

PACIFISM AND THE GREAT WAR IN DAME ROSE MACAULAY'S *THREE DAYS*

by

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is for those who wish to remember.

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2 CRASHING STARS: HORROR ON THE HOMEFRONT.....	7
CHAPTER 3 MAD UNREASON: A SOLDIER’S TRAUMA.....	17
CHAPTER 4 CAMBRIDGE MEN: BETRAYAL OF A GENERATION.....	21
CHAPTER 5 GUARDING WALLS: APATHY AND ANNOYANCE.....	27
CHAPTER 6 DESPERATE AGE: FORGETTING THE WAR.....	33
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION.....	42
WORKS CITED.....	44

## ABSTRACT

The First World War is often remembered today for muddy trenches, large-scale slaughter and bitter, shell-shocked veterans. This incomplete, but popular picture is largely inspired by the poetry and prose written during and after the war. Just as public opinion about the war shifted from unbridled enthusiasm in 1914 to weariness and calls for peace by late 1916, so too did the tone of popular poetry, particularly that written by soldiers. Rose Macaulay's *Three Days* (1919) is an overlooked collection of Great War poems and contains early wartime examples of pacifist poetry written by a civilian. This thesis examines Macaulay's select poems within *Three Days* and argues that her work deserves greater acknowledgement as part of the canon of Great War poetry.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Late in her life, Dame Rose Macaulay wrote to her cousin, the Reverend John Hamilton Cowper Johnson, to express her thoughts on Canon C.E. Raven of Christ's College, Cambridge. Raven had been an Anglican Chaplain in the British Expeditionary Force during the Great War and later supported the interwar Peace Pledge Union. Macaulay seemed quite impressed with the Canon and, in her letter to Johnson, said of him, "He is a pacifist. I think I am too" (72). Indeed, Macaulay's pacifism is evident in much of her writing, including her letters, fiction and poetry. Yet, while critics have largely focused on Macaulay's novels, particularly 1956's *The Towers of Trebizond*, little has been said about her poetry, particularly her second collection, *Three Days* (1919), which was heavily influenced by her experiences participating in the war effort<sup>1</sup>. During the Great War, Macaulay worked as a Voluntary Aid Detachment Nurse (VAD) until 1916 when she gave up nursing in favour of working as a land-girl<sup>2</sup>. In 1917, Macaulay accepted a post as an administrative assistant at the War Office and was later transferred to the Ministry of Information where she remained until the Armistice in 1918.

Macaulay's experiences during the Great War helped shape her staunchly pacifist beliefs, which heavily inform her poetry collection *Three Days*, written between 1915 and 1919. According to Macaulay's biographer Alice R. Bensen, the poetry in *Three Days* "shows a world not lovely" as "the war poems include neither 'patriotism' nor sentimentality" (61). The lack of patriotism and sentimentality in *Three Days* is further noted by literary historians Jane Dowson and Alice Entwhistle in *A History of Twentieth-*

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<sup>1</sup> Babbington Smith, Constance. *Rose Macaulay*. London: Collins, 1972. Print.  
Bensen, Alice Rhodus. *Rose Macaulay*. New York: Twayne, 1969. Print. Twayne's English Authors Ser.: TEAS 85.

<sup>2</sup> Land-girls were a group of women who took up farming and other agricultural positions in the place of men who left for the front.

*Century British Women's Poetry* (2005), in which they write, “[Macaulay’s] stance is decidedly unpatriotic and unsentimental” (19). Much of the better-known anti-war poetry of the war years contains these elements, particularly the poems written by soldier-poets Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon in 1917 and 1918. What sets Macaulay’s poetry apart from her anti-war contemporaries is that her work is not only inherently pacifistic and anti-war, but it is consistently so from the earliest poems in *Three Days* to the last. While many poets in the 1914 to 1916 period were writing about patriotism and the nobility of sacrifice, Macaulay’s experiences led her to condemn the war in all of the poetry she wrote between 1915 and 1919. Furthermore, Macaulay’s work is noteworthy in that the majority of the scholarship on the anti-war poetry of the period is focussed almost exclusively on that written by soldiers, rather than civilians. Less still has been said about poems, anti-war or otherwise, written by women, with the possible exceptions of Vera Brittain and Jessie Pope, the latter being notable for her intensely patriotic and anti-German rhetoric. Even then, Macaulay’s work is notable in that a great deal of the more popular war poems written by women, such as those included in the 1915 anthology *The Fiery Cross*, were also nationalistic and in many cases pro-war. This thesis will demonstrate that Macaulay’s work is intrinsically apatriotic and anti-war and that her early pacifist stance, influenced by her first-hand experiences in the war effort, qualify her work to be considered as integral to the canon of anti-war poetry of the Great War.

In order to understand where Macaulay fits in the canon, it is important to note that the poetry of the Great War can generally be divided into two broad categories: the patriotic, sentimental poetry which dominated the early war years, and the stark, brutal anti-war poetry which dominated the later years. Poetry written during the first two years

of the war, particularly by civilians, or soldiers not yet acquainted with long periods at the front, was characterized by the same sense of duty and high spirit that inspired thousands of young men to volunteer for military service at the outbreak of war. Of the poetry collections printed prior to 1916, Cambridge scholar Paul Norton remarks that “Few raised any questions about the essential ‘rightness’ of the war, or doubted the wisdom of its continued prosecution.” (Norton 517). Two of the more well-known examples of this trend are Rupert Brooke’s “The Soldier” and John McCrae’s “In Flanders Fields,” written in 1914 and 1915 respectively. Both poems are filled with pastoral imagery, speak of the nobility of sacrifice and allude to the importance of duty to the nation. Jessie Pope often went a step further in her war poems, flat out encouraging young men to enlist, shaming those who would not do so, and thoroughly demonizing the enemy. In “The Lads of the Maple Leaf” she describes how Canadian soldiers regained a lost position and “routed the jubilant Huns, / Captured a pack of Germans, and saved their beloved guns” (Pope 45). “The Lads of the Maple Leaf,” printed in *The Daily Mail* and included in Pope’s 1915 collection *More War Poems*, is reminiscent of Tennyson’s “The Charge of the Light Brigade” and is typical of her patriotic and jingoistic work. Poems from the early years that present the war as something less than an altruistic struggle for civilisation do exist; however, they are uncommon. Charles Sorley, for instance, describes “millions of the mouthless dead” (Sorley 78) in his final poem, which was found in his belongings after he was killed at the Battle of Loos in October of 1915. However, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Poetry of the First World War*, Sanatu Das characterises “When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead” as being “unusual for the time” (4) as it contrasted with the “late Victorian culture of heroism and patriotism, a

dominant public school ethos among the officer classes” (5) that was such a heavy influence on the poetry of the 1914 to 1916 period. Indeed, the most prominent poets of the early war years, Brooke, Pope, Rudyard Kipling, Laurence Binyon and others, all convey a sense of national righteousness in their poems, which acknowledge the death caused by war as regrettable, but necessary for the preservation of the British way of life.

The late-war poems written by Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, on the other hand, oppose conflict on a universal level – seeing beyond the us-versus-them mentality – and are therefore necessarily apatriotic and often outright scornful of nationalistic prejudice. In 1917 and 1918, both Owen and Sassoon penned some of the most scathing and bitter poetry written during the Great War, poems that directly reflected the abject horrors experienced by both men as officers serving on the front lines in the British Army. Their work criticised anyone who supported the war, particularly those behind the lines or on the home front, and are utterly stark in its depiction of life in the trenches. Poet Herbert Lomas remarks that Owen’s most famous poem, “Dulce et Decorum Est,” “is made out of plain words, harsh images and anger. The poem is a loaded rifle aimed at cheering civilians” (Lomas 380). In her poetry collection *Three Days*, Dame Rose Macaulay engages with the conflict in a manner that is also both apatriotic and critical of Britain’s participation in the war. She criticizes Britain for allowing nationalism and ‘war fever’ to drive the country to war and concentrates on the universality of suffering caused by the conflict. Macaulay, along with other poets of the time, particularly Sassoon, are especially critical of Britain’s elite class for convincing young men to go overseas to fight when they themselves did not have to leave the comforts of home. The stance taken by Macaulay and other anti-war poets was that violent engagement was senseless and that

only those ignorant of the horrors of war could possibly support or encourage it. Macaulay, however, adopted this stance at a relatively early stage of the war, at a time when poetry and prose were dominated by sentiment and patriotism. Even Siegfried Sassoon, who would go on to describe the war as “The hell where youth and laughter go” (Sassoon 31) in 1918, had in 1915 referred without irony to the action on the Western Front as “fighting for our freedom” (Campbell 13). While none of the individual works in *Three Days* are specifically dated, all of the war poems within are anti-war and represent a departure from Macaulay’s earliest wartime poetry. Her “Many Sisters to Many Brothers”, first published in the Westminster Gazette in October, 1914 reflects Macaulay’s disappointment at not being able to join her own brother in the fighting. However, the events of 1915 had a profound effect on Macaulay and her writing. Her friend Rupert Brooke died on active service in April and she joined the VAD in May, where she witnessed first-hand the suffering of the war’s victims. The death and destruction she experienced influenced not only her poetry, but also her prose. Her novel *Non-Combatants and Others*, written in the latter half of 1915 and first published in the spring of 1916, is described by Rutgers scholar D.A. Boxwell as “Macaulay’s remarkable pacifist novel” (Boxwell 96) and is a further testament to her early anti-war stance.

While Macaulay’s poetry collection *Three Days* is firmly anti-war, the differing poetic styles, content, and subjects within the collection make it difficult to assign to any one literary genre that existed within her period. Temporally, Macaulay belonged to both the Modernist movement, which encompasses the early 20th century, and the Georgian movement, which falls in the first half of King George V’s reign (1910-1936). Georgian poetry was seen as regressive and conservative by many Modernists and often focused on

rural or domestic life and included pastoral elements. Macaulay exhibits these conventions in much of her poetry through her recurrent use of natural imagery and pastoral settings. As Jane Dowson and Alice Entwhistle note, Macaulay's poetry closely resembles Georgian poetry: "[Macaulay] was one of three nominees to Edward Marsh for his quest to include women in his Georgian Poetics anthologies" (19). However, these similarities to other Georgian writers do not account for or explain the fact that Macaulay does not shy away from criticism, satire, and other controversial topics more reminiscent of Modernism. In addition to the aforementioned devices, Modernist poets and writers often experimented with free verse, non-linear time and often displayed disillusionment with humanity and the future. Macaulay walks the stylistic line between modernism and Georgian in that her poems are largely straightforward and include numerous references to nature and sleep, but experiment lightly with form and frequently display a jaundiced view of the human condition. Therefore, despite her temporal inclusion in both the Modernist and Georgian periods, Macaulay's Great War poetry is primarily Georgian with some Modernist influences.

## CHAPTER 2                    CRASHING STARS: HORROR ON THE HOMEFRONT

Macaulay's collection *Three Days* is organized into three sections: "Yesterday," "To-Day," and "Any Day." In the context of Macaulay's engagement with pacifism, these section titles provide a way to read her poetry within a specific temporal context, placing all three sections within the scope of the events of the Great War even if they are not all explicitly about the war. "Yesterday" pertains to the war years, with a particular focus on the years 1915 to 1917, "To-day" pertains to matters of post-war Britain, and "Any Day" includes various poems that can be read as an interconnected epilogue to the previous two sections. The first section, "Yesterday," contains the most widely anthologized of Macaulay's poems, "The Shadow," which, according to Macaulay's biographer Constance Babington Smith, "tells of a bombing raid" (6). Babington Smith also relates one of Macaulay's personal experiences as a VAD nurse on the home front from a letter to Macaulay's sister, Jean, which informed the destructive imagery of "The Shadow":

I went out with the ambulance from 10 till 4a.m. ... bombing was v. bad all around that night; I attended an incident in Camden Town – two fallen houses, a great pile of ruins, with all the inhabitants buried deep. ... I drove to hospital another mother, who had left two small children under the ruins. I told her they would be out very soon – but they never were, they were killed. (153)

Macaulay worked as a VAD nurse through 1915, and the early anti-war poetry she wrote as a reflection of her experience was quite different from the typical sentimental and patriotic poetry of the early war years. While Canadian physician, soldier, and poet John

McCrae encouraged his countrymen to “take up our quarrel with the foe” (McCawley 1) from the pages of *Punch* magazine in December of 1915, Macaulay’s experience led her to lament the senselessness of wartime destruction in “The Shadow.” The poem is organized into three stanzas, each coinciding with a part of the bombing raid: the fear, the havoc, and the aftermath. Each of these stanzas is broken into two distinct parts marked by italics. In this poem, Macaulay juxtaposes the images of the town before, during, and after the attack with natural imagery, which is represented throughout the poem, especially in the first stanza, in which she writes, “There was a shadow on the moon; I saw it poise / and tilt, and go / Its lonely way...” (1-3). The zeppelin’s shadow on the moon creates a visual shift towards darkness at the same time that it creates a metaphorical shift to the darker emotions of fear and anxiety by indicating the speaker’s anticipation of a bombing raid. Although Macaulay’s language disguises the civilians’ fear, the moon acts as a metaphor to set the tone as serene but forlorn.

The contrast between the reality of the attack and the images that Macaulay describes serves to emphasize just how violent and terrifying the night is about to become. The civilians’ fearful anticipation of the reality of the bombing, disguised in the natural imagery of the moon, allows Macaulay to demonstrate an undercurrent of feelings of fear and helplessness behind the serene images. Macaulay also juxtaposes the natural and serene imagery of the night with the reality of the raid in the next lines when she writes:

I know that the blue velvet night  
will soon  
Blaze loud and bright, as if the stars were crashing right

into the town (3-6)

Macaulay uses falling stars as a metaphor for the bombs about to fall. Falling stars, a harmless cosmological event, are here used to draw attention to the violence of the bombing, as the two images –the bombs and falling stars – seem so grossly incongruous. By using the image of natural destructive phenomena, which are unguided, as a representation of the destruction of war, Macaulay criticizes the senselessness of war violence. Therefore, by using the stars crashing to earth in place of bombs, Macaulay focuses on the damage done during the air raid rather than on accusing a specific party.

Macaulay's lack of nationalistic outrage is in sharp contrast to the reporting on actual bombing raids by contemporary news sources. In May of 1915, for example, an article from *The Times* covering a zeppelin attack on Southend begins, "The German lust of murder is still unsated" before giving the first-hand accounts of the survivors (*The Times*, 11 May 1915, p. 9). A later article from February of 1916 recounts stories of families and infants being buried by rubble and consumed by fire, while quoting official War Office statistics of those killed since the raids began (*The Times*, 3 February 1916, p. 9). The sheer number of casualties – 160 men, women, and children killed – and the newspaper stories of the survivors demonstrate that the civilian fear of death from the sky was grounded in brutal reality; however, air raids and deliberate attacks on non-combatants in general often only served to harden civilian and military resolve to see the enemy defeated or punished. When the hospital ship HMHS Llandoverly Castle was torpedoed by a German U-boat with heavy loss of life, a Canadian field commander who had ties to the victims told his brigade "that the battle cry on the 8th of August should be 'Llandoverly Castle,' and that that cry should be the last to ring in the ears of the Hun as

the bayonet was driven home” (McWilliams 31). Macaulay on the other hand engages with the carnage in a way that separates her from those calling for revenge and the accusatory tone of the newspapers of the day. As stated earlier, in *Three Days* Macaulay refrains from assigning blame, holding no one party responsible, blaming no “German lust of murder” for the carnage of the bombing. In not assigning blame, Macaulay maintains a pacifist stance in her critique of the war and its damage to civilian lives. Macaulay emphasizes this danger with the actual cataclysm of the bombs hitting their targets when she writes: “And tumbling streets and houses down, and smashing / people like wine-jars...” (7-8). These lines are important, as they represent Macaulay’s first explicit mention of civilian lives and the delicacy of life. This simile works in both a physical sense and as in a figurative one. The image is used to underscore the physical vulnerability of the victims of the attack by comparing them with glass, as well as painting a picture of people being smashed and shattering so that their red insides – the blood and guts – run out. All of this fear and brutality is corroborated and reinforced by this stanza’s italicized hanging quatrain:

*Fear wakes:*

*What then?*

*Strayed shadow of the Fear that breaks*

*the world’s young men. (9-12)*

Macaulay capitalizes the word “Fear,” and by giving it the action of waking, in line three, personifies the fear itself. This personification is compounded with the way that Fear is named as the entity responsible for the psychological trauma that “breaks” “the world’s young men.” This quatrain also includes the most direct reference in this stanza to the

universality of Macaulay's pacifism through her reference to the "world's young men," not simply Britain's young men. Macaulay does not distinguish between which nations' men are the victims of violence and which nations' men are inflicting it; rather, she holds the personified "Fear" responsible for all of the horror experienced by "the world's young men" (12). The line quoted above also allows the reader to consider the psychological trauma or emotional death that the men dropping the bombs may have experienced in the face of the violence they were ordered to inflict.

Macaulay's apatriotism is again evident in the following stanza, when she writes: "Last time they came they messed up our square, and left it a / hot rubbish-heap" (17-18). Macaulay's use of the plural pronoun "they" in reference to the perpetrators of the last raid shows that she is indeed aware of another side to the conflict. The other side in this case would obviously have been the Germans, but by very deliberately using "they" in place of a national identifier, Macaulay provides ambiguity as to whom she is making reference. In this deliberate pronoun usage, Macaulay provides readers with a method for criticising the war itself. Macaulay's criticizing of three distinct and personified components of the war is strengthened by this interpretation. The three components are highlighted in each of the three italicized quatrains as "Fear," "Pain," and "Hell." The use of these elements, much like the lack of qualifiers attached to "the world's young men," do not offer any sort of nationalistic accusations of blame. Additionally, the deliberate exclusion of place in this instance works in the same vein as the ambiguous "they," in that it allows the destruction to take place anywhere. In doing so, Macaulay again is able to create a sense of universality of experience during the war. She does not assign blame to any one side of the conflict nor does she exclude people of any nation

from the status of victim. Furthermore, Macaulay uses italicized quatrains to highlight the “Fear,” “Pain,” and “Hell” of the trenches to acknowledge and emphasize that the suffering of the young men on the front is worse than the suffering experienced by those left behind in England. The non-italicized portion of the stanzas presents the home front, and the Fear, Pain and Hell experienced by the civilians as the zeppelin appears and drops its bombs is horrifying but is nevertheless a “Stray”, “Pale”, or “Rim” shadow of what is being endured by the men fighting overseas.

As the raid progresses, the object of the poem's criticism shifts suddenly from Fear, Pain and Hell to something more tangible — an ineffective or uncaring God. In the beginning of the second stanza of “The Shadow,” Macaulay writes: “Bright fingers point all-round the sky, they point and grope / and cannot find. / (God’s hand, you’d think, and he gone blind.)...” (13-15). The “bright fingers” are a metaphor for the spotlights searching from the ground for the zeppelins that are dropping bombs. Macaulay employs a distinct and purposeful juxtaposition between light and blindness in these lines. The blindness speaks to either a limitation of God’s power or His wilful blindness. If the blindness is read as a limitation of the powers of God, the indictment is one that further expresses the fear that even God cannot help against such brutality. If the blindness is read as wilful and a conscious refusal to offer help, it speaks to the feelings of helplessness by way of inciting or drawing on a feeling of abandonment by a universal protectorate. In other words, either God cannot help or God will not help. These lines are significant in regards to Macaulay’s apatriotism because she has invoked what is supposed to be a universal power and used it to demonstrate a feeling of universal exclusion, or abandonment, shared by all of the victims of the war.

Macaulay was not alone in her criticism of the Almighty, as a negligent or powerless God was the frequent target of hostility, disillusionment and wariness for anti-war poets of the period. Leslie Coulson, who was killed at the Somme in October of 1916, writes of the old benevolent God of his forefathers being replaced by “That iron God, who still unfed, / sits throned with lips that dribble red” (Coulson 28) in his poem “The God Who Waits.” Coulson’s new God is one who is fuelled by the machinery of war, and is the only deity who exists in the trenches; he had his comrades find themselves “Blaspheming God with our last cry” (29) as they die, victims of this new and merciless face of the Divine. This last line in particular demonstrates a sense of disillusionment with God, which is similar to what Macaulay writes in “The Shadow.” The doubt or loss of faith in a higher power, either by the speaker or as a reflection of the masses in “The Shadow,” is corroborated by the lines: “With people sunk in it so deep, you could not even hear / them swear” (19-20). In light of the previous suggestion that God has failed the victims and left them in a “hot rubbish-heap,” the swearing may be read as taking the Lord’s name in vain or similar blasphemies. The fact that “you could not even hear them swear” or call out to God from under the rubble is another indication of how incomprehensible the destruction is, or an indication of the shock in learning that He is not powerful enough to stop it. Beyond a figurative sense, this detail also addresses a real and brutal image of people dying under rubble in the community they had lived in. The italicized lines at the end of the second stanza also reinforce the motif of light and blindness, as it reads:

*Fire blinds.*

*What then?*

*Pale shadow of Pain that grinds*

*The world's young men (21-24)*

The fire of the bombs blinds people and God alike. It is an equalizer in the worst and most violent way that “grinds / the world’s young men” (23). The repetition of “the world’s young men,” like in the first stanza, is a way of expressing the universality of the pain of war. Macaulay’s refusal to confine the experience of pain to her own nation’s men allows space for the potential acceptance of wrongdoing on Britain’s part. In not allowing nationalistic loyalty, and therefore patriotism, to make an enemy of someone else, Macaulay instead challenges the conflict itself.

While the initial focus of each stanza of “The Shadow” is the suffering of all civilians, regardless of their nationality, Macaulay also extends the universality in her poem to include the suffering of those who went to the front to fight when she writes, “There is a Plain where limbs and dreams and brains to set / the world a-fire / Lie tossed in sodden heaps of mire” (ll. 29-31). In these lines, Macaulay is making specific reference to the battle lines which crossed the narrowest point of the Great European Plain where it arcs through Belgium and Northern France. The area was one of the main British sectors of the Western Front and was the site of significant fighting throughout the war, and included the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915. Second Ypres holds the dubious distinction of being the first battle of the war in which significant quantities of poison gas were used by any of the belligerents. Of the effect of this new and horrific method of warfare encountered at Ypres, historian Tim Cook writes: “With gas there was no bravery, no heroics. Men fell to their knees clutching their throats, gurgling in agony as they coughed up parts of their lungs-slowly asphyxiating to death. It was a torturous way

to die” (Cook 756). The use of poison gas by the Germans was roundly condemned by the Allies but within the year, both sides were using gas on the front lines with alarming regularity. When Macaulay writes about the front she makes no distinction between sides of the conflict and does not attempt to call any of the soldiers morally righteous for their participation; rather, her tone is of pity and sorrow for the collective loss of life. This timbre is emphasized when she disparages the waste of human life through the brutal image of “limbs and dreams and brains” in “sodden heaps of mire.” The lines emphasize the brutality of the war by separating these things from human bodies. Macaulay also uses each of these parts as a synecdoche for what has been wasted in the person’s death and what he or she may have contributed had he or she lived: limbs as a synecdoche for labour and helping others, dreams as artistic inspiration, and minds for intellectual development. All of this potential is wasted and lying instead in “sodden heaps of mire.” As the poem and the raid reach their inevitable climax, Macaulay makes another reference to a universal facet of the horror of war, namely death:

*Death...Well,  
What then  
Rim of the shadow of the Hell  
Of the world’s young men. (33-36)*

By closing with death, Macaulay brings the poem full circle by having the fear experienced in the first stanza fully realised by the victims.

The first stanza addresses the fear felt collectively on the home front in the time before a bombing raid is about to commence, the second stanza addresses the pain and destruction and chaos of the raid in action, and the last addresses the death in the

aftermath of a war event. In organizing the poem around these three concepts, Macaulay acknowledges the fear, pain, and death, of both battlefield and urban populaces, while still granting that the experiences of the former are objectively worse. However, her ending invokes the inevitable result of the war on all fronts through the final phase of a raid or a battle –death. In “The Shadow,” Macaulay displays her apatriotism by refusing to address or assign blame to a specific group or nationality while also refusing to assign moral righteousness to either.

### CHAPTER 3            MAD UNREASON: A SOLDIER'S TRAUMA

The equivocal use of nationality is a common theme in pacifist poetry and Macaulay demonstrates this apatriotic element of pacifism by being deliberately vague when using national identifiers in much of her war poetry. In "The Shadow," Macaulay writes about all soldiers by using the phrase "all the world's young men." Macaulay uses this same ambiguity in her poem "Revue" but in a different way by using the title "the soldier." The title is singular but it still works the same way as "all the world's young men" in that the soldier can be read as any soldier. The poem's form offers a way to physically represent the feeling of disjunction this soldier endures between being familiar with his geographic location while on leave and feeling alien after being traumatized by the war:

The soldier groped in fog-bound streets: the world's  
gray veils were dank as death,  
and flapped and caught and choked his breath, like a  
swinging line of new-washed sheets. (ll. 1-4)

"The soldier" is not given any sort of identifier beyond his occupational title. By not giving any national identity to this soldier she presents his experiences as universal to any soldier returning to an urban environment after experiencing the trauma of war. As an archetype, the soldier represents an individual character that is highly codified and constrained by the title of his occupation. The remainder of the quoted lines set the tone of the poem via her use of natural imagery. The "fog-bound" streets work as a sort of image anaphora throughout the poem but especially in these lines. The streets are "bound" with fog while the "grey veils" of the same fog "[choke] his breath." Both the

personified town and the soldier have experienced the trauma of the war, here represented by the fog, and each has been altered by it. The town is anthropomorphized in the next lines so that both the soldier and the town are characters experiencing the fog when Macaulay writes: “The town’s known face was dipped and drowned and / swallowed in that frozen tide” (5-6). Macaulay anthropomorphizes the town by giving it a face, and like the soldier in lines 1-4, binds it by the fog. The town also experiences trauma at the hands of the fog as it is described as being “drowned” by it. By presenting the soldier and the town as being equally traumatized, Macaulay ties the experiences of the urban together with the experiences of the front. Furthermore, the anthropomorphizing of the town lends a human element to the way it connects with the fog, allowing it to represent not only the physical location of the home front, but the people who live there as well. Therefore, not only does Macaulay refuse to distinguish between a nationalistic right and wrong in the war, but she also refuses to assign a monopoly of trauma to either the battlefield or the home front. However, while Macaulay grants that the town and the soldier are both affected by the war, it is the latter who is the worse off: the soldier’s perception of the town changes as a result of the more horrific trauma he has experienced at the front, leaving him confused and unfamiliar with his surroundings.

The further Macaulay’s poem progresses, the deeper the soldier’s sense of disconnection from the town is evidenced. She uses a synecdoche when she omits the name of the town and refers to it as “a foolish maze” (9) in which the soldier drifts “ignorant and blind” (21) until he arrives quite suddenly and unexpectedly in Leicester Square. Leicester Square, a significant theatre district of London, is full of bright lights and cheery sounds which draw the soldier in like a moth to a flame in search of comfort.

However, the soldier stumbling into a theatre only increases his feeling alienation towards the normalcy of civilian life:

He entered, and drank, half dazed, half dreaming, and sat  
Down in the pit, third row.  
And there, bright-lit, was the mad unreason which was the  
World, the world he knew; (27-30)

When the soldier enters the theatre he begins to drink and is “half dreaming,” which adds a layer of the surreal to the inside of the theatre. The next lines where the soldier takes his place in “the pit” and sees the “mad unreason which was the / world he knew” connects the pit of the theatre and the trenches. The “mad unreason, which was the ... world he knew” also works to reinforce the alienation felt by the soldier. Macaulay’s portrayal of a traumatized soldier returning to civilian life is similar to that discussed by historian Richard Bessel who writes: “The experiences of the war were still too close, the memories of the fighting still too fresh, for heroic myths to take hold everywhere. A set of interrelated, traditional values—bound up with things military ... had been severely weakened by war” (Bessel 28). Bessel and Macaulay both reference the difficulty that soldiers had returning to civilian life because it clashed so heavily with the trauma they had experienced in the trenches, as well as the new values they had learned from warfare as a means of survival. This is confirmed by the last lines of the poem, which read, “...He was a gay star of Revue, / With his comic, foolish turn to do. The fog came down like / An actor’s curtain...” (61-64). The soldier identifies with the fictionalized chaos on the stage, equating himself with an actor in the performance. The fog, equated earlier with war trauma, combines with the play and closes around his performance. The closing of

the fog around him represents a kind of death that he experiences at the hands of the war, if not a literal one. The simile of the fog being likened to an “actor’s curtain” further extends this allusion to death; like the closing of the curtain on stage to signify the end of the performance, it may also signify the end of the soldier’s leave and his impending death. The “comic, foolish turn” that awaits him also refers to his next rotation at the front and the uncertainty it brings. The line includes an allusion to the *Rota Fortunae*, or Wheel of Fate, implying that living or dying in the trenches is strictly in the hands of the capricious goddess of Fortune, further speaking to the helplessness felt by the soldier as he prepares to return to the fighting. Macaulay’s pacifism is represented in this morbid implication of death predicted by the end of the play as well as an ambiguous end for the soldier. She is able to critique the war by drawing attention to the trauma that any soldier might endure simply by watching a play and highlighting the way that he can no longer identify with life at home as a result of his time in the trenches.

## CHAPTER 4            CAMBRIDGE MEN: BETRAYAL OF A GENERATION

While several of Macaulay's poems focus on the experience of war at home, her pacifism is not solely focused on the home front and the universality of brutality in her criticism of the war. In "All Souls' Day 1916," her focus is flipped and the emphasis is on the men in the trenches rather than the traumatic experiences on the home front. As is typical of the poetry in *Three Days*, in this poem Macaulay discusses life at home—in this case Cambridge—at length while making minimal mention of the front. In doing so, she disguises the focus of the poem to draw attention to its satire of trench conditions. In that satire, "All Souls' Day 1916" differs from Macaulay's other work in that it employs dark humour in its criticism of the war. This poem references the University of Cambridge but the location is used in order to mark a broad experience and provide a means of comparison or commonality between those who are fighting and those who are not. This is seen the second stanza of "All Souls' Day, 1916":

They talk with the tongues of aliens;  
They s[h]ake<sup>3</sup> in the keen breeze.  
(The keen breeze searches the chill bones  
Of Cambridge men, not these,  
Of Cambridge men keeping their terms  
In trenches overseas; (7-12)

In calling all of the men, fighting or not, "Cambridge men," Macaulay gives them a collective past unrelated to the war. They do not become soldiers when they leave, but remain "Cambridge men." Even though they, like "Leicester Square," are connected with

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<sup>3</sup> Assumed to be an error in printing, given both the context of the poem and because the original spelling, "Skake," is not a word recognized in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

British landmarks, the connection does not detract from the universality of the experience of leaving home, wherever ‘home’ might be, to fight on the front. Therefore, the use of Cambridge –even in its nationalistic specificity– is still apatriotic and does not undermine Macaulay’s pacifism. Furthermore, Macaulay employs a polysemy of the word “term” which could refer to both the time the men must spend in the military, and the organization of school terms. This pun can be read as a scathing indictment of the waste she feels the “Cambridge men” are being put to in the trenches rather than being at home in school where they ought to be, given her titling of them. Macaulay also uses this denial of their status of soldier in order to fuel the dark humour that comes out in the next lines: “And of colder Cambridge men who lie / In No man’s Land, at ease” (13-14). In these lines Macaulay makes a pun of the military term “at ease,” to create a euphemism for the dead bodies on the field, the “colder Cambridge men,” who are unable to stand at attention anymore. By using army jargon to describe the corpses, Macaulay is able to blame their deaths on the military, while maintaining that the dead “Cambridge men” were never meant to be soldiers. This pun reinforces the apatriotic quality of Macaulay’s pacifism in that Cambridge is not used in an attempt to draw on sentiment for a familiar, distinctly British place to lend a moral high ground to Britain’s participation in the war; rather, this poem is meant to express the loss of young intellectual men who were students first before they were co-opted and wasted by the war. The last stanza of the poem focuses on the transition and effect of going to the front from the intellectual environment of Cambridge:

They’ll walk, gibbering black men’s speech,  
‘Twixt the Great Gate and Caius.

But ever they'll pale, as black men pale,  
A-wilting in the breeze,  
To think how Cambridge called her own  
From beyond the bitter seas. (45-50)

Setting the poem at Cambridge means the “gibbering black men’s speech” refers to academic discussions, the “black” referring to the black robes of students and faculty rather than a marker of race. Macaulay’s reference to “The men black as the cursed night,/ Or brown as *café au lait*” (1-2) in the opening lines of the poem helps to affirm the assertion that Macaulay is making reference to academic dress or the khaki uniforms worn by recruiters rather than race. The use of the term “pale” here does not refer to race either, but suggests that the older men at home will experience regret and shame on realising that they have sent their young charges to the slaughter. Furthermore, Macaulay uses the word “gibbering” to add a disparaging tone to her description of these academics. The reason for this disparagement is found in the last lines of the poem: “To think how Cambridge called her own / From beyond the bitter seas” (49-50). In these lines Macaulay is scornful of the Cambridge academics for not actively protecting their own from the war and discouraging enlistment. This scorn was not without merit. On August 1st, 1914, a petition was sent to several British newspapers signed by Bertrand Russell and over 60 other Cambridge faculty, which declared the signatories’ “conviction of the supreme importance of preserving England’s neutrality in the existing situation” (*Yorkshire Post*, 4 August 1914, p. 4). In spite of this support for peace, many of the men who had signed the pledge quickly reversed their commitment to Britain’s neutrality once the war began three days later. Magdalene College Fellow A.C. Benson, who had been

one of the signatories, wrote shortly after the declaration of hostilities, “I am not a Pacifist any more” (Newsome 309). It is clear in Macaulay’s writing that this abandonment of the principles of peace by the faculty at Cambridge was in her mind unforgivable, particularly because it meant that they had abandoned their students to the war.

The theme of abandonment is particularly poignant when one takes into account the title of the poem, “All Souls Day, 1916.” All Souls Day, which falls on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, is a day of remembrance, when Christians are meant to commemorate the Faithful Departed, often family. November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1916, marked the first All Souls Day since the Battle of the Somme, the beginning of which saw the British Expeditionary Force suffer 60,000 casualties on the first day alone. It is therefore not difficult to imagine the bitterness Macaulay felt towards the Cambridge Dons who failed to protect the young men in their care. This assertion is corroborated in the next lines when Macaulay talks about how the “black men” will turn “pale, as black men pale” as with fear and or death as they are called over “bitter seas” to fight and die like the other “Cambridge men” in No Man’s Land. This criticism of the older generation heedlessly sending their young men off to an unspeakably violent end is a prominent theme in late-war poetry. Wilfred Owen’s 1917 poem “Dulce et Decorum est,” for example, describes a gas attack and a soldier who dies when he is unable to get his gas mask on. Owen tells his “friends” that if they could witness such an agonizing death they would not tell “children ardent for some desperate glory, / The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est / Pro patria mori” (Owen 55), Latin for “It is sweet and fitting to die for one’s country.” While the object of criticism is the same, Owen and Macaulay’s deliveries are in many ways quite different and set

Macaulay apart from many of the anti-war trench-poets. Owen lays out in horrific detail the death of a fellow soldier in the gas attack, describing blood “gargling from the froth corrupted lungs” (Owen 55) in a deliberate attempt to unsettle the reader. Conversely, Macaulay’s use of metaphors and imagery disguises the destruction of the war, but does not attempt to hide her criticism. While many trench poems, like Owen’s, include jarring portrayals of violence and death, Macaulay refrains from using the destruction and casualties to take a moral high ground or attempting to use the savagery of war to shock the reader into agreeing with the pacifism she presents in *Three Days*.

While Macaulay is direct in her frequent and unambiguous use of place — namely, Cambridge — her use of natural imagery is understated in “All Souls Day,” and reduced to a single natural element which winds its way through the poem: the wind. The wind appears in three major instances throughout the poem that function to connect the Cambridge men still at Cambridge with the ones fighting and dying overseas. The first reference to the wind is in the previously quoted lines, “They s[h]ake in the keen breeze. / (The keen breeze that searches the chill bones / Of Cambridge men...”(8-9). The breeze that moves the men still in Britain at Cambridge is the same one that “searches the chill bones” (9) of the dead Cambridge men. Macaulay uses the “keen breeze” much like she uses the fog in “Revue.” The wind is an element of unification, much like Macaulay’s refusal to call the men soldiers, because both groups of Cambridge men are affected by this same wind. She also denotes this element as a thing that unifies in a negative sense and brings trauma and conflict even to places that are not geographically close to the conflict. By positioning the war as the thing to be opposed rather than a nationalistic other Macaulay is able to use specific geography without the adjoining patriotism. While

Britain as a national entity is purposely excluded from Macaulay's poetry, locations within the country play a recurring role in many of her poems. In this way, she is able to remain apatriotic by refraining from assigning a nationality to either the victims or perpetrators of war, while at the same time using British landmarks, like Cambridge University, to represent broadly relatable symbols of pre-war stability. Rolling British hills are used in a similar way to represent the universality of pastoral settings in the first poem in *Three Days*, "Picnic July, 1917."

## CHAPTER 5            GUARDING WALLS: APATHY AND ANNOYANCE

“Picnic July, 1917” is organized into short four line stanzas with irregular metre, but a regular rhyming scheme. This is another example of the way that her stylistic forms represent Georgian forms with Modernist influences. “Picnic July, 1917” is based on Macaulay’s own experiences of the English countryside. According to Babington Smith,

...at weekends [Macaulay] was able to let up a little, and occasionally stayed with Naomi Royde-Smith at her cottage in Holmbury in north Sussex. After one of these visits, writing to Walter de la Mare, she described the woodland near Naomi’s cottage as ‘the peaceullest and silentest and sweetest-smelling place anywhere’. But she did not always find the Holmbury woods so soothing. They were the backdrop for one of the most heartrending of the few poems she wrote about the war, “Picnic, July 1917.” (83)

Smith illustrates that the following poem is a direct result of Macaulay’s own experiences during the war, which anchors the poem’s geography and descriptions to fact, rather than to ambiguous speculation. Much like “All Souls’ Day 1916,” the poem contrasts the battle-front with the home front. However, in “All Souls’ Day 1916,” this contrast draws attention to the wasting of young intellectuals in the war, whereas in “Picnic, July 1917” this contrast is used to draw attention to the interruption of pastoral life on a larger scale due to the war. Both poems also use the natural imagery of the wind in order to represent the pervasive nature of war and the way it travels to reach diverse and wide-spread populations, no matter the distance. However, in this poem geography is used in tandem

with the wind to create a much broader scope. Macaulay sets the scene of the poem by incorporating wide pastoral scenes with specific geographic names:

Behind us climbed the Surrey hills,  
Wild, wild in greenery;  
At our feet the downs of Sussex broke  
To an unseen sea. (5-8)

Much like in “Revue” and “All Souls’ Day 1916,” Macaulay chooses to use places that specify the poem’s setting in Britain by the use of geographically recognizable names. Also, like these poems, these names are not used as a means of galvanizing people toward a feeling of moral righteousness regarding Britain’s participation in the war. Instead, Macaulay uses these places to create a very familiar sense of bucolic calm in order to interrupt these pastoral scenes of home with images of the war:

And life was bound in a still ring,  
Drowsy, and quiet, and sweet...  
When heavily up the south-east wind  
The great guns beat. (9-12)

The “still ring” of “bound life” Macaulay uses is a metaphor for the borders of Britain, and her descriptors of life are extremely positive; however, the pleasant atmosphere is interrupted by the blowing wind. The tone of the poem turns quite suddenly from calm and beautiful serenity to something ominous in the eleventh and twelfth lines. This sudden interruption of familiarity and peace by the sound of guns carried by the wind is quite jarring, as the sound of the guns is discordant with the pastoral scenery. However, in this instance, the peace found in lines nine and ten indicate a kind of deafness to the

sound of the guns in lines eleven and twelve on the part of the speaker. Thus, the speaker does not try to defend war, but instead demonstrates how she has become deaf to its sounds.

Macaulay implies that war and nature are forces from which no person or place are entirely safe. The inescapability of the conflict carries into the eighth and ninth stanzas when Macaulay writes, “And far and far and Flanders mud... / And the blood that runs there runs beyond / The wide waste sea” (29-32). In this passage, Macaulay again employs a specific geographic region in order to tie the war to a specific point. In this case, Macaulay is making reference to Flanders, which was the site of the Third Battle of Ypres—or Passchendaele—in 1917. Eric Dorn Brose singles out the area as being particularly horrific, writing, “Flanders [was] a bloody, corpse-filled quagmire [...] absorbing over 750,000 casualties in 1917, at least 250,000 of these at the battle of Passchendaele alone” (270). The reference to Flanders and its place across “the wide waste sea” is a focused criticism of the way that Macaulay, along with others left behind in Britain, brushed aside the war as something mundane because it was distant and intangible. By providing the two points – where the war is coming from and where it is going to – Macaulay is able to introduce a sense of immediacy even though the war is carried only on the wind. The “wide waste sea” is the channel that separates Britain from the mainland and Macaulay mentions the sea in the previously quoted stanza as well as the “unseen sea.” The “unseen sea” is a pastoral image meant to paint a picture of grassy hills and rolling landscapes so wide that the sea she describes is not visible, whereas, when it is repeated after the turn in lines eleven and twelve in reference to the bloodshed on the continent, it becomes a “waste sea,” very much in contrast to the first mention of

it. Instead of a protective force, the border has become one that reinforces the ominous tone that encroaches onto the pastoral and the charmed lives being lived there. That being said, Macaulay's criticism of the war in this poem is largely one that condemns those who are not conscious and critical of the conflict by virtue of their geographical removal:

We are shut about by guarding walls:

(We have built them lest we run

Mad from dreaming of naked fear

And of black things done.) (33-36)

Again, Macaulay brings the images of borders and walls into the poem. The "guarding walls" are the same ones that she references at the beginning of the poem that "bound [life] in a still ring." Much like the water, in the earlier stanzas, the walls have become something else. They are not the ominous encroaching sea but they are used to wilfully ignore the damage the war is doing to all sides of the conflict. She even directly criticizes the walls as supplying protection from "black things done," or evil things that are done, presumably in the name of the national interest. This is an exceptionally blatant example of Macaulay's apatriotism. She does not shy away from criticizing her own people for hiding behind their geographical removal and not taking responsibility for the military actions of their country.

Macaulay's criticism of other Britons' use of their geographic security to adopt a blasé attitude toward the war continues into the eleventh stanza with another specific reference, but this time to a specific nation:

Oh guns of France, oh, guns of France,

Be still, you crash in vain...

Heavily up the south wind throb

Dull dreams of pain, (41-44)

The geographical reference to France is due to it being a prominent part of the Western Front. Here, Macaulay uses a metonymy for the military forces in France, addressing the objects (guns) rather than the people. In doing so, Macaulay demonstrates her pacifism in that she divorces the human component from the war in order to address war as a concept and to avoid engagement with human elements. The important part of this stanza is that, because of the point of view and pronoun usage in the previous stanzas (“We are shut . . . , “We have built”), Macaulay includes the speaker in Britain’s population, which is the object of her criticism. This is another instance of Macaulay’s apatriotic criticism of British responsibility because they ask those warring in France to stop making noise and fighting wars that bring them inconvenience and “dull dreams of pain.” Macaulay uses this wording specifically to highlight the shallow understanding of the war, as it is only a “dull dream” and not anything with immediacy. This wording of “dull dream” also works to reinforce the ominous tone in that it is an unpleasant dream that has begun creeping into their pastoral serenity. Moreover, the use of natural imagery in relation to war is not limited to Macaulay’s writing, nor is geography. Natural images juxtaposed with scenes of abject brutality are so universal in war poetry and prose that they transcend boundaries of gender, nationality, culture and race. British Imperial troops from India and Africa often used such devices in their letters home. As Santanu Das remarks in *The World’s War*, “Indian soldiers attempting to describe the scale of the slaughter fell back on metaphors and similes taken from the rural life –grain being tossed on the fire, or walnuts falling from trees-” (qtd. in Olusoga 73). Outside of the Anglosphere, soldier-poets like

Giuseppe Ungaretti also drew on natural phenomena to come to terms with the horrors they witnessed in the trenches. In 1918, while serving in the Italian infantry, Ungaretti wrote “Soldati,” a simple four-line verse about the short life expectancy of soldiers, which reads “We are like / in the autumn / on trees / leaves” (Payne 115). Natural imagery used as a method of expressing the universal and horrific brutality of the war relates back to the core values of pacifism that transcend boundaries in order to critique war.

## CHAPTER 6                    DESPERATE AGE: FORGETTING THE WAR

Macaulay carries on the criticism of the war and her clueless or willfully ignorant countrymen in “The Adventurers”, which takes place in post-war Britain. The poem is written using a regular and organized rhyme scheme. Each stanza consists of seven lines rhyming ABBABCC. Like “The Shadow,” Macaulay uses serene imagery in order to disguise the brutality the men have returned from, hinting at it only in juxtaposing descriptions of the men:

Strangers from foreign lands  
Walk in our land to-day  
They have come from far away,  
Venturing, roving bands,  
With laughter careless and grim, and gay (1-5)

Macaulay refers to these men not as soldiers but as strangers in order to highlight the ways in which the trauma of war so dramatically changes a person that when he returns home he is a stranger in his own land. Macaulay again addresses the difference between the experiences of a soldier and a civilian. These men are strangers to their homes, meaning that they both do not know their home anymore, nor does it know them. That one word “stranger,” draws two neat groups of “us” and “them”. By not naming their nationality, much like in “The Shadow,” “the strangers” can be used to represent any men returning from the war or the people left over that were displaced by it. Macaulay encompasses and acknowledges all the people affected by the war and their place in its aftermath, and in this way, much like the other instances of her sense of universality, demonstrates pacifist tenets. These lines also disguise the brutality through juxtaposing

word choices, namely “grim” and “gay.” As the line “With laughter careless and grim, and gay” suggests, the true nature of many returning soldiers’ war experience was not easy to conceal. It was, however, something the society they returned to was quite happy to forget or ignore. For example, the cover of the July 14th, 1919 issue of the *Toronto Star* features a long column describing a great victory parade in Paris in which “25,000 allied veterans marched,” and French Marshals Foch and Joffre were feted as heroes by 4 million spectators (*Toronto Star*, 14 July 1919, p. 1). In the same edition, placed ignominiously in the lower corner of page 20, is the following headline: “Two Veterans Take Their Lives Over The Week-end”.

Soldiers and veterans self-harming was, and is, discordant with the expectation that returning soldiers be “heroes” and is therefore somewhat of a taboo subject. However, Siegfried Sassoon commented directly on the disconnect between the civilian and soldier experience of war in his 1918 poem “Suicide in the Trenches.” In it, Sassoon describes a desperate “soldier boy” taking his own life, while lambasting the “smug-faced crowds” cheering on parading soldiers and telling them to “Sneak home and pray you’ll never know / The hell where youth and laughter go” (Sassoon 31). Unfortunately, actual statistics on soldier and veteran suicides during and after the Great War are difficult to find, as little effort was made to track a manner of death that carried such a heavy social stigma. However, the few snippets from contemporary newspapers paint a grim, if hidden picture, particularly if one takes into account a recent study conducted in the United States which found that modern veterans are two times more likely to commit suicide than their civilian counterparts (Kaplan 620). As this study demonstrates, returning soldiers can have difficulty resuming their lives, even though, as Macaulay suggests,

returning veterans were expected to seamlessly reintegrate themselves into society after their “great adventure.”

Macaulay’s veterans are marked as separate in three ways: their geographical distance from home, their distance from the peacetime social norms of their countries, and their disconnect between the reality of their violent experiences and the public face they put on their “great adventure.” Although these veteran strangers take on normal civilian roles Macaulay notes that “Now and again you may surprise / A hint that glints and dies / In their careless, watching eyes” (19-21), which serves to set them apart and mark them out as “strangers” even though they seem “just like other men” (14). Their laughter becomes a kind of gallows humour because of this trauma, which relates back to “Revue” when the soldier associates himself with the bright and chaotic play but always affected by and reminded of his real and brutal experiences. Another instance in which the veteran’s grim laughter is repeated is when Macaulay writes, “If they be blind, or lame, / They grope with an oath and a jest until / Sleep takes them...”(25-27). In this poem those disfigured and disabled by the war make light of it in order not to draw attention or talk about how it happened. Even the marks of the brutality they brought back with them from the war are disguised by their humour, both in the way they laugh and in the things they laugh at. Like in “Revue,” the soldiers have come back from the war and are trying to participate in this “mad unreason which was the / world, the world [they] knew” (29-30). Using laughter to conceal the trauma of their war experiences is a way for the men to participate in this world they have come back to that has already forgotten the war. Richard Bessel further supports this claim when he writes,

It may be possible that one source of the strength of the popularly held, but strikingly inaccurate, picture of the war veterans returning home in 1918-19 was a sense of guilt and discomfort that one's own behaviour did not match that described in popular literature and in the public language of politics. (Bessel 28)

Bessel comments on the soldier's own feelings of inadequacy in their struggle to integrate back into a society that did not want to acknowledge the horrors of the war they had faced. In the same way that the strangers use laughter to avoid having to discuss their brutal experiences, geography is also used to divide the brutal from the beautiful.

Much like in "Picnic July 1917," "The Adventurers" also specifies the distance between the home front and the front. However, whereas the geography of "Picnic July 1917" is used to criticize people for their refusal to acknowledge how close the war is to home, geography in "The Adventurers" is used to focus on the optimistic adventure stories that soldiers brought back with them, rather than the horrible battles that actually took place there. This division is presented in such a way that the war is hardly mentioned at all in the former soldier's stories:

But wonderful tales they tell.

They have seen the bright stars shine

On the tombs of Palestine.

They have watched the Struma swell

Between dead Greek cities, and drunk red wine

In the inns of France, and of hell.

(These are tales they do not tell.) (29-35)

In this poem, Macaulay depicts the war stories as some far off event, even though she includes references to specific places. This deliberate use of distant and exotic locations separates both the places (France and Palestine) from the conflict and belies the reasons the “adventurers” were there in the first place. She acknowledges this in the final two lines of this stanza when the tone changes with the addition of the words “and of hell” at the end of the line. While Macaulay’s universality is one way that she frequently shows both her apatriotism and accompanying pacifism, she also demonstrates it through her criticism of institutions and individuals. In this instance she is particularly critical of those who forget the war as soon as they can in favour of the highly optimistic and “wonderful tales” told by the soldiers on their return at war’s end. While not as stark as Sassoon describing a soldier “put[ting] a bullet through his brain” (Sassoon 31), the Adventurer’s familiar, childhood images are intermeshed with brutal satire. Macaulay can reflect the ways in which people forgot the war in favour of stories of heroism and adventure. Macaulay juxtaposes whimsical stories with glimpses of the stranger’s trauma in order to depict what hiding this trauma must have been like for them. Her most blatant criticism of the forgetting of the war is carried into the last stanza:

They have stepped from a wilder age,  
Remembered now as a dream.  
Adventurers all they seem,  
Buccaneer, knight and page,  
From an old world drowned by time’s washing stream.  
Danger’s their heritage.  
They are sons of a desperate age. (36-42)

Macaulay addresses how unlike soldiers the “adventurers” seem after the war because the memory of the brutalities is passed over in favour of heroic adventures. Macaulay points out that people literally seem to have selective memories about the war, calling it things like a “wilder age” because it is congruent with their “adventures”. She uses this optimistic metaphor for the war in tandem with the comparison to a dream so as to further represent the veterans’ disconnection from their war experiences, turning them into dream-like, fantastic heroes of adventure.

The last couplet works in tandem with this assertion because the former soldiers have metamorphosed into strange adventurers out of this “desperate age,” the war that they participated in. The last couplet also describes their dual rebirth. With “danger [as] their heritage,” these men’s histories before the war were erased and replaced with the danger of the conflict. Calling them “sons” implies a rebirth in a literal sense, which strengthens the previous claim of an interrupted and erased pre-war life. Macaulay’s apatriotism in this case comes from her analysis of the many re-births of these men in the face of the war they took part in. They are not soldiers, they are strangers, dream-like men, who come from distinct places and tell “wonderful tales” of heroism and adventure. This portrayal of the men could be construed as a criticism of pacifism; however, much like “Picnic, July 1917,” “The Adventurers” is critical of the ways in which people supported the war, but hypocritically refused to take responsibility for, or even acknowledge the destruction it caused. By juxtaposing dreams with reality, Macaulay critiques blind patriotism and its effects, and delivers a poem that is apatriotic even after the war comes to an end.

Macaulay's apatriotism in both "The Adventurers" and "Picnic, July 1917" is evident in her references to distinct geographies. That is, both poems reference specific locations in order to draw attention to the distance of the war. "The Adventurers" uses distant and exotic place names to disguise the war and criticize those who saw the fighting as some fantastic tale, rather than a violent charnel house. In a similar vein, Macaulay uses familiar, idyllic British geography in order to critique patriotism. The natural imagery at the beginning of "Picnic, July 1917" allows the poem to be read as a pastoral poem interrupted by its own tropes when the wind brings the reminders of the war across the channel. Similarly, "The Adventurers" uses fairy tale images of "buccaneers" and "knights" to exoticise the war, and while the poem does not employ the same natural imagery as "Picnic, July 1917," it does serve the same purpose. In both cases the imagery is used to disguise the brutality of war in order to criticize those who blindly refused to acknowledge the savagery of the conflict.

As Macaulay is quite particular in criticising patriotism, war, and wilful ignorance on the home front, it is no surprise that the images she employs to criticise them can be found throughout her work. In analyzing the poetry in *Three Days*, it is evident that certain images and tools are used throughout to similar effect. The first is the repetition of sleep and dreams. Its function varies only a small amount poem to poem but it always serves the same purpose, namely to disguise brutality by giving it a sense of un-reality. Sleep and dreams appear most poignantly in the poems "Picnic, July 1917" and "The Adventurers." In both poems they work as a way to point out and criticize the way that people treat their part in the war. People see the soldiers that returned and do not want to think about them in the context of the war and so their experiences are picked over and

they become nothing more than men who were away for a while having adventures.

Sleep becomes even more critical when Macaulay writes:

If they be blind, or lame,  
They grope with an oath and a jest until  
Sleep takes them; and sleep's the same  
Fore<sup>4</sup> wild hearts and for tame. (25-28)

She refers first to the disabilities the veterans acquired during the war and their way of laughing them off to avoid talking about their trauma. They laugh until “sleep takes them” which provides a slight tone change. The poem’s dream-like quality means that even sleep is disguised as something more brutal. It is an equalizing force not unlike death, which is visited on everyone, including the “wild hearts” as well as the “tame.” Sleep in this poem is used to critique people for ignoring the effects of the war and the trauma it inflicted on those who were lucky enough to return. However, sleep also represents death. The same image of death and dreaming is found in “Picnic, July 1917.” Throughout the poem Macaulay criticizes those who ignore the war given how close it is to them. As in “The Adventurers” sleep and dream are linked to a kind of mass escapism from reality but to a totally different effect, as in the lines “We are shut about by guarding walls: / (We have built them lest we run / Mad from dreaming of naked fear” (35-36). The sleep she refers to here is one that brings dreams of violence and brutality. Instead of a protective or healing force this sleep brings nightmares. Macaulay brings death up again in the last stanza when she writes:

Oh, we'll lie quite still, no listen no look,  
While the earth's bounds reel and shake,

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<sup>4</sup> Assumed to be an error in printing or grammar, given the context.

Lest, battered too long, our walls and we  
Should break...should break... (49-52)

The walls are significant both in terms of the physical war preparations Britain has made, and the mental walls the civilians have built to protect themselves from the harsh reality of the war. However, the walls are not impervious to the pernicious nightmares of war that sleep brings. If the walls should break and the sleep get in the fear is that “we / should break,” a euphemism for death and/or a psychological breakdown. Death is only a change of state, and here it involves the death of peaceful ignorance and the spiral into psychological collapse. Sleep also plays a role in “Revue” in the lines:

To do his turn and dance his dance and slip back into the  
quiet sea  
Of silence and eternity, which drowns life, time and crazy  
Chance  
In sleep, in sleep... (49-53)

Here, too, sleep is equated with death in the dream-like world of the revue. The performance the soldier sees himself as a part of, while he is on leave, is an imitation of a real life he knows will end in death. This equation of death and sleep is a means of talking about the brutality of the war without railing against it. The brutality is not presented as a force that belongs or is being perpetuated by one nation, but rather as an entity itself, a product of the war.

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

Dame Rose Macaulay's poetry has been understudied as a whole, and her war poetry is virtually unknown outside of select literary circles. Nevertheless, the poetry in *Three Days* is remarkable not only in its absolute and apatriotic pacifist qualities, but also in how it is consistently pacifist from beginning to end. Macaulay repeatedly demonstrates her pacifism through her ambiguous use of geography, both specific and unnamed. Her apatriotism is also clear in her refusal to justify the brutality of the war in the name of national defence and her refusal to assign blame to any one nation. In this way, Macaulay avoids assigning a justifiable morality to any act of violence and holds all nations and their elite classes responsible for allowing the war to happen. Macaulay's juxtaposition of natural imagery with images of horror, fear, and brutality creates a level of ambiguity that allows her poetry to be read as a universal experience of brutality rather than one confined to one nation. Furthermore, any sympathy that Macaulay conveys in *Three Days* lies strictly with the casualties of the war. From her perspective, the victims of war are not people of any nation, but rather all civilians ("The Shadow"), all young men sent naïvely off to fight ("All Souls, 1916"), and all the broken and confused shells who returned in their place ("Revue" and "The Adventurers"). Macaulay's criticism is lent a further degree of authority through her utilization of her personal experience witnessing the urban destruction of the bombing raid ("The Shadow") and the willful ignorance of the effects ("Picnic, July 1917"). Her perspective and stance on the war being informed by her experiences also lends authority to her apatriotic and pacifist writing, positions she adopted before most grasped the true horror of the conflict. All of Macaulay's war poems convey an absolute opposition to conflict and are striking and

passionate examples of her unwavering opposition to war, an opposition born of personal experience. That commitment, combined with her early adoption of an anti-war stance and the poignant delivery of her pacifist message, is why Dame Rose Macaulay's *Three Days* deserves to be counted with the great anti-war poetic works of the First World War.

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