, the defects with which he is charged are mainly those which for most people are a subject for leniant regret and not contemptuous abuse.<sup>49</sup>

Macaulay may be considered by some to have been (at best) imprudent in describing the multiple vagaries of Boswell and others in his essays and in the History. Certainly the use of moral criticism gives a characteristic tone to the style of Macaulay; moreover, Macaulay may claim a healthy and extensive precedent for this technique, going back to Boswell himself:

And he will be seen as he really was; for I profess to write not his panegyric, which must be all praise, but his Life; which, great and good as he was, must not be supposed to be entirely perfect....there should be shade as well as light.<sup>50</sup>

Johnson, as well, was quite insistent upon such a theory of biography. And if the student recalls his treatment of Swift, Milton, Pope, his practice will be seen to concur with his theory. Now Macaulay probably modeled his own practice in the pieces for the Edinburgh Review on the Lives of the English Poets. Their structure and use of separation (i.e., life

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<sup>49</sup>H. A. Morgan, "Boswell and Macaulay," Contemporary Review, (January, 1958), 29.

<sup>50</sup>Life of Samuel Johnson, (London: Huteson Co., 1906), 4.

of the subject, qualities of his mind, and characteristics of his poetry) are strikingly identical. With all this denouncement, Macaulay was wonderfully fair to the discussed works or material. His enthusiasm for the literature of the preceding century was, as I have said, rare even in his day.

Arnold's criticism of this "enthusiasm" is well known. He described it as a "heightened and telling way of putting things,"<sup>51</sup> and Arnold seems to have opposed every thing that Macaulay loved. But Arnold, it may be objected was no more correct on Macaulay and Liberalism,<sup>52</sup> than he was on Chaucer, Dryden, and Pope. It may well be questioned who understood Milton better, Arnold or Macaulay. Certainly Macaulay wrote or talked of literature with an intense appreciation or enthusiasm; and his taste in literature, both English and continental, was notoriously more catholic than any of the romantics (including Arnold). This appreciation generally proved contagious, and it is one of the striking characteristics of his style. Arnold described Burke as a

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<sup>51</sup>"Wordsworth," in The Portable Matthew Arnold, 3rd ed.; New York: Viking Press, 1959), 331.

<sup>52</sup>Dawson has described this liberalism thus: "But the liberal ideology is much more...and the tradition out of which that ideology arose is greater still. For this tradition has been central to Western civilization and in spite of the defects and disillusion of the last thirty years it is still a living force in the world today. The Judgment of Nations, (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1928), 61.

writer of "extravagant prose; prose too much suffered to indulge its caprices; prose at too great a distance from the centre of good taste..."<sup>53</sup> One feels that he would have described Macaulay in similar terms. The quarrel with the prose of Burke is that it is provincial. But Macaulay, with the striking quality of his style, is anything but provincial. The continental reputation of Macaulay in his time was generally high; his reputation in America perhaps exceeded all other's.<sup>54</sup>

Once more his striking clarity and the means by which he obtained it have been instrumental in his decline of reputation. Many will feel that Macaulay is frequently or at least occasionally in bad taste. His "enthusiasm" clearly points in that direction. The certitude with which he addressed himself to historical, literary, or political problems is without gradation. In this study through various means I have tried to show that this quality in Macaulay was not amiss and that in his period this confidence was, relatively speaking, deserved.

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<sup>53</sup>"Essays in Criticism, First Series," in English Prose of the Victorian Era, ed. C. F. Harrold and W. D. Templeman, (Oxford, 1938), 1077.

<sup>54</sup>Cf. "The Vogue of Macaulay in America," Transactions of The Wisconsin Academy of Arts and Letters, XIII (1948).

It is difficult for a modern not to long for the Victorian era. As we have seen, it was a time of peace and liberty, rise and progress. When we look closely at the history of the mid-nineteenth century, it is difficult to forgive Carlyle for his incessant railing. Since most writers of the Victorian period refer to Dante at one place or another in their prose, it is doubly difficult to excuse their own continuous lament, for Dante reserved a special corner in hell for those who never knew joy. Again, Johnson thought it sinful to be gloomy. Now Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold were habituated to general castigation both general and personal. Dickens made a fortune describing the plight of the poor. Macaulay's contributions on every level, but particularly political and social, were as great as any Victorian save Newman. Arnold's description of a vast body of countrymen as "philistines" and "barbarous philistines" at that is far more severe and unjust than anything conceived of by Macaulay. Dawson has observed on this habit of Arnold:

Yet I do not think it can be said that his influence was great on the thing that mattered most and on which he was most right, namely the spiritual foundation of culture. Not only so, but he was himself in part responsible for the general unpopularity and bad odour into which the idea of culture has fallen in England.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Understanding Europe, (New York: Doubleday Co., 1952, 1960), 226.

Macaulay's reputation has certainly reached its nadir. I cannot think that this is just; moreover, the exclusion of Macaulay from serious critical interest, as in the case of Basil Willey's two studies on the age,<sup>56</sup> has led others following his tradition into some serious critical error. A recent article in Victorian Studies illustrates this confusion.<sup>57</sup> John W. Bicknell contends that the publication of Leslie Stephen's English Thought in the Eighteenth Century was symptomatic of a change in climate for the nineteenth century:

To explain why Stephen buried himself among the dusty volumes of the English Deists we need something more than a literary device. Nor does this device suggest to us the obvious fact that in turning to the eighteenth century, Stephen was responding in his own way to the pressures of his age....he was sharing with his contemporaries an impulse to reconsider the death sentence passed by Carlyle on that "Bankrupt Century."<sup>58</sup>

Hence, Bicknell argues, one of the dominant characteristics of the later half of the Victorian age is a revival of interest in the history and literature of the eighteenth

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<sup>56</sup>Nineteenth Century Studies, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1949), and More Nineteenth Century Studies, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1952).

<sup>57</sup>John W. Bicknell, "Leslie Stephen's English Thought in the Eighteenth Century: A Tract for the Times," Victorian Studies, VI.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 106.

century. Now Macaulay maintained this interest, not only in himself but in his readers, up to the time of his death (1860).

Yet such a study serves to illustrate the unique quality of Macaulay's sympathies, qualities which were present in none of the other major writers of the period. Yet, one might ask with Walter Bagehot, whether Macaulay misdirected his talents:

The only thing which detracts from the pleasure of reading these volumes, is the doubt whether they should have been written. Should not these great powers be reserved for great periods? Is this abounding, picturesque style suited for continuous history? Are small men to be so largely described.<sup>59</sup>

Most would answer in the affirmative to these questions; but what is not frequently realized is that it is not the style which preserves Macaulay, but the scholarship beneath the style. A specialist in the eighteenth century<sup>60</sup> has written of Macaulay:

In spite of all the criticism which can be levelled against it, the History remains a great work of literature and scholarship. And so do Macaulay's essays. In a hundred years England has not produced an historian of his stature.

He failed even to complete the reign of William III and he was honest enough to admit that his work fell short of

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<sup>59</sup>Literary Studies, 3 vols., (New York: Longman's Green, and Co., 1898), II, 42-43.

<sup>60</sup>J. H. Plumb is the author of England in the Eighteenth Century, (Penguin Series, 1950).

the highest achievements in the writing of history. Nevertheless, it remains one of the greatest historical works in the English language, second only to Gibbon's.<sup>61</sup>

Macaulay then was a great writer of powerful ideas. Many of these ideas, it is true, have since been rejected as either untrue or unsatisfactory. I have argued throughout this paper that Lord Macaulay was one of the great geniuses of his time and that in terms of what he described as "the rarest of intellectual distinctions," (the writing of history) he was the most eminently successful. His study of history, it is true, is the history of rise and progress, filled with Victorian confidence and optimism. And it is sadly true that this optimism has since disappeared. The idea of Progress was traced, in the fourth chapter, through its most illustrious protagonists in an effort to show that it is not a piece of bourgeois idealism.

Macaulay's theory of literature and of criticism may appear even more archaic than his enthusiasm for the idea of Progress. Nevertheless, if we may judge by precedent, a theory did exist; and it was supported by a fairly brilliant line of poets, critics, and scholars. Moreover, a limited number of modern critics have come forward to

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<sup>61</sup>J. H. Plumb, "Thomas Babington Macaulay," UTQ, XXVI (1956), 28, 30.

support certain aspects of this primitivistic theory.<sup>62</sup>

Cardinal Newman has written that "Public men care very little for books....,"<sup>63</sup> and if this is generally the rule for politicians, it is certainly not true for Macaulay. His contributions to all levels of Victorian life were far too significant to admit of such a statement.

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<sup>62</sup>Northrup Frye can be included among these; but more important is a critic like Philip Wheelright, "Poetry, Myth, and Reality," in The Language of Poetry (and the other essays in this anthology) edited by Allen Tate, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960). For a good survey of criticism as a progressive science see R. S. Crane's The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry, (University of Chicago, 1953). For a scholarly essay which implicitly supports the study of Dryden by Macaulay, and the theory of criticism which Macaulay took from Dryden, see "Dryden and the Issue of Human Progress," Earl Miner, PQ, 40 (1961).

<sup>63</sup>Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, (New York: Doubleday Co., 1960), 229.

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Amasinghe, Upali, Dryden and Pope in the Nineteenth Century, Cambridge University, 1962, 214 p.

This work shows the tradition which still recognized the poetic claims of Dryden and Pope during this period; it also shows what an important figure Macaulay was in maintaining their reputations in the nineteenth century.

Annan, Noel, "The Strands of Unbelief," Listener, (March 25, 1948), 331-332.

This essay traces the modern unbelief back to its origins in the Victorian period.

-----, "Verdict on Macaulay," The New Statesman and Nation, (Feb., 1953), 180.

The essay reiterates the charge of philistinism against Macaulay.

Arnold, Frederick, The Public Life of Lord Macaulay London, Tinsley, 1862, 364 p.

This is one of the first biographies on Macaulay. It shows that Macaulay was generally respected by his contemporaries.

Arnold, Matthew, Essays, New York, The Viking Press, 1959, 657 p.

This is the arch-critic of Macaulay. The above edition is not the only one used in this study, but it was the most comprehensive of the brief editions.

Arnott, Neil, A Survey of Human Progress, London, Longmans, Green, 1861, 188 p.

This work is important because it confirms the reasons for the optimism of Macaulay.

Baillie, John, The Belief in Progress, Oxford, 1950, 240 p.

An exceptionally good work which treats the philosophical as well as the scientific aspects of the idea of Progress. This author believes in it, and he calls for a reinvestigation of its claims.

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One of the few studies on Macaulay in our century. In the established manner this writer is always superior to his subject matter. His criticism of the Essays and of the History is commonplace, but he does call our attention to the influence of the Claphams on the young Macaulay.

Becker, Carl L., Progress and Power, Stanford University Press, 1936, 102 p.

Becker traces the influence of historical study on the idea of Progress in these three lectures. He accounts for the idea as a reality and determinate force in historical study.

-----, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers, New Haven, 1961, 168 p.

Becker investigates the element of optimism in the philosophy of this period. He concludes that the philosophy is more traditional in its outlook than many have supposed.

Blair, Hugh, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, 3 vols., Edinburgh, 1783.

This work is part of the Scotch primitivist tradition. It presents some variants on the theme, but his argument that the first men were all poets and that the primitive ages were periods in which the greatest works of the imagination were produced is in common with the tradition.

Bowle, John, "The Idea of Progress," Listener, (Feb. 12, 1948), 272-73.

This writer traces the idea to the Victorian age and shows its influence on Victorian thought.

Brun, Geoffrey, Nineteenth Century European Civilization, Oxford, 1961, 256 p.

An important work for its reflections on the contributions of the middle-classes to the stability of the Victorian period; Brun also concludes that much of the optimism of the period (as described in Macaulay) was deserved.

Buckley, Jerome, The Victorian Temper, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1951, 282 p.

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-----, "The Science of History," Cambridge, 1903, 38 p.

This is the inaugural speech of Bury. In it we can trace the new attitude towards history which was to antiquate the practice of the preceding century.

Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. XIV, edited by Sir A. W. Ward and A. P. Waller, New York, G. P. Putnam, 1917.

The estimation of Macaulay is unique in its esteem of the writer and of the historian.

Chesterton, Gilbert Keith, The Victorian Age in Literature, New York, Henry Holt, 1931, 256 p.

Chesterton has his prejudices, but in spite of them he has written a fairly good study of the literature of this period.

Chew, Samuel, The Nineteenth Century and After, New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948, 402 p.

This is one of the best surveys available of the period. There are some notable deficiencies. The treatment on Newman, Hopkins, and Macaulay is not adequate.

Clements, H., Lord Macaulay, His Life and Writing, London, 1860.

One of the earliest biographies available of Macaulay, Clement's work shows the attitude of many intellectuals towards Macaulay in his own day.

Clive, John, Scotch Reviewers, The Edinburgh Review, Edinburgh, Blackwoods, 1957, 224 p.

This work traces out the influence of the Edinburgh Review on the Victorian mind. It was used extensively in this study because it demonstrates that the vehicle of Jeffrey was less whiggish and more critical than is universally allowed.

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Copleston, Frederick S. J., "Progress and Freedom," Listener, (Feb. 21, 1948), 231-234.

This writer gives us a brief essay on the reputation of Spencer and his use of the idea of Progress.

Croce, Benedetto, History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century, tr. H. Furst, New York, Holt Co., 1937, 333p.

This is the closest realization of Acton's ideal of a history of liberty. Croce gives a close description of the European movement towards the ideal of liberty.

Crawford, Thomas, The Edinburgh Review and Romantic Poetry, Auckland University Press, 1955, 198 p.

A study such as this goes great lengths to restore the reputation of Jeffrey and the Review and by implication Lord Macaulay from the criticism of Wordsworth and Arnold.

Culler, A. Dwight, The Imperial Intellect, New York, Yale University Press, 1958, 327 p.

There are several mistakes in this work, but on the whole it is perhaps the best available study of Newman's educational ideal. Culler shows the indebtedness of Newman to Macaulay on several points, and he shows how Macaulay and Newman differ.

Carver, P. L., "The Sources of Macaulay's Essay on Milton," RES, VI (1930), 48-56.

This essay attributes the study of Macaulay to the influence of Peacock.

Daiches, David, A Critical History of English Literature, 2 vols., New York, Ronald, 1960.

These two volumes are uniformly excellent. Very little is new or controversial in the criticism; the enthusiasm for all of English literature is uniform throughout.

Davies, Godfrey, "The Treatment of Constitutional History in Macaulay's History of England," HLQ, 11 (1939), 179-204.

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-----, Understanding Europe, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1960, 238 p.

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-----, The Judgement of Nations, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1942, 222 p.

This book has very much the same theme as the above. The survey of the strength and weakness of nineteenth century philosophy is very expertly explored.

-----, The Spirit of the Oxford Movement, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1933, 144 p.

This is perhaps the best available study on the Oxford Movement. It is a masterful antidote to Faber, and is uniformly superior to Dean Church's work on the same subject. The writer puts his finger on the central business of the movement: religious, not political, liberalism.

-----, "Devotion to Compromise," Listener, (Feb. 12, 1948), 240-242.

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This collection is a masterpiece. It was used in this study to validate many of the remarks of Macaulay on the circle of Samuel Johnson. The observations of Fanny Burney on Boswell are sufficient evidence of the rectitude of Macaulay's famous pronouncements.

From Dickens to Hardy, edited by Boris Ford, London, Penguin, 1960, 240 p.

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Dove, Patrick, The Theory of Human Progress, New York, Blanchard, 1910, 142 p.

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Duff, William, An Essay on Original Genius, London, 1767, 306 p.

This work is one of the early studies in the primitivist movement. The themes of the primitive genius of Homer and the other epic poets are used in great measure to explain the greatness of these poems.

Fay, C. R., Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century, Cambridge, 1920, 319 p.

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Firth, Sir Charles H., A Commentary on Macaulay's History of England, London, Macmillan Co., 1938, 375 p.

This is the definitive study on Macaulay's History. There are several mistakes in it; and this writer is constantly superior to his subject matter, but his criticism is unusually sound.

-----, "Macaulay's Third Chapter," History, XVII (1932), 180-198.

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Fisher, H. A. L., "The Whig Historians," Proceedings of the British Academy, XIV (1928).

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This book traces the theme of progress through the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Geyl, Pieter, Debates with Historians, The Hague, Holland, 1955, 241 p.

There is a fairly interesting study on Macaulay's Essays in this collection of essays by Geyl.

Green, Frederick, Charles, Rousseau and the Idea of Progress, Oxford, 1950, 20p.

This is an excellent study of the distinctions which Rousseau made concerning the idea of Progress. He did not hold that the world was advancing towards an ideal state.

Greig, James A., Francis Jeffrey of the Edinburgh Review, London, Oliver and Boyd, 1948, 326 p.

This is one of the best available studies on Jeffrey and his contemporary influence. The author stresses in particular the reform impulse that was thematic in the Review and more effective than most of the other criticism of the age.

Gooch, G. P., History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century, New York, Longman's Green Co., 1952.

The study of Macaulay is generally appreciative. The author sometimes regards him as a "Whig-henchman," and he suggests that Ranke's achievement in English history was superior. Lord Acton would have told him different.

Halevy, Elie, A History of the English People, London, Penguin, 1958.

This is one of the best studies of the historical milieu of Macaulay. The author shows the influence of Puritanism upon the social thought of the period.

Hegel, G. W. F., Lectures on the Philosophy of History, tr., J. Sibree, New York, Dover, 1961, 477 p.

One of the best definite endorsements of Protestant Progress, this work points to certain tendencies in German thought which are decidedly unhealthy for the world. As the minor thesis of the book argues, this work suggests the theme of progress and dominance which was to ultimately invalidate for many the idea of Progress.

Hopman, G. J., "Notes on Macaulay," English Studies, V (Feb., 1923), 46-49.

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This is perhaps the best available study on the most illustrious intellectual heir of Macaulay. The author neglects, however, the extreme importance of Macaulay's influence on the historical theory and practice of Acton, which influence Acton himself acknowledged.

Houghton, Walter E., The Victorian Frame of Mind, Yale University Press, 1957.

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Howse, Ernest Marshall, Saints in Politics: The "Clapham Sect" and the Growth of Freedom, University of Toronto Press, 1952.

This work traces the Tory and Whig influence which went into the various reform measures of the early nineteenth century. It was the Claphams possibly that gave Macaulay his keen zeal for reform.

Hume, Lord David, Essays: Literary, Moral, and Political, Edinburgh, 1788, 901 p.

Only a few of these essays were used in this study. The remarks of Hume of the rise and fall of literature and the influences which affect this are a possible source of various similar themes in Macaulay.

Hutton, Graham, "The Conception of Wealth," Listener, (May 13, 1948), 422-24.

This article suggests the physical and moral benefits which were delivered to late Victorians through the efforts of the preceding generation.

Inge, William Ralph, The Idea of Progress, Oxford, 1920, 34 p.

A brief cursory study of the influence of the idea on western thought. Inge claims that the source of the idea is the Jewish quest.

-----, The Victorian Age, Cambridge, 1922, 54 p.

The writer traces many of the marvelous aspects of the Victorian age. He writes with enthusiasm on a period that seems hardly the same as that of Arnold, Ruskin, or Carlyle.

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The writer links commerce and opulence to the development of the Fine Arts. He remarks that the outlet of wealth should be the development of these arts.

Knowles, David, Macaulay, Cambridge, 1960, 30 p.

This brief study was the only major publication in honor of the hundred years after the death of Macaulay. Knowles gives several authorities who consider Macaulay the greatest of all English historians.

Krutch, Joseph Wood, Samuel Johnson, New York, Harcourt, Brace, & World Co., 1963, 595 p.

This is one of the greatest available studies on Johnson. Its author is very much opposed to Macaulay's description of Boswell, but he goes (unconsciously) to great lengths to affirm the verdict of Macaulay.

Macaulay, Thomas Babington, The Works, New York, Collier, 1903.

This is the first of several editions which I was forced to use.

-----, The Works, Cambridge, 1860.

This was the definitive edition for many years.

-----, History of England, London, J. M. Dent Sons, 1958.

This was the cheap edition used for convenience in making allusions to the text.

The Marginal Notes of Lord Macaulay, edited by Sir. G. O. Trevelyan, London, Longman's, Green, Co., 1907, 65 p.

This work is less commonly known. In it are the comments of Macaulay on the literatures and histories of several nations.

Lovejoy, Arthur O., The Great Chain of Being, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1936, 1960, 371 p.

This work has an introductory chapter which served as a partial model and inspiration for this work.

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Marvin, F. S., The Century of Hope, Oxford, 1919, 314 p.

This author traces many of the romantic aspects of this century's development. He has a cosmopolitan scope of interest.

Miner, Earl, "Dryden and the Issue of Human Progress," Philological Quarterly, 1 (1961), 48-64.

This article confirms some of the remarks of Macaulay on Dryden.

Merz, John Theodore, A History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century, 4 vols., Edinburgh, Blackwood's Sons, 1896-1914.

This is the longest and most difficult work in the bibliography. Merz makes his division between scientific thought (vols., 1, 11) and philosophic thought (vols., 111, 1V). His thought seems to be generally concerned with explicating the German philosophers. The attention to philosophic thought is also concerned in the main with the German philosophers.

Mill, John Stuart, Autobiography, New York, Collier, 1907, 199 p.

This work hardly needs description. It is important in this study for its recognition of Macaulay's non-utilitarian habits of thought.

Monboddo, Lord, The Origin and Progress of Language, 6 vols., Edinburgh, 1774-1792.

This is the best study of the "primitives." Monboddo presents the thesis that the early unspoiled language was the most suited for great poetry.

Morgan, H. A., "Boswell and Macaulay," Contemporary Review, CXCI (1958).

This work questions the value of Macaulay's essay on Johnson and Boswell. The critic dislikes the strong language of Macaulay, and claims that the value of the essay is lessened because of it.

Morison, John Cotter, Macaulay, English Men of Letter Series, London, 1889, 186 p.

Morison is fairly severe in his criticism of Macaulay. He does not contest the facts or the scholarship of Macaulay, but he strongly resents the manner of certitude in the historian.

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Morley, John, Macaulay, London, 1894, 105p.

Morley is one of the honest doubters, and he, as well as Morison, dislikes the strong confidence of Macaulay. But he does insist upon his greatness as a writer.

Munroe, David, "Macaulay, the Study of an Historian" Queen's Quarterly, XLVI (1924).

This is a brief study on some of the techniques, scholarly and narrative, of Macaulay.

Newman, John Henry Cardinal, Apologia Pro Vita Sua, edited by A. Dwight Culler, Boston, Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1956, 384 p.

This work is of great importance to this study because of its detailed analysis of the evils of liberalism (religious). Newman also points out the benefits that were derived from the various reform measures of the period. On one point alone he contests the verdict of Macaulay on Sir T. More.

-----, Idea of a University, edited by Charles F. Harrold, New York, Longman's, Green, Co., 1947, 413 p.

This work was cited to show the widespread influence of Macaulay on the thought of his time. It is hardly possible after Newman's commendation to consider Macaulay as a superficial writer..

"Christianity and Physical Science," in The Idea of a University, ed.cit., 1947.

Newman's use of Macaulay in demonstrating the theme of the essay is extensive.

Paget, John, The New Examen, Edinburgh, 1861, 400 p.

This is the most detailed negative criticism of Macaulay's History. The pains of the critic are obvious, and his scholarship is extensive. His complaints are still essentially Tory in their approach.

Parsons, James, Remains of Japhet: Being an Historical Enquiry into the Affinity and Origin of European Languages, Edinburgh, 1782.

This work suggests that the first languages were naturally more conducive to great poetry because of their greater strength.

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Percy, Hugh, An Essay on the Ancient Minstrels in England, Philadelphia, 1823, 204 p.

This work is part of the Scotch tradition. The ancient minstrels were the greatest of English poets because they had an unpolished language to work with and because the imaginative faculty was not impaired by the growth of science.

Pinkerton, John, Dissertation of the Oral Tradition of Poetry, 2 vols., London, 1781.

This is another work in this tradition of primitivism, largely concerned with Scottish poetry.

Plumb, J. H., "Thomas Babington Macaulay," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXVI (1956).

This is one of the best brief studies on Macaulay's achievement as an historian.

G. R. Potter, Macaulay, Writers and Their Work Series, New York, Longman's, Green, Co., 1959, 48 p.

This is a brief biographical and critical study of Macaulay. The criticism is fairly commonplace.

Priestly, Joseph, Essay on Government, London, 1768, 191 p.

This is one of the eighteenth century figures who maintained that society and science were progressing towards an unknown yet miraculous goal.

Sensabaugh, G. G., That Grand Whig Milton, Columbia University Press, 1952, 213 p.

This is a fairly interesting study of Milton's political prose. It is important because it shows the intellectual tradition which resulted in Victorian liberalism and tolerance. Also the work shows the vicious criticism (Tory) of Milton.

Somerwell, David, C., English Thought in the Nineteenth Century, New York, Longman's, Green, Co., 1940, 241 p.

This is an excellent work. Its achievement is to show the variety of Victorian thought as well as its unity. It may be noted that Macaulay is included among the "thinkers."

-----, The Victorian Age, London, G. Bell Sons, 1937, 30 p.

This book is equally sound. The interpretation of the Oxford Movement leaves something to be desired.

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Spedding, James, Evenings with a Reviewer, 2 vols., London, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1881.

It is interesting to note the pains and painful manner of Spedding to refute the charges of Macaulay. He uses two volumes in a "Socratic" manner, but he neglects Bacon's remarks on his own guilt, as well as the essay in which he describes the "method" of advancement.

Stephen, Sir James, Essays, 2 vols., London, 1850.

One of the above essays is a warm endorsement of the achievement of Macaulay as an historian.

-----, Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography, 2 vols., London, 1860.

All of these essays were first published in the Edinburgh Review, and they are a partial commentary on the variety of subject matter in the journal, as it were "the play of the mind." The description of the Clapham Sect is especially useful as regards this study.

Stephen, Leslie, Hours in a Library, 3 vols., London, Smith, Elder Co., 1892.

There is an interesting essay on Macaulay in this collection. It was Macaulay who helped Stephen become established as an historian, and both shared an interest in the literature and philosophy of the preceding century.

Strachey, Lytton, Eminent Victorians, London, Chatto and Windus, 1918, 310 p.

This work hardly needs an introduction. It was important for purposes of this study to show the variety of thought in the period.

-----, Portraits in Miniature, New York, Harcourt, Brace Co., 1931, 217 p.

The tribute to Macaulay in this collection is somewhat lefthanded, but the writer does reiterate the charges of Macaulay on Boswell.

Strong, George B., Adam Smith and the Eighteenth Century Concept of Social Progress, St. Louis, Eden Publishing Co., 1932, 92 p.

This is a doctoral dissertation presented to the University of Chicago. Its thesis is that the concept of progress which Smith advocated in terms of economics had beneficial social connotations.

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Teggert, F. J. ed., The Idea of Progress, A Collection of Readings, Berkeley, California, 1949, 457 p.

This survey is excellent, and the implication that the idea of Progress does have a high intellectual tradition as well as a continental reputation is obvious. The writer is, however, a little too catholic in his selection. Bury has shown and others after him that the idea was foreign to the Greek mind.

-----, Theories of History, Berkeley, California, 1952, 323 p.

The survey includes an essay on the idea of Progress and its relation to the study of history.

Thomson, David, England in the Nineteenth Century, London, 1950, 251 p.

This brief study of the period is excellent. The biography is useful, and my own study has relied heavily on Thomson.

Trevelyan, George Otto, The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay, London, Longman's, Green Co., 1886.

This is one of the great biographies in the language. The criticism of Macaulay's poetry is perhaps overly fond, but the portrait of Macaulay is excellent.

Trevelyn, George Macaulay, Clio: A Muse, New York, Longman's, Green, Co., 1913, 195 p.

This study contains a number of essays of various subjects; most important is his repudiation of the idea that history is science and that its aims and methods are the same.

-----, "The Historical Background," Listener, (Feb. 5, 1948), 278-80.

A brief study of the social and economic advances of the age.

-----, "Macaulay and the Sense of Optimism," Listener, (May, 1948), 239.

Trevelyan justifies the optimism of Macaulay, reasoning that the situation of Victorian England at that time and with those prospects were excellent.

Troeltsch, Ernest, Protestantism and Progress, tr. h. Montgomery, Dover Books, 1961, 210 p.

This work is one of the most important in this bibliography. The author uses a theme of Macaulay that it was Protestantism which was responsible for the tremendous progress in the nineteenth century, and that one of the duties

of the historian is to interpret the progress of the past in terms that will have meaning for the present.

Bibliographies of Studies in Victorian Literature for the Thirteen Years, 1932-1944, edited by William D. Templeman, University of Illinois Press, 1945.

This work is the best general bibliography on the period, but others used in this study are also listed.

Bibliographies of Studies in Victorian Literature, 1945-1958, edited by Austin Wright, University of Illinois Press, 1959.

This work has the same format and general qualities as the above.

Victorian Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism, edited by Austin Wright, Oxford, 1961, 377.

This collection is generally excellent. Objections have been made in my text to the essay on Macaulay, but the merits of the studies on Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold more than make up for this one deficiency.

The Victorians and After, edited by Edith C. Batho and Bonamy Dobree, London, The Cresset Press, 1950, 310 p.

This work has bibliographies of value. The criticism is fairly routine.

Wain, John, Contemporary Reviews of Romantic Poetry, London, Harrop, 1953, 212 p.

This work shows the influence of the Edinburgh Review on the contemporary reputations of Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. It is at once obvious that the criticism of Jeffrey was of a vastly higher order than that of Christopher North.

Wallis, Wilson, D., Culture and Progress, New York, McGraw, 1930, 503 p.

The author shows the varieties of progress which were developed in an earlier century, and which were at their highest achievement during the Victorian era. He also points the way to future attainments.

Wellek, Rene, A History of Modern Criticism, 2 vols., Yale University Press, 1955.

This study was consulted for its treatment of Jeffrey's principles of criticism. Jeffrey was an important force in the evolution of Macaulay's prose style.

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Warton, Thomas, History of English Poetry, 4 vols., London, Thomas Tegg, 1824.

This is a well known work. Like any and every enlightened figure, Warton suggests that poetry was in a constant tradition of refinement which culminated in Pope. This work and the critical themes in it are likely sources for the critical themes of Macaulay.

Whitney, Lois, "Primitivistic Theories of Epic Literature," Modern Philology, XXI (1924), 24-58.

This essay is an excellent introduction to the theory of primitivism in Scotland and England of the eighteenth centuries. The bibliography listed is also excellent.

-----, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress, John Hopkins University Press, 1934, 343 p.

This is an excellent study on the simultaneous growth of these two themes in eighteenth century thought. Both receive ample statement in Macaulay, and Miss Whitney has suggested many possible sources for these themes in Macaulay. Above all her description of the history of thought in the eighteenth century is the first step in what has been the object of this study--to show the intellectual milieu of Macaulay.

Willey, Basil, Nineteenth Century Studied, London, Chatto & Windus, 1949, 287 p.

Except for the omission of Macaulay, this work is excellent. It has been the object of this study, however, and one of the constant minor themes to show that Ruskin, Arnold, and Carlyle are very uncertain guides to their era.

-----, More Nineteenth Century Studies, London, Chatto & Windus, 1952, 304 p.

Again the balance of such a work can be questioned, and the implications of it can be dismissed. The study of Morley is an accurate guide to the change in the climate of opinion that has proven so fatal to the reputation of Macaulay.

Wingfield-Stratford, Esme, Those Earnest Victorians London, Routledge, 1928, 396 p.

This book describes one of the dominant intellectual characteristics of Lord Macaulay and his generation.

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Young, George M., The Victorian England: Portrait of an Age, Oxford University Press, 1960, 213 p.

This is an excellent study of the period. Several of its viewpoints and implications have been contested in this period; and it may be added that the criticism of the literature is not important. Still the author points out the virtues and achievements of the age.

-----, Early Victorian England, 2 vols., Oxford University Press, 1934.

There were a number of other contributors to this work besides Young. These two volumes are perhaps the best historical study on the period.

-----, Essays on the Victorian Period, Oxford, 1962, 198 p.

One of these essays is on the speeches of Lord Macaulay. Young remarks that Macaulay was one of the greatest orators in English history and one of the most influential and constructive political figures of his time.

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

In this study an attempt was made through various means to present Macaulay in his historical and traditional perspective. I have endeavoured to show that Macaulay was not the "arch-philistine" or shallow critic of his age that many have taken him to be. The general method used was that outlined by Professor Lovejoy in his study The Great Chain of Being. The methods of historical criticism, as part of the above, were also widely used. In many places throughout this study attention was called to the fact that the historical moment of Victorian England was much brighter and much more positive than a reader of Dickens, Carlyle, or Arnold might guess.

It was also pointed out that the Essays of Macaulay were neither shallow in their content or in their criticism of their times. Rather they were a reflection of many of the critical themes of the Edinburgh Review and of the eighteenth century. Macaulay was one of the few writers of his time who could still react with enthusiasm to the achievements of the eighteenth century. Moreover, as proof that he was not a shallow critic, an attempt was made to trace many of the critical themes in his prose to earlier critics.

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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The same method was used with the idea of Progress. As we have seen the use of the idea in Macaulay was not an instance of Victorian smugness or complacency; rather it was a reflection of a philosophic theme that was common to Europe in the eighteenth century. Once more, while we may not accept the idea, it is impossible to deny the "intellectual tradition" which it represents.

Attention was directed to the original contributions of Macaulay, how he differed in style and content from the other members of the Edinburgh Review. It was shown that his theory of history and his practice as an historian are quite unique and give indication of a fairly well disciplined intellect. It was also seen that as wide and various as the criticism of Macaulay is, positive criticism of an authoritative stature can be cited. The professional reputation of Macaulay is in our century high; and we may argue by implication and citation that any patent dismissal of his works as superficial can hardly be considered as accurate.