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[title]Chapter 4: ‘Imprisoned in a cage of print’: Rose Macaulay, journalism and gender

[author] Sarah Lonsdale

[A] The writer and the early twentieth-century newspaper

The dilemma of the artist forced by financial exigencies to sell their work in the popular marketplace is a familiar theme of nineteenth- and twentieth-century fictions. From Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* (1853-56), who ‘wrote for cyclopaedias, magazines / And weekly papers, holding up [her] name / To keep it from the mud’, to the protagonist of Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford’s novel *The Inheritors* (1901) who scratches out a piece of mercenary journalism on ‘coarse paper’ with ‘thick, pale and sticky ink’, the plight of the writer who has to sell – and thus degrade - their pen to the newspaper trade is a recurring subject for authors without a private income. Rose Macaulay, who earned her living from 1911 from publishing poems and short pieces in newspapers, experienced a particularly complex and often contradictory relationship with journalism. Occupying that hazy and contested zone between highbrow and middlebrow, the intellectual and the popular, Macaulay was clearly fascinated by the world of newspapers, as attested by eight of her novels which have journalism either as a dominant or major theme.<sup>1</sup> They critique the press from multiple and contradictory viewpoints, the reader, the contributor, the novelist and intellectual concerned with its influence and the celebrity subjects, all perspectives she had experienced and pondered on deeply herself. As a young girl she harboured desires of being a foreign correspondent, as she confessed in a newspaper article in 1928,<sup>2</sup> but was, and always would be, she ruefully admitted, prevented from being one because of her sex. After the end of the First World War, concerned that her

employment at the Ministry of Information would cease, Macaulay successfully applied for a job on the liberal *Daily News*, 'quite a subordinate and behind-the-scenes job, but still an opening...the *D[aily] N[ews]* is a good little nag on the whole'.<sup>3</sup> In her June 1924 article 'What the public wants' for *Good Housekeeping* she describes herself as a 'self-respecting journalist' capable of settling 'a wide field of philosophical and metaphysical inquiry ... in a few brief pages'.<sup>4</sup>

Despite her interest in newspapers, and her continuing desire, even when an established author, to write for them, Rose Macaulay was deeply anxious, as were many other inter-war writers, about the degrading influence of popular newspapers on the reading public. She was as concerned about her own position as a writer for newspapers as she was about the widely perceived decline in standards following the astonishing growth in circulation of the new halfpenny dailies through the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> As increasing amounts of space in newspapers became reserved for news and advertisements, trained news reporters took away lucrative space from professional writers.<sup>6</sup> As the journalistic field became increasingly commercialised and dependent on large circulations, writers could respond by withdrawing to an intellectual, highbrow position or risk damaging their reputation by continuing to take commissions from what was widely perceived to be a degraded medium. Macaulay did the latter. While much of her journalism was witty and erudite, she also committed some of the crimes of which she had accused others in her fiction, for instance in her *Daily Mail* article: 'Rose Macaulay, who is a Novelist, and Single, discusses People Who Should Not Marry'.<sup>7</sup> By calling spinsterhood that 'which ... flout[s] nature and rebel[s] against her rules' in the popular newspaper, she was in effect criticising her own condition.

The gradual reappraisal of what Matthew Rubery calls ‘the agonistic relationship between modernism and mass culture’<sup>8</sup> has been active for a number of years, leading scholars to accept a more nuanced understanding of innovative inter-war writers and popular writing than the uniform hostility asserted by earlier literary-historical narratives.<sup>9</sup> Potent symbols of the new mass culture, the newspaper and journalism are themes widely explored by inter-war writers. Having grown in just a few years from the low-circulation ‘party press’ of the Victorian years to, by 1938, a mass medium selling 19 million copies a day, the press and its influence on readers’ tastes for other forms of literature was a source of concern for cultural producers.<sup>10</sup> From Ezra Pound branding journalists as ‘flies carrying news’ in his *Hell Cantos*, to Eric Ambler portraying the freelance foreign correspondent of the late 1930s as a last bastion against the rise of fascism and appeasement, writers of all genres and brows sought to establish and comment on the role of the journalist and the press.<sup>11</sup>

[A] Newspapers and ‘woman’

Many contemporary highbrow commentators blamed a fall in standards on the ‘feminisation’ of the daily press, the large numbers of female readers as well as women columnists, reporters and feature writers, as proprietors like Lord Northcliffe appealed to this hitherto ignored sector of the newspaper-reading public. Arthur Baumann wrote in April 1920 (somewhat sweepingly):

To one man who buys a paper nowadays, there are perhaps 10 women. For the majority of women there is but one topic of interest, namely clothes ... It must be obvious that women have exercised a deteriorating influence on the press.<sup>12</sup>

In another essay for the *Spectator*, the critic St John Ervine also blamed ‘the advent of the woman reader’ for the decline in newspaper standards: ‘everything [women] do is lavishly announced and advertised, even when the same thing, though done better by men, is ignored or briefly mentioned’.<sup>13</sup> Macaulay was equally critical, although from a different standpoint. She was irritated by magazines’ and newspapers’ obsession with ‘Woman’, and their use of her and her vulnerabilities as simply another means of selling both advertising and copy. Her article, ‘Problems of a woman’s life’, dwells on a theme that she expands on in her 1922 novel *Mystery at Geneva*, and in other articles and lectures:

Turn the pages of a woman’s magazine and problems of which you had not thought confront you on every page. How to clean chintzes. Why look lined and unlovely? Is your neck too fat? Is it too thin? How to prepare hearty meals of eggs. How to express your personality by your scent ... What a life is this into which we have been flung!<sup>14</sup>

In a lecture to the Six Point Club she uses her characteristic humour to complain about Woman’s ubiquity: ‘Woman is a great and increasing nuisance in England ... You read about her everywhere. You are told she is fickle. Then you are told she is faithful. She is hard, she is gentle. She is selfish. She is unselfish ...’.<sup>15</sup>

Macaulay wrote much journalism that could indeed be described as trivial, and although she did it for money, she also enjoyed being in demand and being paid to ‘babble’, as she confided to her cousin Jean Smith just after the First World War: ‘the whole press having apparently taken into its head at once that I should write articles for it ... I love the *Telegraph* because it asks me to name my own terms and then falls in with them ... Meanwhile I babble for the *Star*, the *Daily*

*Chronicle, Everyman* etc'.<sup>16</sup> Another letter, to her sister Jean Macaulay, reveals her bemusement – and amusement - at being asked to write about a subject on which she is ignorant:

I've just had to do an article on 'The Problems of Married Life' ... I had nothing original to say, of course ... they want another five articles on similar subjects.<sup>17</sup>

Despite her keen intelligence and her deeply felt ideas on contemporary culture, Macaulay's journalism rarely strove for seriousness. Her subtle use of irony occasionally makes her arguments difficult to follow. At a time when other women intellectuals such as Rebecca West, Winifred Holtby and Vera Brittain were writing serious articles in *Time and Tide*, the *Sunday Times*, *Nation and Athenaeum* and *New Statesman*, discussing feminism, politics and peace campaigns, Macaulay deliberately remained flippant in her journalistic writings, keeping to trivial subjects or treating serious subjects with levity. Melissa Sullivan has argued that women writers of the interwar period were prevented from participating in 'highbrow' or 'serious' debates because of gender constraints,<sup>18</sup> but this argument does not stand up to a scrutiny of interwar journalism. Even popular newspapers gave space to women journalists who wanted to discuss serious contemporary issues such as the pressure on women to return to the home after the war and the rights of wives forced to give up work.<sup>19</sup> Macaulay declined the opportunity to raise serious issues in her journalism, instead writing articles such as 'Why I dislike cats' or 'A Recipe for Happiness' for the *Daily Mail* in 1928 and 1929 respectively. Her articles for the *Spectator* in the 1930s employ irony, exaggeration and humour which reduce the impact of her argument, as here (on the BBC's guidance on pronunciation) 'How to Speak English':

It occurs periodically that this great country of ours is rent from Land's End to John O'Groats by a fierce and internecine warfare, and her inhabitants (at least with regard to

this subject) of the bull dog breed, fly at one another's throats and remain there snarling for at least three weeks.<sup>20</sup>

This deliberate flippancy may be partly explained by a lack of self-confidence in her abilities, identified as an 'intellectual anxiety' by one of her biographers.<sup>21</sup> Yet she also disdained 'highbrow' literature and journalism, which she would target fiercely in several of her interwar novels, including *Potterism* (1920), *Crewe Train* (1926) and *Keeping Up Appearances* (1928). As she told her mother in 1921: 'I said I had no ambition to be a great writer and my touch was for trivial topicalities'.<sup>22</sup> This position, combined with her often trivial journalistic output contrasts troublingly with her sometimes trenchant criticism in her fiction of women who write inane articles for the press.

Edna Pritchard, the vain and dangerously influential writer in Macaulay's unpublished play *Bunkum* (1924), writes for *Good Housekeeping*, as did Macaulay. Pritchard's infantilising influence on her readers is evident in the portrayal of Miss Locke, 'a young woman, rather pretty and silly' seen at the beginning of the play sucking a large sweet and flicking through the *Daily Mirror*, yet who knows nothing of pressing political events. Macaulay is here raising the dichotomy of her own role as a writer. Cecily Garber describes Macaulay here as moving 'with agility between the brows'<sup>23</sup> but Macaulay could also be exercising a malign influence on female readers who won't or can't read her more serious thoughts in her novels but who mistakenly think they are improving themselves by reading her popular journalism. Certainly her *Good Housekeeping* articles of the time, many of them reproduced in *A Casual Commentary*, are astutely observed and erudite, and also in line with the level of other contributors such as Winifred Holtby, Somerset Maugham, Rupert Brooke, Rudyard Kipling, Katharine Tynan and

Clemence Dane. Macaulay's more downmarket journalism however, is almost at the level of Edna Pritchard.

[A] Information overload in a multimedia world

Macaulay also criticises highbrow intellectuals, Whitehall hypocrites and society snobs in her novels, whose rigid adherence to arbitrary rules and gender and class barriers she saw as a greater bar to progress than the language and subject matter of the popular press. The novels also reveal a continuing interior monologue over what she regarded as her own literary shortcomings. Rose Macaulay was older than the leading inter-war critics of the popular press, including T S Eliot, Evelyn Waugh, FR and Q D Leavis. She had grown up during the dominance of the Victorian liberal tradition of the press, before their leading titles like the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Daily News*, *The Globe* and *Westminster Gazette* succumbed to the economic challenge of the popular press.<sup>24</sup> Her early success in having poetry published in the *Westminster Gazette* would have confirmed her belief that the daily press was an enlightened, educative public sphere which welcomed literature as well as 'news'.<sup>25</sup> It would take her fourteen years, from *The Making of a Bigot* (1914) to *Keeping Up Appearances* (1928) to fully flesh out her ideas about the press and its influence in her fiction, returning to the subject of the mendacious beauty columnist in a later novel, *Going Abroad* (1934).

*The Making of a Bigot* (1914), Macaulay's seventh novel, was the last of her pre-War novels that she later regarded as 'painfully naïve'.<sup>26</sup> It has a rawness absent in her later works. The theme of the immature writer trying to establish a firm point of view and a unique voice reflects Macaulay's own struggles. An earlier expression of this 'longing to draw the line somewhere'

can be seen in a skit she wrote for the *Saturday Westminster* in August 1911 about ‘Peter (someone I know)’ who ‘accepted ... the whole Universe with glee ... He would breakfast off hot plum pudding and ginger beer, reading meanwhile (propped against the butter), *Answers* or the *Adult Review* ... or the *Spectator* or Law’s *Serious Call* ... he crept around the world ashamed.’<sup>27</sup> The protagonist of *The Making of a Bigot* is Eddy Oliver, a young graduate who wants to be a journalist in the nineteenth-century mould: a great man sitting at his desk making the intelligentsia take notice of his thunderous opinions. His journey, from a generous idealist who confuses readers and editors by embracing all creeds and politics, to a more sophisticated and cynical, narrow-minded yet more successful ‘writer for the press’, suggests that Macaulay’s conclusion is that success in writing is more about staking out a clear, often confrontational line than honestly admitting there are merits to all sides of an issue. Staking out a clear line was something Macaulay herself found extremely difficult, telling Virginia Woolf at a party once, ‘I’m a mere battlefield of opposites’.<sup>28</sup> Her meditations on the press occur during the period when newspapers were undergoing enormous change, with the popular ‘halfpenny press’ gradually overcoming the more intellectual Victorian newspapers. While *Making of a Bigot*, *Non-Combatants and Others* (1916), *Potterism* (1920) and *What Not* (1919) all, to a greater or lesser extent, celebrate the diversity of the press and its ability to democratise access to knowledge, her later novels express disappointment that literary standards in the popular press were not maintained.

A theme in *The Making of a Bigot* that will appear in later novels is of the bewildering array of periodicals available in the early twentieth century and what a household’s newspaper subscription list tells you about its intelligence, political persuasion and religious affiliations. As well as the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Times*, laid out on the table by the window in Eddy

Oliver's father's home, the family could read the *Spectator*, *Punch*, the *Morning Post*, the *Saturday Westminster*, the *Quarterly*, the *Church Quarterly*, the *Hibbert*, the *Cornhill*, the *Commonwealth*, the *Common Cause*, and *Country Life*, but did not take the *Church Times*, *Poetry and Drama*, the *Blue Review*, the *English Review*, the *Suffragette*, *Further* and any of the halfpenny dailies. 'All the same, it was a well-read home, and broad-minded too.'<sup>29</sup> The taking of the *Morning Post*, *Times* and *Manchester Guardian* in preference to the 'halfpenny dailies' indicates an erudite, upper middle class household, with the choice of *Spectator* and *Country Life* suggesting a Tory-leaning, traditionalist approach, underlined by the rejection of titles like the *Suffragette*. The Dean's Anglicanism is defined by his taking of the *Hibbert* rather than the *Church Times*, as Macaulay explains in her 1925 essay 'How to Choose a Religion': Anglo-Catholics take the *Church Times*, whereas 'If you are Broad Church' you read the *Hibbert*.<sup>30</sup>

This was a time when, as F R Leavis noted, 'a deluge of printed matter pour[ed] over the world'.

<sup>31</sup> While being something to celebrate, this was a problem for the writer yet to settle on a viewpoint, but also dangerous confusion for the uninformed reader.

In *Non Combatants and Others*, the existence of a multiplicity of reading matter underlines a major theme. While there is an excess of media communication, inter-personal communication is at best stilted, at worst downright false. The entire nation seems to be engaged in a long exercise in mass deception. In the novel specific periodicals are cited: the pacifist *Cambridge Magazine*, the popular *Evening Thrill*, the *Daily Message*, the weekly women's magazine *Home Chat*, the *Star*, the *Globe*, *Pall Mall*, *Evening News*, *Manchester Guardian*, the *Times*, the *Daily News*, the *Spectator*, the *English Review*, the *Freethinker*, the *Record*, the *Church Times*, the *Challenge*, the *Ballydehob Weekly Despatch* and various literary fortnightly reviews. German newspapers and even the 'Parish magazines' *Sign* and *Peep of the Day* are read from cover to cover: mass

communication surrounds the characters. In contrast, soldiers lie to their worried relatives in their upbeat reports of life in the trenches. When Alix's cousin John comes home wounded he is unable to speak properly because of an injury that has damaged his tongue .<sup>32</sup> In a grimly ironic echo of John's injury, the residents of the suburban villa Violette, who represent the unthinking mass-market reading public, eat tongue for their Sunday roast.<sup>33</sup> The status of newspapers in the novel is ambiguous. They certainly peddle lies – a Zeppelin attack that has caused in reality 'wild terror and shrieking confusion' is described in the press as causing 'no panic', and the *Evening Thrill* carries false stories of German atrocities and claims that Harrogate is 'a nest of spies'.<sup>34</sup> When newspapers do, occasionally, report the truth, no one believes them. The shallow Mrs Vinney, one of the visitors to Violette, reveals an advanced cynicism about the newspapers although her grasp of what is true and what is false is somewhat tenuous: 'no one can ever tell if [the news is] true or not. ..Why, they said there weren't any Russians in England, when everyone knew there were crowds'.<sup>35</sup> When Kate, who lives at Violette, reads a report of how none of the German privates want to fight and they only continue because of threats of flogging, her remark 'It's wonderful how the war goes on since all the Germans are like that' is uttered 'without conscious irony'.<sup>36</sup> Women's feature pages in the newspapers offer helpful information about how to restore life to old clothes and how to create meals from an almost bare pantry, and the weekly *Home Chat* provides within its pages patterns for home-made garments. During the war Macaulay contributed to the periodical *The Quiver* which carried short stories, correspondence and helpful articles such as 'Varying the Menu' and 'The Possibilities of Potatoes', offering an impressive array of recipes including curried potatoes, potato soup, 'gnocchi di patate', potato 'puff' and potato doughnuts.<sup>37</sup> Macaulay's own contribution in the December 1917 issue describes her ideal Christmas under the straightened circumstances of War. Here, as in

Macaulay's references to recipes and patterns in *Home Chat*, the women's pages provide domestic certainties and useful advice while the unreliable news pages mix fact with fiction. While Alix's educated brother Nicholas reads highbrow journals and discusses abstract ideas, resolutely protecting his German friends from jingoistic attack, at the other end of the scale the lowbrow women of *Violette* discuss tittle tattle and are hopelessly ill-informed about anything except how to restore a hat or how to make apple shortcake. Yet it is popular newspapers' role in undermining their ability to determine truth from falsehood that forces them to retreat into domesticity condoned by the *Evening Thrill* and *Home Chat*.

[A] Media manipulation of women: Kitty Grammont, Jane Potter, Denham Dobie

Kitty Grammont and Jane Potter, the protagonists of *What Not* and *Potterism*, two of Macaulay's post-war novels published within 12 months of each other, represent two aspects of Macaulay's thinking on women and the role the modern media plays in shaping their behaviour. Kitty Grammont, a propagandist for the Ministry of Brains, writes articles for *Intelligence*, a government-sponsored weekly journal published to promote its eugenicist policies on marriage. The novel prefigures later dystopian fictions such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *1984* (1949) which put state control of reproduction and relationships at the heart of their authoritarian policies. Like Julia in *1984* Kitty works for the oppressive regime, yet also subverts its authority by embarking on an illicit, secret affair. Women's magazines support the government line, appealing to women's vanity and maternal instincts to encourage them to attend government Mind Training courses:

The *Queen*, the *Gentlewoman*, the *Sketch* ... had articles on 'Why does a woman look old sooner than a man?', 'Take care of your mind and your complexion will take care of itself,' 'Raise yourself to category A, and you enlarge your matrimonial field,' 'How to train Baby's intellect,' and so forth.<sup>38</sup>

The *Times* and other newspapers support the government line and campaign for compulsory Mind Training, as the voluntary system employed thus far is not having the desired effect, a reference to the Northcliffe Press's clamorous campaign for conscription during the War. Written in the last months of the First World War, the novel is a commentary on the dangers of newspapers' willing manipulation by government, particularly on the pressure imposed by government and the media on women to accept the correct roles designated for them: dutiful citizens making appropriate marriages leading to responsible motherhood. The novel is also a reflection on Macaulay's position as a socially deviant woman: the university-educated spinster who was conducting her own illicit affair with a married man.<sup>39</sup>

In *Potterism* Jane Potter's ability to promote her ideas on feminism to a wide receptive audience is not just due to her writing, but because she has married the editor of the *Daily Haste*. Like Kitty Grammont, Jane Potter is something of a conundrum for the reader. We are told, at the novel's outset, that Jane, cleverer than her twin brother Johnny, will always be at a disadvantage 'owing to that awful business sex'.<sup>40</sup> She writes about health and housing concerns for the poor, and the role of women after demobilisation: serious subjects that Macaulay did not tackle herself, except in a light-hearted way. But Jane Potter is also a hypocrite: although she is a member of the Anti-Potter League, she writes for her father's Potter press whose editorial policy opposes the very subjects she purportedly believes in: 'The Potter press, like so many other presses, snubbed the militant suffragists, smiled half approvingly on Carson's rebels, and frowned wholly

disapprovingly on the strikers'.<sup>41</sup> As Melissa Makala points out in Chapter 2, the realm of journalism and public policy that Jane so desires, is a male one, marked 'by the exclusion of many capable women'. The only way Jane can access this realm is, ironically, through marriage, another form of female subjugation.

However, even in the Potter press, there is a place for Jane Potter's journalism as there is a place for news of foreign battles and scientific discoveries, even if these issues are reported in an 'idiotic' way. 'Even though people might like their science in cheap and absurd tabloid form, they did like it. The Potter press exulted in scientific discoveries made easy, but it was better than not exulting in them at all'.<sup>42</sup> In *Potterism* Macaulay presents a deliberate opposition to the 'highbrow' criticism of the popular press that was such a prominent feature of Interwar intellectual debate.<sup>43</sup>

The dual attack against intellectual snobbery and an increasingly invasive popular press is continued in her novel *Crewe Train* (1926). Denham Dobie, seeking refuge from the highbrow family she has married into, is betrayed by her gossipy mother-in-law and becomes an item of interest in the *Weekly Chat* (195). The exposure of her unusual secret Cornish cliff-top refuge leads to her eventual domestication and a hollow suburban life from which she can never escape. However in using the very un-highbrow newspaper gossip column as a way of forcing Denham into adopting the correct gendered behaviour for a woman, Evelyn Gresham is unwittingly exposing herself. As Ann Rea argues in Chapter 6 the supposedly 'bohemian' Greshams in fact force 'social normativity' on Denham, and must be condemned by the reader as foolish hypocrites. Macaulay has genuine sympathy for Denham Dobie, whose only mistake is to marry into a literary family that flirts with celebrity. Her sympathy for Denham may well be partly explained by her own experience of being the butt of literary gossip, spread by her erstwhile

friend Naomi Royde-Smith of the *Saturday Westminster*.<sup>44</sup> However *Crewe Train* also marks a point in Macaulay's trajectory of opinion at which initial forgiveness of the popular press turns to exasperation at its seemingly never-ending inanity, a theme Macaulay explores in her most wide-ranging study in fiction of literary life, *Keeping Up Appearances* (1928). At this time her own relationship with journalism becomes more strained. Letters to her cousin Jean, in contrast to her earlier glee at being asked to write for the press, now reveal fatigue: 'I've been very busy with ... a *smother* of tiresome articles for various destinies...I am tired of all this, and want to write my novel, but can't get onto it'. (emphasis added)<sup>45</sup> Similarly a 1928 letter describes how all the articles she has to write gives her 'That Breathless Feeling'.<sup>46</sup> Later, in a 1931 letter to Victor Gollancz she refers to her journalistic work as 'my Beasts'.<sup>47</sup>

[A] *Keeping up Appearances*: the crisis is reached

While *Keeping Up Appearances* is ostensibly a humorous novel about a young woman who gets into a terrible social muddle trying to be both a 'highbrow' young lady of independent means and a middlebrow journalist writing articles on 'Should Clever Women Marry Stupid Men?', it contains within it a cry of personal agony over the prostitution of her pen, because 'A girl has to live'.<sup>48</sup> The setting for Daisy's meditations on her gendered entrapment at the beginning of the novel is an Arcadian idyll of a Mediterranean island left just as the ancients would have found it, abundant with aromatic herbs. The use of the classically-derived plant names 'romulea' and 'silene' emphasise the difference between Daisy Simpson's desire to write poetry, and the reality of her life as 'one of those vulgar little journalists who write popular feminine chit-chat'.<sup>49</sup> Macaulay's use of classical allusions to highlight the 'gulf that divides ... reality from sham, life

from non-existence’<sup>50</sup> is an idea taken from one of the writers she most admired, E M Forster, of whom she had always been ‘an ardent disciple’.<sup>51</sup> In *Keeping Up Appearances* the tensions between the brows are so great as to split a vulnerable woman writer into three parts: Daphne, Daisy and Marjorie.

Daisy is trapped by her need to earn money, in a ‘cage of print’.<sup>52</sup> People’s understanding of language and society is controlled by newspapermen, ‘the masters, never the slaves, of language’ who can ask her to write two hundred words on ‘Do Men Like a Girl to Fix her Face in the Street?’.<sup>53</sup> They control the production and distribution of the printed word through their ownership of printing presses, paper and staff. Yet even while Daisy is having these rebellious thoughts her journalism is conniving in the media manipulation of women. Macaulay’s criticism of Daisy is tempered by her acknowledgement of the restrictions created not just by the press for which, through economic necessity she has to work, but by readers like the snobbish Folyots whose rigid class and intellectual values are presented as cruel and hypocritical. Once Raymond Folyot realises Daisy’s profession and lower origins, their planned marriage is out of the question.

Macaulay uses several themes from the novelist E. M. Forster’s work in *Keeping Up Appearances* to explore the hypocrisy of highbrow snobbery and the barriers both between the classes and between the brows. At the dramatic moment of Daisy’s unmasking she springs from her chair with ‘her book tumbling to the floor’.<sup>54</sup> Here, in a scene reminiscent of the tragi-comic death of the class interloper Leonard Bast when the book-case falls on him in *Howards End*, Daisy’s lost book symbolises the upper middle class world of the Folyots from which Daisy is now excluded. The echo from *Howards End* is reinforced by Daisy and Bast’s remarkably similar expressions of distress when they realise their attempts to breach the social-cultural

fortress erected by the upper middle classes have ended in both failure and their own undoing: ‘Oh what *shall* I do, whatever shall I do?’; ‘Oh what am I to do?’<sup>55</sup> It may be that *Howards End* also provided Macaulay – who surely, as ‘Emilie Rose’ is also ‘Daphne Daisy’ - with the idea of a fractured personality: under the strain of attempting to inhabit two worlds Bast was ‘rent into two people who held dialogues’.<sup>56</sup> In *Keeping Up Appearances* the book that tumbles from Daisy’s lap represents both class and the world of literature. Revealed simultaneously as Daisy Simpson, the lowbrow journalist and also Marjorie Wynne, the middlebrow novelist, Daphne cannot, in the Folyots’ home at least, hold a book. Yet while Daisy’s lower middle class family take great pleasure and enjoyment from their popular papers – which they find hilarious - and their Edgar Wallace thrillers, Mrs Folyot who only reads the ‘so-called best contemporary fiction’, reads ‘with little either of hope or gratification’.<sup>57</sup>

The Folyots like to think they are the cultured and free-spirited Schlegels of *Howards End*. In fact they are the philistine Wilcoxes who ‘plunder and oppress’ the ‘half-submerged’ strugglers such as Leonard Bast and Daisy Simpson.<sup>58</sup> Raymond’s unthinking snobbery is revealed after a visit to his home by news reporter Edward Arthur. Referring first to his servants he mutters: ‘I must tell *them* not to let any more of *them* in’ (emphasis added): both the servants and reporters are part of a large, unnamed inferior mass.<sup>59</sup> While Raymond’s response lacks the physical violence of Charles Wilcox in *Howards End*, the effect is as powerful, and through the simple use of language reveals the ‘barbaric standards’ of his class seeking to preserve its status.<sup>60</sup>

Macaulay deliberately located the battlefield of the brows and the classes on the issue of journalism – at the time a growing industry employing, and paying well, increasing numbers of the newly-educated lower middle classes – in order to expose the hypocrisy of elitists.

Yet the Folyots are not the only ones who are blinkered. For Daphne/Daisy, the Folyots' Campden Hill house represents, as *Howards End* does for Leonard Bast, 'truth and light'. However it is its opposite: 'sham and darkness'.<sup>61</sup> Daphne/Daisy's inability to see this is the result of her having spun her web of deceit so tightly that she can no longer tell fiction from reality. On one occasion she criticises journalists for pigeon-holing women, expostulating 'Why can't they let us alone?' In the next moment she replies, acknowledging her complicity in her fate: 'Well I suppose it comes from writing it'.<sup>62</sup> Money was always a worry for Macaulay – for example in a letter to her cousin Jean in 1930 she writes: 'That book [*Staying with Relations*] has got to sell, or ruin stares me in the face'.<sup>63</sup> Read in this light *Keeping Up Appearances* can be seen as a confession by 'a cheap and babbling authoress' on how the need to earn a living has forced her downmarket.<sup>64</sup>

#### [A] The beauty columnist

Daisy Simpson – and Rose Macaulay - is only too well aware of the inanity of her occupation as a journalist, 'doomed ... merely through an accident of sex, to write' articles such as 'Can Women Have Genius?'<sup>65</sup> Daisy ponders why her editors want her to write such nonsense. Macaulay herself suffered from this pigeonholing, despite being a distinguished novelist, as she describes in her *Good Housekeeping* article 'What the Public Wants'.

Daisy/Macaulay's frustration at being confined to writing foolish articles is mirrored in other early twentieth-century fiction which caustically derides the low standards of reading matter offered to women readers by the popular press, from C L Graves and E V Lucas's comic fantasy *Signs of the Times* (1907): 'Silly season continues. The *Daily Mail* begins correspondence:

‘Should Women Eat?’; to Rachel Ferguson’s *The Brontes went to Woolworths* (1931) where freelance journalist Deirdre Carne is asked to write an article on ‘Is the Bank Holiday Girl Naughty?’<sup>66</sup> Macaulay addresses the issue again in her later novel *Going Abroad* (1934), this time specifically attacking beauty columnists in her damning parody of Madame Josef whose extraordinary (and impossible) recipe for a beauty elixir promises to ‘impart a wonderful fresh bloom and take away that tired, sagging look that is every woman’s worst foe’.<sup>67</sup>

Another charlatan, the society beauty ‘Lady Flora Fibber’, is paid to puff Madame Josef’s products in the press.<sup>68</sup> This is possibly a reference to Lady Kitty Vincent, beauty columnist for the *Daily Express* who gave women readers such advice as: ‘we lose [our figures] through our own laziness, and let me be candid our own greed. There is absolutely no reason why we should not be all sylph-like at eighty as eighteen’.<sup>69</sup> Fibber and Josef’s role is to undermine women’s morale to such an extent that they feel obliged to invest in expensive beauty products: ‘Now let me deal with those ugly rolls of fat. Only expert roller-massage or electric vibrations can cure them, but these treatments now are delightfully economical’.<sup>70</sup> In a letter to Gilbert Murray discussing *Going Abroad*, Macaulay apologises for lampooning in the novel another social ‘type’, the proselytising young Christian but is unrepentant at her savaging of beauty writers: ‘I’m sure they [Christians] mean so well...one had to walk carefully not to hurt their feelings – which I did *not* feel about beauty specialists.’<sup>71</sup>

While Macaulay certainly felt sympathy for women writers confined to writing about domestic issues, she had no time for those who exploited women’s weaknesses. In *Keeping Up Appearances* she makes it clear that Daisy is responsible for her own plight by failing to stand up to the editors who demanded she write demeaning trivia such as ‘Do Men Like a Girl to Fix her Face in the Street?’<sup>72</sup> The punishments and penalties meted out to all her women journalists are

harsh and often ludicrous. Daisy Simpson becomes a social outcast and flees to America, suppressed, broken and frightened. Jane Potter loses first her husband and then her fiancé, the price she has to pay for her ticket into the male public sphere. Madame Josef is revealed to have two plain daughters whom she has kept hidden to avoid embarrassment. ‘Henry Beechtree’ the ‘pale and melancholy’<sup>73</sup> journalist later revealed to be ‘Miss Montana’ in *Mystery at Geneva* (1922) is a lonely outcast, eroded by spite and exposed to public ridicule. At the end of the novel, ‘past laughter, past tears’ she takes a final moonlit row on Lake Geneva, possibly never to be seen again.<sup>74</sup> As Juliane Romhild points out in Chapter 5 however, we should not care about whether ‘Henry’s’ wearing trousers is odd or not. We should care far more that the only way a woman can attend a major public event (apart from as a secretary) is by pretending to be a man.

While Daphne/Daisy is clearly Emilie Rose, the slim, androgynous Miss Montana bears remarkable similarities to Macaulay, who covered the 1921 League of Nations Assembly both as a special reporter for the *Daily Chronicle* and as ‘League official novelist’.<sup>75</sup> Macaulay’s biographer refers to her being ‘tomboyish’, and her friend Rosamond Lehmann describes her ‘androgynous tall figure, flat as a shape cut out in white paper ... sexless’.<sup>76</sup> Kitty Grammont, ‘red-lipped and golden-eyed and black-lashed and tanned a smooth nut brown’ is a more sexually confident version of Rose Macaulay, carrying her social transgressions more lightly, not afraid of her hypocrisy, only afraid of being found out.<sup>77</sup> Macaulay’s women characters, and particularly the woman writer and journalist, are victims of the sexism that pervades society and the media, and are often their own worst enemies: determinedly ill-informed (*Non-Combatants*, *Bunkum*), hypocritical (*What Not*), greedy and grasping (*Potterism*), conniving in their own wretched pigeon-holing (*Keeping Up Appearances*), and contributing to the correct gendered behaviour of women (*Going Abroad*). While the male ‘kings of print’<sup>78</sup> have the power to circumscribe and

control women's behaviour and aspirations, Macaulay is equivocal and unforgiving about their female victims.

[A] Newspapers and the reading public

Macaulay's dissection of the press and its influence tries to unpick a more subtle thread, the issue of whether the language and subject matter of the press was having an effect on readers' brains. The idea that newspapers encouraged light, disjointed reading rather than deep, concentrated reading, would be pursued by critics of the press throughout the inter-war years. In his PhD thesis, completed in the same year as *Bunkum*, F R Leavis argued that newspapers encouraged readers to 'skim lightly over vast areas of print'.<sup>79</sup> This idea is explored further in Q D Leavis's *Fiction and the Reading Public*, which concludes that the reason why the 'reading capacity of the general public ... has never been so low as at the present time' is because of the widespread influence of journalism: 'A taste formed on mannered prose at the journalist's level is certain to find the classics of the language and the best contemporary literature insipid and dull'.<sup>80</sup> In *Keeping Up Appearances* Macaulay certainly acknowledged that newspapers seemed to be evolving a language all of their own: 'when they used a word the word meant what they chose that it should mean'.<sup>81</sup> Initially her parodying of newspaper headlines in *Keeping Up Appearances* appears to adhere to the prevailing intellectual, anti-press view such as in Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* (35). When Daisy Simpson is travelling home from a foreign holiday and arrives back in Dover, her eyes are drawn to the evening paper placards:

WEST END FLAT MYSTERY SURPRISE

DARK GIRL SENSATION

AMAZING REVELATIONS

Another:

WELL-KNOWN CLUBMAN IN DOCK

MYSTERY WOMAN IN COURT

AMAZING SCENES

And a third, more briefly:

CAPTAIN COE'S FINALS

FLAPPER'S FATAL LEAP<sup>82</sup>

The disintegration of language and meaning, from the relatively explanatory 'West End Flat Mystery Surprise' to the inconclusive 'Captain Coe's Finals' and the clumsy alliteration of 'Flapper's Fatal Leap' is an echo of Pound's accusations that journalists are 'perverters of language'.<sup>83</sup> Daisy, reading the headlines, muses whether 'Surprise' in this context was a noun, an adjective or a verb and whether 'Clubman' was a 'man who wielded a club, like a gunman, or a man who spent a great deal of time at his club.'<sup>84</sup> British journalistic style is shown to present something of an intellectual challenge, like a puzzle to the returning holidaymakers, a skill in solving they had temporarily lost, 'But they would soon pick it up again'.<sup>85</sup> Advanced readers of popular newspapers, such as the Arthur family of East Sheen, have learned to differentiate between the language of journalists and the language of ordinary people. They treat newspaper stories with scepticism, but appear unconcerned as to whether the stories are truth or fiction. When Mrs Arthur talks to her journalist son, she speaks to him in newspaper language so he can understand: 'I saw the west-end flat crime mystery dark girl surprise well-known clubman

involved. Anything else?’<sup>86</sup> The Arthurs, and the rest of the popular newspaper-reading public have, in effect, become bilingual. The language of newspapers is a fantasy language, constructed by editors who ‘pander to their own morbid taste, hoping that it may also be to the taste of others’.<sup>87</sup> This observation is also a conclusion of the influential Political and Economic Planning’s *Report on the British Press* (1938). The report argues that while popular newspapers appeared to pander to the lowest common denominator, those who seek to preserve the social status quo and prevent improvements in education and social welfare are as much as to blame as newspaper editors and proprietors:

It must be remembered that millions of newspaper readers condemned to do their daily reading in overcrowded vehicles, often in a very tired state, naturally demand a disturbingly high proportion of aids to escape into unreality. It would *be unfair to blame only those who exploit such conditions and to overlook those who have helped to create them.* (emphasis added)<sup>88</sup>

Macaulay’s thoughts on the influence of the press in her novels are profound, wide-ranging and controversial. While she agreed with contemporary intellectual opinion that the popular press ‘reduced the popular mind to childishness’,<sup>89</sup> she also asked for a more critical approach from the middlebrow reading public, especially women. While identifying more benefits of the popular press than many interwar writers, she highlighted areas for improvement, and demanded that her readers ask more of their press. The novels highlight the role the media plays in circumscribing and holding back women particularly in newspapers’ and magazines’ portrayal of the correct gendered behaviour of women.

However with even the most serious and subtly argued issues Macaulay tends to identify a matter of intellectual concern and then proceeds to treat it with levity. The suspicion that Macaulay's work always hinted at 'something held back', that some 'power' or 'quality' was always held in reserve was noted by the critic and reviewer Humbert Wolfe in a foreword to a collection of her poetry.<sup>90</sup> Her harshest criticism is not for the press, nor for the highbrows but for herself, both in her need to write for money, and for what she perceived as her intellectual insecurity.

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<sup>1</sup> These are, in chronological order, *The Making of a Bigot* (1914); *Non-Combatants and Others* (1916); *What Not* (1919); *Potterism* (1920); *Mystery at Geneva* (1922); *Crewe Train* (1926); *Keeping Up Appearances* (1928) and *Going Abroad* (1934).

<sup>2</sup> Rose Macaulay, 'If I had to Live my Life Again', *Daily Mail*, 25 August 1928, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Macaulay did not in the end take up this job due to her suffering some kind of nervous attack (Smith 2011, 35).

<sup>4</sup> Rose Macaulay, 'What the Public Wants', *Good Housekeeping*, June 1924, 18-19, 103.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Alan Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England, 1855-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1976).

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<sup>6</sup> Sarah Lonsdale, 'Man of Letters, Literary Lady, Journalist or Reporter? Contributors to the new mass press and the evolving role of the writer 1880-1920', *Media History* (December 2014).

[<http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/CbkbHWf6PZqgtFhs3tUf/full#.VYktZvmqqko>, accessed 23 June 2015]

<sup>7</sup> Rose Macaulay, 'People who Should Not Marry', *Daily Mail*, 26 October 1929, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Rubery, *The Novelty of Newspapers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 163.

<sup>9</sup> See for example Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Erica Brown and Mary Grover (eds), *Middlebrow Literary Cultures. The Battle of the Brows, 1920-1960* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). The hostility of intellectuals and 'highbrow' writers towards mass culture, as exemplified in the Leavisite attitude, has been best expressed in John Carey's *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (1992); Patrick Collier's *Modernism on Fleet Street*, while expressing a slightly more nuanced approach in his chapter on Rose Macaulay, nevertheless still concentrated on T S Eliot, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce's hostile attitudes.

<sup>10</sup> The circulation of all daily newspapers in 1936 was 19.05 million (Political and Economic Planning (PEP) *Report on the British Press*, London 1938, 2). In 1938 the circulation of the nine national dailies was 10.7 million and that of the 12 national Sunday newspapers was nearly 15 million (PEP 1938, 5).

<sup>11</sup> Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (1924) (London: Faber and Faber 1998), 63.

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<sup>12</sup> Arthur Baumann, 'The Functions and Future of the Press' *The Fortnightly Review* 113 (April 1920), 620-27, 626.

<sup>13</sup> St John Ervine, 'The Future of the Press II', *The Spectator* 29 November 1930, 836-37, 836-36.

<sup>14</sup> Rose Macaulay, 'Problems of a woman's life', *A Casual Commentary* (London: Methuen, 1925), 80-85, 84.

<sup>15</sup> Rose Macaulay, 'Novelist asks mercy for her sex', *The Daily Mail*, 8 February 1926: 6. It is of course ironic that a write-up of Macaulay's speech should appear in the *Daily Mail*, possibly the worst culprit in turning 'woman' into a news story. Contemporary articles in the *Daily Mail* included 'Are Clever Women Unpopular?' (15 September 1924), 'Nervy Women – nearly all women suffer in these days from nervous troubles' (8 April 1921) and 'Will Women Fly?' (14 January, 1919).

<sup>16</sup> Smith, Martin Ferguson (ed.) *Dearest Jean: Rose Macaulay's letters to a Cousin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 39.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from RM to Jean Macaulay, 15 April 1922, Dame Rose Macaulay Papers, Wren Library, Trinity College Cambridge (ERM), 9/3.

<sup>18</sup> Melissa Sullivan, 'The Middlebrows of the Hogarth Press: Rose Macaulay, E. M. Delafield, and Cultural Hierarchies in Interwar Britain', in *Leonard and Virginia Woolf, the Hogarth Press, and the Networks of Modernism*, Helen Southworth (ed.) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010), 52-73, 55.

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<sup>19</sup> Sarah Lonsdale, 'Roast seagull and other quaint bird dishes: The development of features and 'lifestyle' journalism in British newspapers during the First World War', *Journalism Studies* (September 2014).

[<http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/xMkYt8VrfWpNT63hVZBw/full#.VYkvtvmqqko>, accessed 23 June 2015]

<sup>20</sup> Rose Macaulay, 'How to Speak English', *The Spectator*, 12 January 1934, 43.

<sup>21</sup> Sarah LeFanu, *Rose Macaulay* (London: Virago, 2003), 177.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from RM to Mrs Macaulay, 26 January 1921, ERM 9/1.

<sup>23</sup> Cecily Garber, *Fiction-Criticism in Interwar England: Judgement, Gender and the Pluralist Public Sphere*, PhD thesis, University of Illinois, May 2014, 33.

<sup>24</sup> Lee 1976, 130-160.

<sup>25</sup> Rose Macaulay, 'Song of Prosper the Knight' *The Westminster Gazette*, 18 November 1905 (ERM 8/51).

<sup>26</sup> Constance Babington Smith, *Rose Macaulay, A Biography* (London: Collins, 1972), 51.

<sup>27</sup> Rose Macaulay, 'On being Fastidious', *Saturday Westminster*, 5 August 1911 (ERM 8/60).

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in LeFanu 2003, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Rose Macaulay, *The Making of a Bigot* (1914) (Lightening Source 2010). 32.

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<sup>30</sup> Rose Macaulay, 'How to Choose a Religion', in *A Casual Commentary* (London: Methuen, 1925), 5-13, 8.

<sup>31</sup> F R Leavis, *The Relationship of Journalism to Literature*, 1924. PhD dissertation 66, Cambridge University, 336.

<sup>32</sup> Rose Macaulay, *Non-Combatants and Others* (1916) (London: Capuchin Classics, 2010), 17.

<sup>33</sup> Macaulay 1916, 47.

<sup>34</sup> Macaulay 1916, 53, 64, 45.

<sup>35</sup> Macaulay 1916, 66. This is a reference to rumours – later exposed as complete fabrication - that swept through the country that the Russians were coming to Britain's aid, and had been seen marching south, with snow still on their boots (Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime* (1928) (California: Institute for Historical Review, 1991), 62).

<sup>36</sup> Macaulay 1916, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Anon, 'The Possibilities of Potatoes.' *The Quiver* 52/11 (September 1917), 957-959.

<sup>38</sup> Rose Macaulay, *What Not* (1919) (London: John Long Ltd, 1924), 68-69.

<sup>39</sup> Babington Smith 1972, 89.

<sup>40</sup> Macaulay 1920, 2.

<sup>41</sup> Macaulay 1920, 5.

<sup>42</sup> Macaulay 1920, 161.

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- <sup>43</sup> Patrick Collier, *Modernism on Fleet Street* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 4.
- <sup>44</sup> Babington Smith 1972, 102.
- <sup>45</sup> Smith 2011, 135.
- <sup>46</sup> Smith 2011, 157.
- <sup>47</sup> Letter from RM to Victor Gollancz, 1931, ERM 15/92.
- <sup>48</sup> Rose Macaulay, *Keeping Up Appearances* (1928) (London: Methuen, 1986), 98.
- <sup>49</sup> Macaulay 1928, 18.
- <sup>50</sup> Rose Macaulay, *The Writings of E M Forster* (London: Hogarth Press, 1938), 11.
- <sup>51</sup> Babington Smith 1972, 103.
- <sup>52</sup> Macaulay 1928, 131.
- <sup>53</sup> Macaulay 1928, 129, 119.
- <sup>54</sup> Macaulay 1928, 190.
- <sup>55</sup> E M Forster, *Howards End* (1910) (London: Penguin, 1969), 294; Macaulay 1928, 293.
- <sup>56</sup> Forster 1910, 294.
- <sup>57</sup> Macaulay 1928, 125, 126.
- <sup>58</sup> Macaulay 1938, 120.

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<sup>59</sup> Macaulay 1928, 193.

<sup>60</sup> Macaulay 1938, 27.

<sup>61</sup> Macaulay 1938, 99.

<sup>62</sup> Macaulay 1928, 172.

<sup>63</sup> Smith 2011, 164.

<sup>64</sup> Macaulay 1986, 156.

<sup>65</sup> Macaulay 1928, 22.

<sup>66</sup> C L Graves and E V Lucas, *Signs of the Times* (London: Alston Rivers, 1907), 90; Rachel Ferguson, *The Brontes went to Woolworths* (1931) (London: The Bloomsbury Group, 2009), 17.

<sup>67</sup> Rose Macaulay, *Going Abroad* (London: Collins, 1934), 89.

<sup>68</sup> Macaulay 1934, 90.

<sup>69</sup> Kitty Vincent, 'Skip and be Slim; Sylph-like at 80', *Daily Express* 8 July 1926, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Macaulay 1934, 93.

<sup>71</sup> Letter from RM to Gilbert Murray (ERM 17/52).

<sup>72</sup> Macaulay 1924, 119.

<sup>73</sup> Rose Macaulay, *Mystery at Geneva* (London: Collins, 1922), 1.

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<sup>74</sup> Macaulay 1922, 259.

<sup>75</sup> Babington Smith 1972, 105; Smith 2011, 95.

<sup>76</sup> Babington Smith 1972, 36, 225.

<sup>77</sup> Macaulay 1921, 191, 150.

<sup>78</sup> Macaulay 1928, 130

<sup>79</sup> Leavis 1924, 335.

<sup>80</sup> Q D Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932) (London: Pimlico, 2000), 228-31.

<sup>81</sup> Macaulay 1928, 129.

<sup>82</sup> Macaulay 1928, 45.

<sup>83</sup> Pound 1924, 61.

<sup>84</sup> Macaulay 1928, 44.

<sup>85</sup> Macaulay 1928, 44.

<sup>86</sup> Macaulay 1928, 51.

<sup>87</sup> Macaulay 'What the Public Wants', 1924, 19.

<sup>88</sup> PEP 1938, 157.

<sup>89</sup> Baumann 1920, 624.

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<sup>90</sup> Babington Smith 1972, 108.