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## A Horrid, Malicious, Bloody Flame: Elegy, Irony and Rose Macaulay's Blitzed London

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<1> In 1849, prominent reformer and liberal historian Thomas Babington Macaulay wrote, "Those who compare the age on which their lot has fallen with a golden age which exists only in their imagination may talk of degeneracy and decay: but no man who is correctly informed as to the past will be disposed to take a morose or desponding view of the present."<sup>[1]</sup> A century later, his grandniece Rose Macaulay, renowned novelist, scholar, broadcaster and critic, responded to his epic narrative of humanist progress with a war-weary rebuttal. Her novel *The World My Wilderness* (1950) and her later treatise *The Pleasure of Ruins* (1953) together present an *a posteriori* study of the human condition, as coloured by the physical devastation and rhetorical fragmentation of the Blitz on London. In these works, Macaulay discards any attempts to read British history as progressive or unified, undermining London's state-sanctioned status as "The New Jerusalem" by instead detailing the "orts, scraps and fragments" (as Woolf would have it) of a very specific, pedestrian, ruinous cityscape. This paper will examine Macaulay's anti-romantic geographies, suggesting that her mode is at once elegiac and ironic and that her writings together seek a more authentic vision of London's history, a vision predicated not on bombast and heroism but on lived practice and artefactual record.

<2> Unsurprisingly, Macaulay's own wartime experience informed her works' pessimism immensely, particularly the death of her married lover and, more publicly, the 1941 bombing of her flat. The ensuing fire destroyed all of her books and personal correspondence -- all, that is, that she deemed tangible of her personal history. "Forgive this dislocated scrawl," she wrote to friend Daniel George. "I now have nothing. I came up last night ... to find Lux[borough] House no more -- bombed and burned out of existence, and nothing saved. I am bookless, homeless, sans everything but my eyes to weep with ... I have no O[xford] D[ictionary] ... No nothing ... It would have been less trouble to have been bombed myself."<sup>[2]</sup> This same anguish reappears in "Miss Anstruther's Letters" (1942), Macaulay's only short story of the war ("unoriginal, but veracious, mainly," she deems it).<sup>[3]</sup> Miss Anstruther, who has lost all of her lover's correspondence in a Blitz fire, finds memory itself incinerated: she recovers one shard of a letter, and from that reconstructs a wholly inaccurate, tragic version of her twenty-year affair. Tearing through the charcoals of her collapsed building, Miss Anstruther becomes a "revenant", a subordinated haunter of a bygone existence, desperately pawing through the rubble in search of a Rosetta stone with which to unlock a newly inaccessible past. It is a deeply personal story: out of Macaulay's physical losses arose a need for concrete record, and the integral connections between artefact and history and between place and memory haunted her perpetually.

<3> Scarred by her own experience and realising that such loss was the wartime rule rather than the exception, Macaulay approached the optimistic propagandas of the day with especially incensed cynicism. The Ministry of Information's media campaigns emphasised the glorious history of England and preached a continuous ancestry between noble Roman Britain, heraldic medieval Britain and the modern age. Bookstores heaved with histories and memoirs which, if they were not invoking sentimentalised images of Old England (that is, the England "worth fighting for"), were detailing modern war-time encounters in the epithetic language usually reserved for Homeric verse and Norse saga. The images in the papers were heroic, showing St Paul's Cathedral rising unscathed above clouds of Luftwaffe smoke, an image in sharp contrast to the bomb damage visible out of one's window. A neo-Romantic trend emerged in the visual and literary arts, one which sought its consolation in a "projected past which found its myth of origins in the land of Britain itself" and which sought to remoralise London's ruins as evidence of a continuous national narrative, a romantic wilderness which might inspire patriotism and pride."<sup>[4]</sup>

<4> For Macaulay, myths of progress and unity did not resonate in the wartime world. The line between civilization and barbarism, constantly referenced in her novel *The World My Wilderness* (1950), is infinitely blurred, and the future of Europe is clouded by its barbaric past. Inasmuch as history can be read as linear or unified, her only collective constant is violence: "Visigoths, Franks, Catalans, Spanish, French, Germans, Anglo-American armies" are all painted with the same despairing brush.<sup>[5]</sup> One character in *The World* looks on aghast as "cities and buildings, lovely emblems of history, fell shattered, or lost while Europe dissolved into wavering anonymities, bitter of tongue, servile of deed, faint of heart, always treading the frail plank over the abyss ... everywhere cruelty, everywhere vengeance, everywhere the barbarian on the march."<sup>[6]</sup>

<5> *The World My Wilderness*, set in central London immediately post-war, has as its heroine Barbary Deniston, whose forename unsubtly foretells her avoidance of all things "civilized". Barbary, of English parentage, has been raised by her mother in occupied rural France. She is impetuous, Romantic and "so ignorant she can barely read", as her erudite, careless mother notes.<sup>[7]</sup> Barbary has been sent to live in London with her father Gulliver, a barrister and advocate for order and civility, an icon of Edwardian propriety and, in the post-war city, a relic of a more upright and uptight age. For Barbary, her father's intact London is that of Blake's "charter'd streets" -- a mapped-out, middle-class limbo. "[She] could barely endure the meaningless grey city streets, the dull, respectable, smoke-dark houses," Macaulay writes.<sup>[8]</sup> Rather, ever the romantic, Barbary prefers wandering through the areas hardest hit by bombing, finding solace and a home in the gaping shells and twisted staircases, in the haunted, brittle beauty of the bombed out areas of the City's Square Mile.

<6> Barbary is painted much as Thomas Babington Macaulay's New Zealander, projecting the romantic aesthetic of the outsider upon the "newly-discovered" ruins of London.<sup>[9]</sup> For Barbary, London is gothic and sublime, "a wilderness of little streets, saves and cellars, the foundation of a wrecked merchant city, grown over by green and golden fennel and ragwort, coltsfoot, purple loosestrife ... and tall nettles, among which rabbits burrowed and wild cats crept".<sup>[10]</sup> Macaulay once described an early version of Barbary to Virginia Woolf as a diluted, satirized daughter of Coleridge, one deliberately placed at odds to the traditional (and intact) urban environment.<sup>[11]</sup> Now, in the ruinous city, Barbary becomes a kind of genius of the place, the hermit of this urban *maquis* (a term that refers both to the French Resistance and to the complicated metaphor of fecundity and ruin that persists throughout the book).

<7> However, although Macaulay toys with the possibility that naivety and creativity enable survival in gutteral, illogical times and thus that Barbary is well-adapted to her epoch, ultimately Macaulay refuses to let Barbary-as-Romantic-heroine to pass muster. Depicted without genius, agency, or even much self-awareness, Barbary is what Forster might term a "flat" character and survives through no heroism or adaptation of her own. Indeed, there is no heroism in this book -- merely circumstance. While Barbary's is the dominant voice of *The World*, her Romanticism is, Macaulay suggests, diluted by historical reality, rendered immature and futile by incomprehensible real *ruin*.

<8> To further undermine and eventually dismantle the Neo-Romantic trope, Macaulay seeks an alternative cityscape to Barbary's gothic crevasses. Mark Bonham Carter, one of Macaulay's publishers, recalls her declaring that "all of my novels started with places."<sup>[12]</sup> Just so with *The World*: London is, in a way, its *raison d'être*, and her wartime writings establish a cityscape grounded upon a very specific and pointedly realistic

history rather than upon the Romanticised mythologies so prominent within the popular press.

<9> A famous haunter of the British Library and a historian by education, Macaulay sported an exhaustive knowledge of London's economic, geographic and social history, a background that enabled her to document its destruction all the more acutely. Although her prose style (as filtered through Barbary) is often over-the-top Romantic,<sup>[13]</sup> if Macaulay's ideology is at all idealistic it is solely in that she places some value -- albeit with admitted desperation -- in the act of unsentimental historical remembrance. Thus, the demythologized city: her chronicle of London depicts barbarism, civilization, the past and present, the tedious and the grandiose existing side-by-side. *The World My Wilderness* accordingly serves a threefold purpose: to ironise any sense of redemptive Romantic mythologizing; to taxonomize and elegise a more democratic, realistic London; and to contextualise by historical comparison the destruction of the present.

<10> Barbary's exoticizing gaze, then, is contradicted by the very local erudition of the narrator, a tension which subverts the depersonalized tendency of nationalistic myth (as outlined by Barthes, et al) by portraying a very specified, everyday geography. Indeed, *The World My Wilderness* often reads like a lyrical, literary cartography project. Although Barbary may have no London knowledge, the narrator is genuinely omniscient: as with *Ulysses*, the narrative can be considered geographic, an A-to-Z tabulating of London's bomb victims and survivors. Here is one example, referring to the area just south of the present-day Barbican complex:

He started, and hurried on, running down Monkwell Street, past Barbers' Hall, past the Coopers' Arms at the corner of Silver Street, past St. Olave's churchyard, past all the ruined halls, down the narrow alley of Noble Street that cut across the jungle to Gresham Street, past the church of St. Anne and St. Agnes with its gardens full of fig-trees, and the churchyard of St John Zachary, and so down Foster Lane into Cheapside, where streets were paved and buildings stood up ...<sup>[14]</sup>

Or again, "They got off in Cheapside, and walked up Foster Lane. Having crossed Gresham Street, the road became a lane across a wrecked and flowering wilderness, and was called Noble Street. Beyond Silver Street, it was a still smaller path, leading over still wilder ruins."<sup>[15]</sup> In these passages, there is a sense of preservation in such long lists, a need for a *known* geography to be remembered as once known and, just as importantly, used. Macaulay even alludes to the cartographic project explicitly, naming the statue of 17th-century mapmaker John Speed, famous for his skyline of the City of Westminster, as prominent amongst the rubble within St. Giles Cripplegate church.

<11> Moreover, in these litanies of place-names, Macaulay leaves very little room for the iconic. Hers is a decidedly quotidian city, a choice that tidily offsets the *Picture Post's* love of the stalwart tourist-route classics. Even when describing the most grandiose of the great buildings, she tempers the grandeur by introducing pedestrian detail. Here the "ivory tower of aristocratic culture" is undermined by,

some vagrant, [who] seeking shelter by night, might creep into Barbers' Hall and burrow in among the bracken of Inigo Jones's courtroom, to find there not the ancient treasures, the gilt cup with bells, the silver cup with gilt acorns dangling, the great silver bowl, the Holbein, the Van Dyck, the plaster fruit and flowers, but the big canvas shopping-bag squatting in a deep nest of marigolds.<sup>[16]</sup>

However exotic her prose, Macaulay's settings are everyday ruins, filled with everyday ghosts. Accordingly, although she locates much of the novel in the area around St. Paul's, she casts a skeptical eye at its totemic status. In one revealing passage, Barbary, "looked out from her terrace over the cold grey tumbled waste...and saw the great dome riding beyond it, pale curve of dove grey against a dove's breast sky. Mighty symbol dominating ruin; formidable, insoluble riddle; stronghold, refuge and menace, or mirage and gigantic hoax?" A pertinent question, and one that Macaulay's heroine accepts only in part as the former, saluting it "with a deprecatory sign of the cross".<sup>[17]</sup>

<12> Rather, more often than not Macaulay avoids the iconic altogether, eschewing symbolic settings in favour of grittier authenticity. Macaulay's London is the wrecked commercial rather than intact imperial city, and it is a largely mercantile past she invokes -- an accurate portrait of the ruined areas around St Paul's. "I find it very English, this city, a great habitation of merchants," comments Barbary's French stepbrother with tongue-in-cheek allusion to Napoleon's apocryphal dismissal of *une nation de boutiquiers*.<sup>[18]</sup>

<13> Indeed, the proper names of Macaulay's City -- Cheapside, Wood Street, Bread Street (on which Milton was born), Gresham Street, Noble Street -- all have their root in the medieval market town, a tradition of individualism, practicality and hand-to-mouth subsistence that is, Macaulay suggests darkly, a human constant. The streets nearby had been filled with "men who had manufactured hats, mats, ties, underwear, account-books, typewriters, fancy goods, gloves and buttons, and busy with general merchants, those more versatile, less creative beings, traders living among makers."<sup>[19]</sup> Macaulay's imagined ghosts are neither statesmen nor the "heroic Cockneys" that Angus Calder details in *The Myth of the Blitz* (1991). Rather, they are splendidly banal, mere middle-class manufacturers and financiers that continue "manufacturing, trading, warehousing, conferring, drinking, praying, vergering ..."<sup>[20]</sup> Nor do they hint at the Freudian *Unheimliche* -- this Samuel Pepys' city: dirty, mundane, recognizable, vivacious.

<14> Macaulay's very precise London, filled with very unremarkable ghosts, functions as a pointed response to the dehistoricising nature of propagandas whose aims were to highlight the extraordinary rather than the ordinary, the national optimism rather than the individual's trauma. Punctuated as it is by scars, slums and shopkeepers, *The World My Wilderness* seeks a counter-narrative. For Macaulay, history may be viewed as a continuum of destruction rather than of survival, a belief underscored by her palimpsestic readings of place.

<15> Two locations highlighted in *The World* merit further scrutiny as palimpsestic case studies: the Adelphi Terraces, just south of Charing Cross station, and the Square City Mile, with particular emphasis on St Giles-without-Cripplegate church and its surroundings (now home to the Barbican complex). As I will argue below, each location for Macaulay symbolises a microcosmic representation of London's history, but only the financial City -- as the more "authentic" -- can function unironically in Macaulay's post-war landscape.

<16> By the end of the Second World War, the London of Edwardian respectability -- as represented (literally) by Barbary's solicitor father Gulliver -- has ceased to exist (if it ever had, of course). For Gulliver, however, civilization still represents law and order: as Barbary's mother Helen comments to him, "Gully, you stand nearly alone, my dear."<sup>[21]</sup> Macaulay reiterates his archaic Georgian civility in a very literal fashion, describing his house, the *patrie* of propriety, with satirical precision:

The house of Sir Gulliver Deniston was in the Adelphi; it looked on the embankment gardens and the river with an air of leisurely survival. Inside it Adam elegance was enriched by a coloured Persian luxury which suggested the island of Sybaris (influence of Helen), a chaste masculine comfort (influence of Sir Gulliver), and a refurbishing of gay cretonnes on cushions and curtains, with spring flowers in jars (influence of [trophy second wife] Pamela).<sup>[22]</sup>

"Leisurely survival" indeed: Macaulay's choice of location is particularly clever, as the Adelphi Quarter, designed and built by Robert and James Adam in 1768, was a landmark development which mirrored the changes that the city itself underwent in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

<17> Transforming what was previously a swampland deemed unwholesome into luxurious four-storey houses and an extension of the Strand at street-level, the Adelphi Terraces represented an architectural conquering of an unstable geography as well as a paean to London's burgeoning wealth.<sup>[23]</sup> Its façade was an elegant neo-classical stucco, and it combined access to trade routes and warehousing vaults (known as the Adelphi Arches) with expensive housing and premium access to the law courts and financial district: a stylish icon of free-market Enlightenment London.

<18> By Dickens' time it had declined somewhat, and particularly its arcades were recognized as seedy, thus providing Dickens with perfect settings. But the Adelphi was rendered reputable once more after the 1864 construction of the Victoria Embankment, a breakthrough build in

London's history that provided new sewer lines, the District and Circle tube lines, and increased the Thames' flow, thus making its fumes less noxious. Thereafter, the Adelphi's "Adam elegance" attracted some of London's most famous intellectual patrons, including HG Wells, Roger Bacon, Thomas Hardy, Richard D'Oyly Carte, George Bernard Shaw, and The Webbs, of Fabian fame, who helped found the London School of Economics, which was originally housed within the Adelphi alongside the Royal Society of Arts.

<19> With its iconic history and Enlightenment aesthetic, it makes the perfect post-war residence for Gulliver, himself a Swiftian satire of a bygone age. It also makes a sardonically appropriate choice for Macaulay: the Adelphi residences, as she would have known, were almost entirely torn down in 1936. Her characters inhabit either a reliquary shard or a ghostly shell, what Osbert Lancaster might refer to as the crumbled "acropolis of Edwardian propriety".<sup>[24]</sup> The current art deco building was erected in 1938 and bears little resemblance to the genteel home described in *The World*. Serving as a synecdochal symbol of London's age of progress, Macaulay's Terraces are part satire and part elegy, a post-war memorial to a questionable and remote past.

<20> In contrast to the Adelphi Terraces, however, is the bombed-out financial city. Hit particularly hard in the same raids that destroyed Macaulay's flat (a poignant choice, then, surely), the Cripplegate and Aldersgate area of the city serve as a rhetorical counterpoint to the unified aesthetic and progressive archaism of the Adelphi. For Macaulay, the Square Mile represents a more accurate historical palimpsest, evolving haphazardly over two millennia with a sprawling, illogical organicism appropriate to the impersonal, random devastation of the Blitz.

<21> Thus, it is to the City's less rarefied, more turbulent history that Macaulay turns when seeking analogy. The Blitz, then, evokes constant comparison with another of London's great crises, the 1666 Fire. Virginia Woolf diaries on Dec. 29th, 1940, "On Sunday night as I was reading about the great fire, in a very accurate detailed book, London was burning. Eight of my city churches destroyed, & the Guildhall."<sup>[25]</sup> Macaulay draws the connection even more literally: after one of Barbary's Romantic fantasies, the narrator editorially derails reverie by introducing painful history, observing, "the garden of a great house of stone and timber anciently belonging to the Nevilles; a great gabled house over against a bastion of the Wall, perished nearly three centuries since in another great fire."<sup>[26]</sup> Later, her narrator even quotes Pepys' account of the Great Fire at length:

Cellars so solid, on foundations so deep dug, that two great fires and more, storming over them, had yet left their bases set. 'We saw the fire grow ... in corners and upon steeples, and between churches and houses, as far as we could see up the hill of the city, in a most horrid malicious bloody flame, not like the fine flame of an ordinary fire ... The Churches, house, and all on fire and flaming at once; and a horrid noise the flames made, and the cracking of houses at their ruin.'<sup>[27]</sup>

Fire, it seems, is the only historical constant. And yet although to invoke such overlap with past events suggests a cyclical history of destruction and rebirth, Macaulay rejects Dryden's claim in *Annus Mirabilis* that "a greater and more august London would arise from her fires". As seen with her shopkeeper ghosts and casual barbarity, the city is a functional rather than a mythical entity: Macaulay establishes historical precedent with emphasis on annihilation rather than regeneration.

<22> Macaulay's apprehension of the Blitz devastation was, perhaps, all the more urgent for its relevance to her own profession. For one, *The World* contains a deep, anti-fascist anguish over wartime *bücherverbrennung*, particularly because the publishing industry was hit particularly hard in the Blitz. Her choice of settings is apposite to this crisis: St Paul's Yard and Paternoster Row had been the traditional home to the book trade for three centuries and in 1940 was home to twenty-seven publishing firms. Notes historian Robert Hewison, "Five million volumes were destroyed in the fires that followed, and most of the publishers, including Longmans and Collins had their premises destroyed."<sup>[28]</sup> As with the 1666 fire, when "Shakespeare's London disappeared", a specifically literary commercial landscape went up in the Blitz.<sup>[29]</sup>

<23> As a charred survivor in the centre of the City, St Giles Cripplegate church features prominently in *The World* as a central witness to and relic of a thousand violent years of City history. Partly incinerated in the raids, its walls and towers survived the Blitz and serve as Barbary's primary refuge, her *maquis* home. Like the Adelphi, St Giles is a particularly useful palimpsest: with foundations stretching to the ninth century, its function as an everyday parish church brought it into contact with both everyday urbanites and some of the founding fathers of the area's history, including Sir Thomas More, Ben Jonson, William Blake, landscape painter William Turner, seven Lord Mayors of London including Sir William Staines, and most particularly John Milton, who is interred there. It was also the first architectural casualty of the Blitz, struck on 24 August. Photographer Cecil Beaton's wrote of its interior,

I marveled at...the unfathomable laws of blast. ... whole memorial plaques of carved marble had been blown across the width of the church and lay undamaged. The entire frontage of the deserted business premises opposite was wrecked, and Milton's statue had been flung from its plinth. Yet the lamp-post was standing erect with no pane of its lantern broken.<sup>[30]</sup>

<24> The statue of Milton blasted from its plinth becomes an appropriate symbol for Macaulay. Although she had praised *Paradise Lost* in her 1934 biography of Milton, by *The World*, Macaulay's view had shifted: while the postlapsarian creative wilderness is a constant preoccupation in this book, she thoroughly rejects it, finding no solace in the Felix Culpa or the beautiful ruin. (Understandable, no doubt, given her personal ruin.) As a final dismissal of the consolatory aestheticising, she even resurrects Milton in the guise of a mad vicar who, having been trapped for two days in the rubble of his church, has lost both his faith and his mind. (The other heroes of City history are either ignored entirely or trivialised similarly.)

<25> Indeed, St Giles remains symbolic not for its survival but for its tragedy: its function is, at best, elegiac. Unlike Louis MacNiece or Herbert Read, whose revolutionary glee celebrated "all institutions, ... associations and federations" becoming transformed into "so many empty forms, structures with their windows blown out, their walls cracked, their reports and memoranda a heap of sodden ashes," Macaulay makes it clear that ruined London promises no new world order.<sup>[31]</sup> Nor does she condone the government's claims of a "New Jerusalem" being forged in Blitz fires. Her post-war metropolis is far more cynical: as a historian and classicist, she acknowledges cyclical destruction and regrowth but finds no mass deliverance in it. Unlike the consolatory promises of Barbary's Romantic city, with its creative vitality, or of Gulliver's Age-of-Progress-style humanism, refreshed anew in post-war social reforms, Macaulay insists on here-and-now realism, approaching the city with a pragmatist's eye. Thus her cartographic description, detailed commercial and clerical histories, and very democratic geographies. Macaulay's sole consolation, then, is curatorial: *The World My Wilderness* itself functions as artefact, a desperate chronicle of a transient age.

<26> Tellingly, then, her novel contains a pervasive fascination with archaeological record, just as her later treatise, *The Pleasure of Ruins*, interrogates the aesthetic function of contemporary ruin. Uncovered in the bombed-out modern city were huge chunks of its medieval and Roman past; appropriately, these "dusky craters, the broken walls" form, along with ruinous St. Giles, Barbary's refuge. "Excavators had begun their tentative work, uncovering foundations, seeking the Middle Ages, the Dark Ages, Londinium, Rome. The Wall was being examined, its great bastions identified and cleared, their tiles and brickwork dated. Roman and medieval pots and coins were gathered up and housed; civilised intelligence was at work among the ruins," observes Macaulay's narrator.<sup>[32]</sup> And yet unlike T.B. Macaulay, who projected upon London's anticipated ruins an aura of essentialised British civility (and certainly unlike Hitler's architect Albert Speer, whose Theory of Ruin Value was meant to ensure Nazi monumentality throughout the ages), Rose Macaulay finds little in London's ruins save historical curiosities and portents of future decay.<sup>[33]</sup>

<27> If lessons can be learned from history, Macaulay implies, it is only through civilisations' comparative and inevitable declines. In "Miss Anstruther's Letters", she writes that "the little burial garden was like a garden in a Vesuvian village, grey in its ash coat" and later that the "Gothic respectability of Mortimer House one with Nineveh and Tyre and with the little public [house] across the street."<sup>[34]</sup> Similarly, in *The World*, Macaulay allies London's remnants to those of Angkor Wat, a Mayan temple, Pompeii, Rome; there is even the self-punishing hint that, as with biblical Babylon, the destruction was deserved.

<28> This somewhat laboured emphasis on historical comparatives brings Macaulay back into direct confrontation with Romantic *ruinenlust*, a pursuit of which she remained guiltily fond. She writes in her massive 1953 treatise *The Pleasure of Ruins* that the apprehension of old ruins is aesthetically and emotionally fulfilling and that, “[o]f all ruins, possibly the most moving are those of long-deserted cities ... Such dead cities stir us with their desolate beauty.”<sup>[35]</sup> *The World My Wilderness* is filled with images of dead London, deserted and ruined: seen through the romantic, unreflexive Barbary, it becomes an aesthetic object, a perfect canvas for her childish adventures.

<29> No matter how Romantic Macaulay’s heroine and hobbies, however, she rejects Barbary’s ahistorical naivete utterly, again emphasizing a very real material history and an acute awareness of a city’s loss. “New ruins have not yet acquired the weathered patina of age,” she concludes in *Pleasure*. “The bombed churches and cathedrals of Europe give us, on the whole, nothing but resentful sadness, like the bombed cities ... *Ruinenlust* has come full circle: we have had our fill.”<sup>[36]</sup>

<30> Appropriately, despite its almost post-modern reliance upon pastiche and irony, *The World My Wilderness* concludes on a philosophical tone: “So men’s will to recovery strove against the drifting wilderness to halt and tame it; but the wilderness might slip from their hands...seeking the primeval chaos and old night which had been before Londinium was... ‘I think,’” Barbary’s brother Richie murmurs, “‘we are in rats’ alley, where the dead men lost their bones.’”<sup>[37]</sup> Milton, Coleridge and Great-Uncle Macaulay here yield to *The Waste Land* at its most pessimistic. As her city begins rebuilding, for Macaulay past ignominies still overwhelm, reducing her meticulous geographies and elegiac histories -- her shored-up fragments -- into portents of an ominous future. Ultimately, in Macaulay’s post-war London, the mythogenic quest fails utterly: the faceless barbarians still threaten the gates, Eliot’s desert still intrudes.

## Endnotes

[1] Macaulay, Thomas Babington. *The History of England from the Accession of James II*, Book 1, Chapter 1, Part 1. Project Gutenberg, 2000 (1849). [\[△\]](#)

[2] Rose Macaulay, letter to Daniel George, 13 May 1941, as quoted in: Smith, Constance Babington. *Rose Macaulay: A Biography*. London: Collins, 1972, p. 157. [\[△\]](#)

[3] *Ibid.* 159. “Miss Anstruther’s Letters” was originally published by Storm Jameson in 1942 in an American collection entitled *London Calling*. [\[△\]](#)

[4] Art historian David Mellor summarises in *A Paradise Lost*, “Emblematic of...the Neo-Romantic sensibility is ‘the quest’, as portrayed, for instance, by Cecil Collins or John Piper, a search whose object is the shrine, an Eden or Arcadia; a quest made by artists sensitive to the spiritual loss of their day, a society which was to be broken by a tidal wave of war carnage and subsequent consumerism. ... This was a projected past which found its myth of origins in the land of Britain itself -- the Britain of Arthur and Blake’s Albion, an organic myth of rocks, hills and Arcadia.” (David Mellor, *A Paradise Lost: The Neo-Romantic Imagination in Britain, 1935-1955*. [London: Lund Humphries, 1987], p. 16-17.) In particular, the maudlin sensitivity of many of the New Romantic artists -- Piper, perhaps, excluded -- and New Apocalyptic writers would have repelled Macaulay. [\[△\]](#)

[5] Macaulay, Rose. *The World My Wilderness*. London: Collins, 1950, p. 102. [\[△\]](#)

[6] *Ibid.* [\[△\]](#)

[7] *Ibid.* 14. [\[△\]](#)

[8] *Ibid.* 65. [\[△\]](#)

[9] C.f. Gustave Doré’s 1872 etching entitled “The New Zealander”, from *London: A Pilgrimage*, wherein a futuristic figure from the New World stumbles upon the ruins of an ancient civilization and sketches from South Bank the ruins of St Paul’s, the financial city and the commercial wharves. For a thorough discussion of the New Zealander figure, originally a didactic creation of Macaulay’s great-uncle T.B. Macaulay, see David Skilton’s “Contemplating the Ruins of London: Macaulay’s New Zealander and Others”, from the March 2004 edition of *Literary London*. [\[△\]](#)

[10] *Ibid.* 35. [\[△\]](#)

[11] Macaulay’s literary executor, Constance Babington Smith, claims that Macaulay never wrote this fictional offspring of Coleridge (she was not named in the letter to Woolf). I would stridently argue otherwise. Smith 154-5. [\[△\]](#)

[12] Smith 231. [\[△\]](#)

[13] Along with “Miss Anstruther’s Letters” and *The Pleasure of Ruins*, *The World My Wilderness* marks a tremendous break with the light satirical tone Macaulay typically employed in her prose. [\[△\]](#)

[14] *The World*, 50. [\[△\]](#)

[15] *Ibid.* 33-4. [\[△\]](#)

[16] *Ibid.* 124. [\[△\]](#)

[17] *Ibid.* 129-30. [\[△\]](#)

[18] *Ibid.* 108. [\[△\]](#)

[19] However unintentionally on Doré’s part, this description dovetails neatly with his “New Zealander”, which (unironically) places commercial properties in the foreground of London’s crumbling, Romantic ruin. [\[△\]](#)

[20] *Ibid.* 135. [\[△\]](#)

[21] *Ibid.* 175. [\[△\]](#)

[22] *Ibid.* 24. [\[△\]](#)

[23] Cf. David C.G. Allan’s *The Adelphi: Past and Present -- History and Guide*. London: Calder Walker Associates, 2001. [\[△\]](#)

[24] Lancaster, Osbert. *All Done from Memory*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953, p.107. [\[△\]](#)

[25] Woolf, Virginia. “I January 1941.” *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume Five*. New York: Harvest Books, 1985, p. 351 [\[△\]](#)

[26] *The World*, 47. [[^](#)]

[27] *Ibid.* 109. [[^](#)]

[28] Hewison, Robert. *Under Siege: Literary Life in London, 1939-45*. London: Methuen, 1988 (1977), p. 35. [[^](#)]

[29] Bell, Walter George. *The Great Fire of London in 1666*. Edited and introduced by Belinda Hollyer. London: The Folio Society, 2003 [1920], p. xxi. This is likely to be Woolf's "very accurate detailed book". [[^](#)]

[30] As quoted in Hewison, 115. [[^](#)]

[31] Piette, Adam. *Imagination at War: British Fiction and Poetry, 1939-45*. Basinstoke: Papermac, 1995, 40. [[^](#)]

[32] *The World*, 177. [[^](#)]

[33] Cf. Catherine Edward's *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789-1945* (CUP 1996). [[^](#)]

[34] Reprinted in Smith, 167-8. [[^](#)]

[35] Macaulay, Rose. *The Pleasure of Ruins*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1953, p. 253. [[^](#)]

[36] *Ibid.* 454. [[^](#)]

[37] *The World*, 177. [[^](#)]

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In 1666, London was England's economic powerhouse with an estimated population of 500,000. Its closest rival in size was Bristol with a population of only 30,000. The city's architecture had changed little from the Middle Ages. Flames fanned by a steady wind quickly spread to the surrounding neighborhood. By 8 o'clock in the morning the fire had reached the Thames and progressed half way across London Bridge, its advance halted only by a gap in the shops on the bridge. The hill of the city, in a most horrid malicious bloody flame, not like the fine flame of an ordinary fire. We stayed till, it being darkish, we saw the fire as only one entire arch of fire from this to the other side of the bridge, and in a bow up the hill, for an arch of above a mile long. It made me weep to see it. "A Horrid, Malicious, Bloody Flame: Elegy, Irony and Rose Macaulay's Blitzed London". *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London* 5.2. Google Scholar. Anthony, Sian. 2011. *Medieval Settlement to 18th-/19th-century Rookery: Excavations at Central Saint Giles, London Borough of Camden, 2006-8*. London: Museum of London Archaeology. Google Scholar. Ashton, Rosemary. 2012. *Victorian Bloomsbury*. London: Yale University Press. CrossRef Google Scholar. Beaumont, Matthew. Dame Emilie Rose Macaulay, DBE (1 August 1881 - 30 October 1958) was an English writer, most noted for her award-winning novel *The Towers of Trebizond*, about a small Anglo-Catholic group crossing Turkey by camel. The story is seen as a spiritual autobiography, reflecting her own changing and conflicting beliefs. Macaulay's novels were partly influenced by Virginia Woolf; she also wrote biographies and travelogues. The hill of the city, in a most horrid, malicious, bloody flame, not like the fine flame of an ordinary fire. We stayed till, it being darkish, we saw the fire as only one entire arch of fire from this to the other side of the bridge and in a bow up the hill for an arch of above a mile long: it made me weep to see it. The churches, houses, and all on fire and flaming at once and a horrid noise the flames made, and the cracking of houses at their ruin. So home with a sad heart and there find everybody discoursing and lamenting the fire, and my friend, poor Tom Hater, come with some few of his goods saved out of his house, which was burned up on Fish Street Hill. "A Horrid, Malicious, Bloody Flame: Elegy, Irony and Rose Macaulay's Blitzed London". *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London* 5. K L Anderson. *Nightwalking: A Nocturnal History of London*. London has provided the setting and inspiration for a host of literary works in English, from canonical masterpieces to the popular and ephemeral. Drawing upon a variety of methods and materials, the essays in this volume explore the London of Langland and the Peasants' Rebellion, of Shakespeare and the Elizabethan stage, of Pepys and the Restoration coffee house, of Dickens and Victorian wealth and poverty, of Conrad and the Empire, of Woolf and the wartime Blitz, of Naipaul and postcolonial immigration, and of contemporary globalism.