



TOURISTS AT THE RUINS OF LONDON The Metropolis and the Struggle for Empire

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“Babylon and Memphis, Troy and Mycenae,
Carthage, Athens and Rome.
Why not London?”

Christopher Woodward

In a recent article on “visions of ruined London,” Patrick Parrinder approvingly quotes Anne Janowitz to the effect that “the building of a national identity is closely linked to the sense of some earlier or some other nation’s ruin.” Parrinder remarks, “London comes after ancient Rome, but what rough beast—many writers have asked—will be born out of London’s ruins?”¹ The purpose of this paper is to investigate for the period 1750-1870 some of the cultural significances not only of the past transfer of empire (*translatio imperii*) by which Britain achieved imperial greatness, but of the next *translatio* which will take that greatness away.²

Christopher Woodward eloquently puts the general point about anticipated ruins,

Babylon and Memphis, Troy and Mycenae, Carthage, Athens and Rome. Why not London? In the 18th century it was accepted that this great city, capital of a new Empire, would also lie in ruins one day. As Rose Macaulay showed in her exhilarating book, *The Pleasures of Ruins* (1953) every flourishing empire has experienced the premonition that its decline was inevitable.³

¹ Patrick Parrinder, “‘These Fragments I have shored against my ruins:’ Visions of ruined London from Edmund Spenser to J.G. Ballard,” *London in Literature: Visionary Mappings of the Metropolis*, Susana Onega & John A. Stotesbury eds., Anglistische Forschung 309 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2002) 20; quoting Anne Janowitz, *England’s Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (Cambridge, MA & Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) 4.

² I use “transfer” in preference to “translation” to convey the sense of “*translatio*,” since “translation” invokes distracting meanings in an English context. “Empire” is used in the sense of “rule” or “sway,” and by “transfer” I intend the exercise of imperial sway by a new power, not the transfer of the property in particular imperial territory.

³ Christopher Woodward, “Scenes from the Future,” in *Visions of Ruin: Architectural Fantasies and Designs for Garden Follies* (London: Sir John Soane Museum, 1999) 15-17.

The habit of drawing conclusions about the probable fate of one's own civilisation from the contemplation of the ruin of other imperial cities is illustrated in a footnote in *Decline and Fall*,

While Carthage was in flames, Scipio repeated two lines of the Iliad, which express the destruction of Troy, acknowledging to Polybius, his friend and preceptor, [Polyb. in *Excerpt. de Virtut. et Vit.* tom. ii, 1455-1465], that while he recollected the vicissitudes of human affairs, he inwardly applied them to the future calamities of Rome [Appian. in Libycis, 136, ed. Toll.]⁴

Tradition identifies the Homeric lines in question as those in which Hector expresses a similar awareness of the ultimate fate of *his* city, and while arming for battle predicts its fall to Andromache: "For a surety know I this in heart and soul: the day shall come when sacred Ilios shall be laid low, and Priam, and the people of Priam."⁵

The premonition of decline is firmly based in a recognition of the power and prosperity of the imperial city as it is, and the awareness is therefore in general intellectually and aesthetically pleasurable, as Daniel Abramson remarks: "The idea of the future ruin blended picturesque visual pleasure with the sublime frisson of temporal doom consoled by architectural immortality." A new building, such as the Rotunda of John Soane's Bank of England, imagined as a future ruin, "joins the revered remains of Roman antiquity."⁶ It was a compliment to an architect and his employer to say that a recent creation would make a noteworthy ruin. More recently we find Albert Speer advancing a "law of ruin value" (*Ruinengesetz*), and advising Hitler that buildings should be so designed that they would make glorious ruins at the end of the Third Reich's millennium, to provide a "bridge of tradition" for posterity.⁷

Pointing to London's deficiencies in this respect, we find the young Swedish poet, Erik Gustaf Geijer, when visiting London in 1809, wondering at the vastness, wealth and impersonality of "the most populous city in Europe," but representing its buildings to himself as inadequate future ruins: "No houses in *grand* style (although some admittedly in *heavy* style). Few palaces—and these not beautiful—no monuments, whose ruins should, in a future age when London is no more, speak to future generations. It is a boundless Babylon of bricks."⁸ Certainly Saint James's Palace was not Drottningholm. It helps to contextualise this cultural judgment if we

⁴ Edward Gibbon, "General Observations on the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West," *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, David Womersley ed., 3 vols (London: Allen Lane, 1994) vol 2, 509 n4.

⁵ *Iliad* 6.447-9, translated A. T. Murray, *Loeb Classics* (London: William Heineman, 1930) 294-95.

⁶ Daniel Abramson, caption to catalogue item 133, *John Soane Architect* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1999) 231.

⁷ Alex Scobie, "Albert Speer's Theory of Ruin Value," in *Hitler's State Architecture: the Impact of Classical Antiquity* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990) 93-96.

⁸ Erik Gustaf Geijer, *Minnen* (1834), *Erik Gustaf Geijer Svalans svenska klassiker*, Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 1958, 32: "För övrigt inga hus i *stor* (ehuruval några i *tung*) stil. Få palatser—dessa ej vackra—inga monumenter, vilkas ruiner i en kommande tid då London ej mera är, skola tala till kommande släkter. Det är ett omätligt Babylon av tegel" (My translation).

compare Geijer's reaction with a passage in which Gibbon describes the arrival in Rome of Constantius, who "expressed, with some pleasantry, his affected surprise that the human race should thus suddenly be collected on the same spot," in this most populous city on the Earth. The son of Constantine, we are told, spent "his short visit of thirty days [...] employed in viewing the monuments of art and power which were scattered over the seven hills and the interjacent vallies." The Emperor, a tourist in his own capital, was of course gratified by the architectural and aesthetic confirmation of the city's, the Empire's, and hence his own greatness. The Swedish student arriving in London to learn English, however, saw plenty that asserted the commercial supremacy of Britain, but nothing that would *commemorate* the power of the British Empire. In contrast, the modern tourist described by Gibbon could still recognise the splendour that had been Rome: "The traveller, who has contemplated the ruins of ancient Rome, may conceive some imperfect idea of the sentiments which they must have inspired when they reared their heads in the splendour of unsullied beauty" [Gibbon, I, chap.19, 699].

London, it seems, would have less to offer the future grand tourist, though most commentators ranked Saint Paul's as a noble structure and hence a good prospective ruin. In 1800 Elizabeth Lady Holland recorded in her journal,

I have been reading Le Brun's journey to Persepolis in 1704, the ruins of which (Persepolis) seem equal to anything in antiquity in point of solidity, size, and extent.

In future times when this little island shall have fallen into its natural insignificancy, by being no longer possessed of a fictitious power founded upon commerce, distant colonies, and other artificial sources of wealth, how puzzled will the curious antiquary be when seeking amidst the ruins of London vestiges of its past grandeur? Acres now covered by high, thin walls of brick, making streets *tirés à cordon*, divided into miserable, straitened, scanty houses, will, when decayed, crumble into a vast heap of brick-dust. No proud arch to survive the records of history, no aqueduct to prove how much the public was considered by ye Govert., no lofty temples, no public works! St. Paul's anywhere would be a grand edifice; finer as a ruin than in its present state, disfigured with casements, whitewashed walls, pews, etc. The bridges alone would strike the eye as fine remains; they are magnificent.⁹

Although, given the physiocratic tendency of her remarks, Lady Holland seems not to have read thinkers like Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, her exclamation about the lack of "public works" shows that she has learned one of the lessons from Gibbon's great history,

Among the innumerable monuments of architecture constructed by the Romans, how many have escaped the notice of history, how few have resisted the ravages of time and barbarism! And yet even the majestic ruins that are still scattered over Italy and the provinces,

⁹ Elizabeth Vassall, Baroness Holland, *The Journal of Elizabeth Lady Holland*, G.S.H.F. Strangways ed., 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green, 1908) vol. 2, 54.

would be sufficient to prove that those countries were once the seat of a polite and powerful empire. Their greatness alone, or their beauty, might deserve our attention; but they are rendered more interesting, by two important circumstances, which connect the agreeable history of the arts, with the more useful history of human manners. Many of those works were erected at private expense, and almost all were intended for public benefit. [Gibbon, I, chap.2, 71-72]

The contemplation of future ruin sharpens the perception of the qualities of the present civilisation.

At certain moments during the chosen period the intellectual and aesthetic pleasure and the “frisson of temporal doom” aroused by the rhetorical device of the anticipated ruin seem to be supplemented by a more or less focussed concern that current historical developments are already pointing inexorably to that doom. At times of national danger, the future fall of the imperial capital can be imagined in more specific terms, with a plausible causality and even chronology implied. In these cases, there is a strong sense of the transfer of empire to some new metropolis, and the contingency is no longer generalised and simply aestheticised. The visualisation of the future ruins often includes one or more tourists, who represent the coming age, and the coming imperial power. I shall present a number of examples of this phenomenon, largely clustered around the national and imperial perils of the American Revolution and the darkest years of the Napoleonic Wars. In these examples, it is not divine vengeance so much as economics, which is to bring London and the empire down. In presenting these examples in the context of the wider cultural habit Woodward identifies, this paper also seeks to distinguish specific, focussed visions from the more general, pleasurable rhetorical practice of less alarming moments of history. The historical narrative thus implied will place the anticipated ruin in the context of specific international rivalries for the mastery of the world between France and Britain in this period, and between Britain and the United States of America in a future age. Anna Barbauld’s poem, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* will be found to be exceptionally well attuned to the major intellectual currents of the age. Victorian uses of the device will be seen to be a response to the heightened British (or English) sense of self in that new age.

The image of tourists at the ruins of London in the future is for a period of a hundred years or so, from about 1770 to 1870, a rhetorical device which associates the fall of the metropolis and the loss of empire with the decline and fall of Rome, establishing by its classical associations the transfer of learning (*translatio studii*) as well as the transfer of empire (*translatio imperii*) from ancient Rome to modern London, and predicting in the same device the eventual *translatio imperii* from Britain to the next great imperial power. This is a period in which there is heightened exploitation of ruins in general, as aids to poetic contemplation, as landscape features, as painterly subjects, as part of the apparatus of “gothic” fiction, in serious archaeology, and as architectural models.¹⁰ This is also a period dominated by grand

¹⁰ See Laurence Goldstein, *Ruins and Empire: the Evolution of a Theme in Augustan and Romantic Literature* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); Anne Janowitz,

historical narratives of empire in English, such as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88), William Robertson's *History of America* (1777), and the confident sweeps of Macaulay, who proposed a unique British combination of industry, liberty and democracy to account for the manifest wealth and power of the country. By the end of the period, London had become the first modern megalopolis, and the implications of Carlyle's question, "To whom ... is this wealth of England wealth? Who is it that it blesses; makes happier, wiser, beautifuller, in any way better?"¹¹ were more urgent than ever. In particular, as far as this paper is concerned, these were the years during which Britain lost the thirteen American colonies, re-invented its Indian empire, gained undisputed control of the seas and dominance in world banking, trade and industry, while in 1815 finally bringing to an end centuries of debilitating wars with France.

Horace Walpole uses the rhetorical device of the anticipated ruin of London at least three times in letters from 1774 to 1778. The first instance, from November 1771, is explicitly linked to current discontent and impending revolt in the American colonies,

The next Augustan age will dawn on the other side of the Atlantic. There will perhaps be a Thucydides at Boston, a Xenophon at New York, and in time a Virgil at Mexico, and a Newton at Peru. At last some curious traveller from Lima will visit England and give a description of the ruins of St. Paul's, like the editions of Balbec and Palmyra — but am I not prophesying contrary to my consummate prudence, and casting horoscopes of empires like Rousseau? Yes; well, I will go and dream of my visions.¹²

In identifying the origin of the "curious traveller" as Peru, Walpole is harking back to the heyday of imperial Spain, whose wealth was based on precious metals, with little support from the trade and industry, which, it was becoming clear, were the basis of the British Empire. The traveller is to be a literary reincarnation of the architectural archaeologist Robert Wood (1716-1771), whose influential *The Ruins of Palmyra* and *The Ruins of Balbec* appeared in 1753 and 1757 respectively. He (and at this period our visitor is invariably a "he") is also allied to the future historian of Britain, envisaged a few years later by Gibbon as a philosophical historian from a new civilisation in the southern hemisphere,

If, in the neighbourhood of the commercial and literary town of Glasgow, a race of cannibals has really existed, we may contemplate, in the period of Scottish history, the opposite extremes of savage and civilised life. Such reflections tend to enlarge the circle of our ideas; and to encourage the pleasing hope, that New Zealand may produce, in some future age, the Hume of the Southern Hemisphere. [Gibbon, I, chap. 25, 1001]

England's Ruins; and for a reliable and immensely readable account of the wider subject of ruinism, Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2001).

¹¹ Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, Centenary Edition (London: Chapman and Hall, 1907) 6.

¹² Horace Walpole to Horace Mann, 24 November 1774, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, W.S. Lewis et al. eds., 48 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1937-1983) XXIV (1967), 62.

This passage, which glances at the renaissance tradition of the world turned upside down, yet is informed by the eighteenth-century “stadial” model of history, is a tribute to Gibbon’s contemporary and friend, David Hume, who had died in 1776. The volume in which it appeared, the second of *Decline and Fall*, was published in 1781.

Walpole repeats the conceit when writing to Rev. William Mason in 1775, to approve the idea of printing a work on landscape gardening for private circulation among interested gentlemen, who, he suggests, are one day to become extinct, even if their “improving” habits are to survive on the other side of the globe,

I approve your printing in manuscript, that is, not for the public, for who knows how long the public will be able, or be permitted to read? Bury a few copies against this island is rediscovered, some American versed in the old English language will translate it, and revive the true taste in gardening; though he will smile at the diminutive scenes on the little Themes when he is planting a forest on the banks of the Oroonoko.¹³

This future authority is a scholar and a traveller, and in his development of a plantation, very much a successor of the eighteenth-century country gentlemen Mason is addressing. Once more he hails from Latin America, but this time from the Caribbean, the earliest area of British transatlantic influence, from which great British fortunes were being made. This scholar of the distant future who will investigate the privately printed work on landscape gardening will study English as an ancient language, and will perhaps be a colleague of the archaeologist whom Walpole had imagined twenty years earlier, puzzling over the cultural significance of an ancient Roman altar-tomb which Horace Mann had sent over from Italy in 1753 to embellish and make more complex the garden of Walpole’s ornamental villa, Strawberry Hill, at Twickenham, in which it had “churchyarded itself in the corner of my wood, where I hope it will remain till some future virtuoso shall dig it up, and publish it in a *collection of Roman antiquities in Britain*. It is the very thing I wanted.”¹⁴

The third example from the seventeen-seventies of the future ruin of London arises from Walpole’s description in July 1776 of the uncontrollable building boom in London, at a time when immense wealth was being brought back from India by the nabobs of the East India Company,

America and France must tell us how long this exuberance of opulence is to last! The East Indies, I believe, will not contribute to it much longer. Babylon and Memphis and Rome probably stared at their own downfall. Empires did not use to philosophize, nor thought much but of themselves. Such revolutions are better known now, and we ought to expect them—I do not say we do. This little island will be ridiculously proud some ages hence of its former brave days, and swear its capital was once as big again as Paris, or— what is to be the

¹³ Horace Walpole to Rev William Mason, 27 November 1775, *Correspondence*, vol. 28 (1955) 234.

¹⁴ Horace Walpole to Horace Mann, 21 July 1753, *Correspondence*, vol. 20 (1960) 388.

name of the city that will then give laws to Europe?—perhaps New York or Philadelphia.¹⁵

In this example the future may be either with France or with the revolting American colonies, or perhaps (such is the value of hindsight) with France in the short term, and America in the more distant future. Despite its defeats in India, in America and on the Seven Seas in the Seven Years' War, France was the principle enemy and the chief rival to become the dominant imperial power.

The same set of assumptions underlies an unfinished and posthumously published poem by Thomas Lyttelton (1744-79), second Baron Lyttelton of the first creation (known as "the wicked Lord Lyttelton"), posthumously published in 1780 in a volume entitled: *Poems, by a Young Nobleman, of Distinguished Abilities, lately deceased; Particularly the State of England, and The once flourishing City of London. In a Letter from an American Traveller, Dated from the Ruinous Portico of St. Paul's, in the Year 2199, to a friend settled in Boston, the Metropolis of the Western Empire. Also Sundry fugitive Pieces, principally wrote whilst upon his Travels on the Continent.*

"The State of England, and The once flourishing City of London. In a Letter from an American Traveller, Dated from the Ruinous Portico of St. Paul's, in the Year 2199" is dated "1771," but internal evidence makes this date impossible. In particular an almost certain reference to the Grand Union Flag, which is said to have been first raised on Prospect Hill on New Year's Day 1776, suggests that "1771" is a misreading for "1776." Lyttelton is not only agitated by the possible loss of the colonies but by a new alliance of France and Spain with the colonies against Britain, and it is this alliance of two old imperial enemies which is to bring Britain down, leaving the dominance of Boston to the more distant future.

This poem, incomplete and mediocre though it is, constitutes the first developed account of a tourist's visit to the future ruins of London. Starting *in medias res*, either on Horatian or on Shandean principles, or because we only have a fragment, Lyttelton's poem presents the approach to London under its poetic name of "Augusta," which foregrounds the identification with Rome promoted by writers since the late seventeenth century,

And now thro' broken paths and rugged ways,
Uncultivated regions, we advanc'd
Tow'rds fam'd Augusta's towers, on the Thames
(Whose clear broad stream glides smoothly thro' the vale)
Embank'd, and stretching o'er the level plain,
For many a mile her gilded spires were seen,
While Britain yet was free—Alas! how chang'd,
How fallen from that envy'd height [1-8]

These opening lines give a flavour of the style and establish the minimal level of poetic competence, which reigns throughout. Yet the following description is worth quoting. Predictably the ruins of St Paul's are the greatest in size and architectural splendour. The tour our American traveller

¹⁵ Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, 17th July 1776, *Correspondence*, vol. 24 (1967) 228-29.

is now undertaking closely parallels the Grand Tour as practised by Lyttelton and his contemporaries. In particular the tourist shares with his correspondent an education based in the study of Latin and Roman history, and, like many an eighteenth-century milord, takes as a guide a member of the degenerate race descended from the old masters of the world. The new condition of Britain is that

... her sun
That once enlighten'd Europe with his beams,
Sunk in the West, is set, and ne'er again
Shall o'er Britannia spread his orient rays!
These were my thoughts whilst through a falling heap
Of shapeless ruins far and wide diffus'd,
Paul's great Cathedral, from her solid base,
High tow'ring to the sky, by Heav'n's command,
Amidst the universal waste preserved
Struck my astonish'd view! A fabric huge,
Of nobler structure than e'er Babylon,
Or glorious Rome within her marbled walls
Cou'd boast in days of yore; before the Goth
With barb'rous hand, and uncontroled sway,
Crush'd furious her magnificence, and swept
Temple, and tower down to the ground. For not
The fam'd pantheon, or the sculptur'd dome
Of great Semiramis, not holier fane
Of once inspir'd Judea, to the eye
Of speculative wonder, did present
A more admir'd, or admirable view!
On this fair object my fix'd eye was kept
In pleasing meditation, whilst my guide,
A poor emaciate Briton, led me on
Through streets, and squares, and falling palaces,
(Where here and there, a habitant was seen) ... [12-37]

British travellers on the Grand Tour commonly complained that the inhabitants of eighteenth-century Rome represented a drastic falling off from the Romans of old, and the future tourist's experience of London will parallel that of eighteenth-century Britons at Rome, where they found a sparse, enfeebled population, whose condition they attributed to the collapse of martial valour, succeeded by centuries of subservience and starvation.

Yet Lyttelton has something to add which brings the collapse of London up-to-date. After all, he is a man of his age, and knows that British power depends on British commerce, and that that commerce depends on banking services, in which London has only one rival, Amsterdam. The visitor is taken

To where stood once amongst the peopled town,
Th' Exchange of London; where the golden streams
Of vivid commerce from the trading winds
Levant and Ponent, north and south effus'd,
Were in a centre fix'd: where ev'ry day,
Ten thousand merchants, learned in the art
Of nursing and improving wealth, conven'd

To settle on the wide and stable base
 Of liberty, and public good, their own
 And happy England's welfare.—Then the pride
 Of the commercial world; whose trade spread on
 From southern Orelan, to the banks
 Of cold Estotiland, from sultry climes,
 And freezing regions, over distant seas,
 Brought gather'd wealth, and Asian treasures home. [38-52]

The "poor emaciate Briton" is well versed in his country's history of four centuries before, and sheds a patriotic tear while recounting the past glories of the city,

In this unwholesome fen, by the foul toad,
 And eyeless newt inhabited, *once* stood
 The bank and treasury of England, fill'd
 With shining heaps of beaten gold; a sum
 That wou'd have beggar'd all the petty states
 Of Europe to have rais'd. Here half the wealth
 Of Mexique and Peru was pour'd, and hence
 Diffus'd in many a copious stream, was spread
 To distant towns and cities, and enrich'd
 Industrious commerce through the polish'd land. [58-67]

Accumulation of bullion alone, of course, was not the sole cause of British commercial and military might, which also depended on the government's ability to raise loans for itself and its allies and client states. It is corruption and the collapse of credit, Lyttelton proposes, that will leave the country open to a French invasion, and the extinction of Liberty,

But now, alas! not e'en a trace remains,
 Not e'en a ruin of the spacious pile;
 Raz'd even with the dust, by the joint hand
 Of the avenging multitude; what time
 The fall of public credit, that had long
 Totter'd upon her airy base, involv'd
 In sudden and promiscuous ruin, all
 The great commercial world.—Then fell,
 Struck to the heart by dark Corruption's arms,
 The British Lion: then the Flower de Lis
 Wav'd high on London's tower;—and then sunk,
 Beneath the tyrant's bloody hand, the last
 Remaining spark of LIBERTY.—A dire
 And dreadful revolution! [68-82]

The possibility of a French victory and the sack of London was recognised at intervals for centuries. A good poetic example of the French threat in a commercial and imperial setting is met in *Britain*, an anonymous poem of 1757, which is sometimes erroneously attributed to Robert Colvill. This poem was published early in the Seven Years' War, during French incursions into British colonies in America, and before Britain achieved naval supremacy and secured the Indian territories of the East India Company. The poet attributes the future fall of London to indolence and luxury, and the loss of the Indian empire to the French, who aimed

With impious hands, to lift the BRITISH crown
From GEORGE'S sacred head, and give the realm
A prey to tyranny and lawless power:
To tread religion, hallowed, under foot,
And send the fury superstition forth,
Blasphemous, and devouring thro' the land:
Then aim some dreadful mischief, to subdue
Our stubborn sons, and bend them to the yoke;
Perhaps to yield our princely senate, where
The love of liberty and virtue dwells,
Invincible, and ardent to be free,
To the nefarious axe: perhaps, in rage,
To lay the pride of cities in the dust,
Imperial London sack'd and plundered,
To yield her merchants, and her merchandize,
Her treasur'd heaps, the spoil of ruffian Gauls:
To send her turrets blazing to the skies;
Her sacred domes with sacrilegious fire
To burn; her royal palaces, the work
Of ancient kings, with all their stately pride
Of towers, and glittering spires, to humble low:
To render desart where proud London stood,
And lay her boasted glories in the dust. [I, 395-417]¹⁶

Despite the parallels between these two extracts, the later poem assumes British naval, commercial and financial superiority at the date of composition, while the earlier piece, though vaunting the virtues of Britain and British trade, cannot reasonably make such an assumption. France and Britain are in equal contention at that date. The balance of power has shifted by 1776 because of military and naval victories and the accelerating Industrial Revolution, and although it will still be France that threatens to defeat a Britain weakened by the loss of its American possessions, it will only be able to do so through an alliance with the revolting colonies and the ageing Spanish empire.

The corruption and indolence that will bring Britain low are presented in true Enlightenment fashion as psychological and socio-economic factors, like those operating in Montesquieu, Voltaire, Adam Ferguson, Hume and Gibbon, and not as sins calling forth Divine vengeance. In contrast, at the conclusion of Book III of *The Task* (1785), William Cowper, like a thousand others before him and after, links London to the Cities on the Plain,

Ten righteous would have saved a city once,
And thou hast many righteous.—Well for thee—
That salt preserves thee; more corrupted else,
And therefore more obnoxious at this hour,
Than Sodom in her day had pow'r to be,
For whom God heard his Abr'am plead in vain. [III, 843-848]¹⁷

The economically produced collapse Lyttelton foresees is explained in greater detail by a “horrid phantom,” emblematic of old England, dressed in

¹⁶ *Britain, A Poem in Three Books* (Edinburgh, 1757) 20-21.

¹⁷ *The Poems of William Cowper*, John D. Baird & Charles Ryskamp eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 184.

antique armour, and carrying a broken spear and a placard bearing the legend "MAGNA CHARTA." This ghostly figure, which surely prefigures the spectre which appears to Volney in the ruins of Palmyra to prophesy the fall of empires,¹⁸ addresses the American tourist, recounting how Britain cherished the colonists, and how ingratitude and machinations by the other great powers led to an exhausting war.

Because it is printed from an incomplete draft, or even cobbled together from a number of separate drafts in Lyttelton's posthumous papers, the poem suffers from serious inconsistencies, and now jumps without warning to a direct address to the colonists of 1776, proposing that if the British "family" united, France, "with inland conflicts' sunder torn," would be expelled from Asia, Spain would be defeated in America, and

Americans and Britons, the same thing,
Sprung from one oaken truck, rul'd by one king,
Combin'd, may conquer worlds as yet unknown ... [260-262]

The poem ends in patriotic fervour, hearing Britons both sides of the Atlantic

... with cheerful voice hosannahs sing,
Cheer wives and children, and hail great George their King [274-275]

This final line is as weak in grammar and scansion as it is as a historical prediction, and scarcely seems to present a logical outcome to the rest of the poem as we have it. However, as late as 1813 we find the Scottish writer Anne McVickers Grant (who lived in America as a young child in the seventeen-fifties) going still further and hoping that the then current war in North America will result in re-absorption of the old colonies under the British Crown. By 1813, this sentiment was less often expressed than it had been when Lyttelton wrote, soon after the Declaration of Independence,

The colonists were seen by their British and Irish sympathizers as part of the same political community, the same British nation. Once the fighting broke out ... there was still a significant number of opponents of the use of military force against the Americans, who wished fervently to reunify the fractured British Atlantic community. Events, however, were to make an inclusive Greater-Britain type of Britishness untenable.¹⁹

In this respect as in others Lyttelton's unfinished poem is interesting for the register it provides of British reactions to and knowledge of the American Revolution, as well as for the writer's appreciation of the role of economics, and for his early prediction of internal "conflicts" in France.

An alternative reaction to the loss of the American colonies was to welcome the creation of a new nation, based on the supposedly British principles of liberty and trade, and not only speaking English, but propagating English around the globe. Accepting an eventual *translatio*

¹⁸ See C.-F.C. de Volney, *Les Ruines, ou méditations sur les révolutions des empires*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1792) 133ff.

¹⁹ Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 166.

imperii, this view retains British intellectual influence. The American tourist will then be in search of his cultural roots when he visits British remains. Empire may be transferred, but learning will at least acknowledge its British heritage, as a bridge to posterity less concrete than lapidary ruins, but equally enduring. The form in which the case for this kind of cultural continuity is advanced in J. D. Brown's anonymous *Britain Preserved* of 1800 is worth examining briefly. As a Scot, Brown is writing of "the British language," which, despite, or because of, the result of the American War, he sees as one of the great legacies of a post-colonial Britain to "more than half the world," carrying with it British cultural renown,

Nor with less boast, the BRITISH tongue shall spread,
And more than half the world, by Speech, confess
Her name, her Spirit, Genius vast, sublime:
Which earth, nor seas can bound, Nature its range;
Even here, by ardent energy prepar'd
In regions infinite, yet unconceiv'd,
With higher powers, in higher Worlds to act.
And with her Speech, her fame in arts and arms,
Whate'er a CHATHAM plann'd, a WOLFE achiev'd;
Whate'er a ROBERTSON or HUME record;
Whate'er a BOYLE, a LOCKE, a NEWTON, trac'd
Of Nature, Nature's Laws, and Nature's Lord;
Whate'er a MILTON, POPE, or THOMSON sung;
Whate'er the Muse in strains divine has taught,
In all its native force and fire shall flow
Thro' this new tract of worlds, till time expire. [VI, 493-508]²⁰

Brown, who claimed to have been the first, in 1778 or nine, to use "Columbia" as the poetic name for America, finding "America" not conducive to good poetry [*Britain Preserved*, Appendix, 295-296], is enthusiastic in his desire to identify something positive for Britain in the outcome of the conflict. The future transfer of power will be to an empire led, it seems, rather than oppressed by the United States, and based on free trade, liberty and the English language, followed in time by Australia and the Pacific islands. In particular the Spanish colonies of South America will be liberated.

The Muse exults in prospect fair to trace
This rising bliss in occidental climes:
When Freedom, conscious of her native claims,
From nature and the eternal worth of man[,]
Tho' long delay'd, and still but slow her course,
Still interrupted oft by adverse aims,
O'er all thy land, Columbus, shall advance,
And still to good thy great discoveries turn.
Not shall IBERIA's now debased line
In endless thrall the hapless natives hold,
The slaves of slaves. Ye long-insulted race,
Lift up your heads, and hail the approaching dawn,
Now from the Atlantic's margin breaking clear:

²⁰ *Britain Preserved. A Poem, in Seven Books* (London, 1800) attributed to James Brown, 238-39.

For soon the Sun of Freedom, bright and strong,
 Shall drive the gloom, dispel the lingering shades,
 And far and wide his gladdening influence spread:
 Till even the long-lost regions of the South,
 Tho' now with BRITISH outcasts only stor'd,
 Like ROME, shall high in pride and potency rise,
 And OTAHEITA and her sister isles,
 By nature prone, with Grecian Cyprus vie,
 In luxury and pleasure's wanton arts.
 Thus freedom, peace, and liberal intercourse,
 To bless the world their joys benign shall spread ... [VII, 529-552,
Britain Preserved, 281-282]

In "this great rising occidental scene" (565), there will be improvements in roads and internal navigation, and North and South America will be united as

... one busy, peopl'd, polish'd scene
 Of trade, and travel, business, pleasure, mix'd;
 From whence enlighten'd views, enlarged thoughts,
 And plans of liberal policy shall spring,
 Above the selfish statesman's partial aim;
 And high and just conceptions shall arise
 Of Nature's universal plan, which form'd,
 For one great social public, all the race. [VII. 581-588]

With unlimited free trade accelerated by canals at Suez and Darien, the world will be united, and acknowledge God as supreme king, in fulfilment of this "plan." In Brown's scheme of things, Britain is preserved thanks to Pitt, but eventually Columbia expands to take the lead among the nations. This from the point of view of the British Muse is a less than catastrophic *translatio imperii*, because of a continuing share in the *studii*, and a quasi-parental pride in a common language and heritage.

Meanwhile the concept of the fall of empires had been given a public philosophical endorsement by the publication in Paris of Volney's *Les Ruines, ou méditations sur les révolutions des empires* in 1791, followed by a dozen editions of English translations over as many years, the first in 1792. A new English translation was published in Paris in 1802, overseen by Volney himself, who by now had improved his knowledge of the language during his travels in the United States, and the perceived importance of this work can be judged from the fact that the famous Invocation scene was translated by Thomas Jefferson, and the work completed by Joel Barlow.²¹ This is not the place to discuss Volney at length. Suffice it to say that his prose poem descriptive of meditations at the ruins of Palmyra over the fall of empires became part of the mental furniture of a multitude of readers and writers in French and English for the next forty years. (It may even be that the spectre which is haunting Europe at the opening of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* is a descendant of the spectre that addresses the Volney-figure at Palmyra.) Volney's project is to convince legislators that reason can produce ideal schemes of government which will enable states and empires

²¹ Jean Gaulmier, *L'Idéologue Volney 1757-1820: Contribution à l'histoire de l'orientalisme en France* (Beyrouth: Imprimerie catholique, 1951) 237.

to avoid the errors of the past, among them superstition and religious belief general, and so endure indefinitely, and in the "Avertissement" to *Les Ruines* he refers directly to the Revolution as providing the legislator able to put such a programme into effect.²²

From the point of view of the present investigation, it is notable that the *philosophe* relies on centralist political and educational policy to achieve his results, while the rival empire of Britain put its faith in its power to fund pragmatic action. For obvious reasons, Volney appealed especially to those radical writers in Britain who opposed slavery, monarchy, colonialism and institutionalised religion. His direct influence can be seen in the works of both Shelleys (Frankenstein's creation reads Volney), in Southey, and in the Irish novels of Sidney Owenson (Lady Morgan).²³ Such was the power of his name that a bookseller wishing to promote a translation of a French novel by Jean-Baptiste Cousin de Grainville entitled *Le Dernier Homme* (1805), and translated as *The Last Man, or Omegarus and Syderia, A Romance in Futurity* (1806), falsely attributes it to the pen of the great Volney.²⁴

Wherever anticipated ruins were at issue, the words of Volney before the ruins of the Eastern Mediterranean were sure to be recalled,

Reflecting that the places before me had once exhibited this animated picture: who, said I to myself, can assure me that their present desolation will not one day be the lot of our own country? Who knows but that hereafter some traveller like myself will sit down upon the banks of the Seine, the Thames, or the Zyder sea, where now, in the tumult of enjoyment, the heart and the eyes are too slow to take in the multitude of sensations; who knows but he will sit down solitary amid silent ruins, and weep a people ignored, and their greatness changed into an empty name? [Volney, 12]²⁵

²² When he first conceived of this project in 1784, he says, it could not be put into effect: "Dans le premier plan, le *Législateur* étoit un être fictif et hypothétique; dans celui-ci, l'on y a substitué un *Législateur* existant; et le sujet y a gagné l'intérêt de la réalité;" Volney, "Avertissement," ix-x.

²³ Robert D. Richardson, Jr., in his introduction to the 1979 reprint of the 1802 translation (2 vols, New York: Garland Publishing, 1979, vol 1, vii-viii), rates Volney's influence in Britain and America as "considerable": "Coleridge read it, twice, with distaste. Southey and Moore read it, and it has long been recognised as a major source behind such early poems of Shelley's as *Queen Mab*, "The Revolt of Islam," and "Alastor." It has been claimed that there are "numerous echoes" of it in Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826). At least eighteen editions had appeared in England by 1878. Its influence in America was also considerable. Gilbert Chinard has shown that the present translation was begun by Thomas Jefferson and finished by Joel Barlow [*Volney et l'Amérique*, Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1923]. It was elaborately answered by Joseph Priestley, there were at least eight nineteenth-century editions and it influenced in various ways, Emerson, Thoreau, Poe, and Lincoln, and was especially important to the young Walt Whitman."

²⁴ Morton D. Paley, "Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*: Apocalypse without Millennium," *Keats-Shelley Review* 4 (Autumn 1989) 1-25; and Peter Garside, with Jacqueline Belanger & Anthony Mandal, "The English Novel, 1800-1829: Update 1 (Apr 2000-May 2001). Section B" *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* 6 (June 2001) 20 Jan. 2003 <<http://www.cf.ac.uk/encap/corvey/articles/engnov1.html>>: "Newman Catalogue of 1814 states 'from the French of Volney'."

²⁵ In the second Paris edition of 1792 this passage reads: "Réfléchissant que telle avoit été jadis l'activité des lieux que je contemplois: Qui sait, me dis-je, si tel ne sera pas un jour l'abandon de nos propres contrées? qui sait si sur les rives de la *Seine*, de la *Tamise*, ou de

Both *The Last Man, or, Omegarus and Syderia* of 1806 and Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* of 1826 propose the cataclysmic destruction of the human race, and hence, though fascinating in their own right, lie outside the present enquiry, which is about *translatio* and not extinction, and requires localised ruin with survivors elsewhere to take up empire over the world, and play the cultural tourist.

Anticipatory ruinism is one strand in an international skein of ideas in this period, and Volney's work represents a fascinating cross-over of English and French thought. He wrote that he was proud to be dubbed a follower of Gibbon, Hume and Voltaire, in a line of atheist intellectuals.²⁶ He would have been aware of English poetic works on the melancholic contemplation of ruins, such as Thomas Warton's *The Pleasures of Melancholy* (1747) and Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742-1745), while he drew on English and French archaeological publications, making particularly heavy use of Robert Wood's *The Ruins of Palmyra* in his description of that city, which, it has been established, he did not himself visit.²⁷ Volney also had a French tradition of ruinism behind him, not to mention the revolutionary novel, *L'An deux mille quatre cent quarante*, published in London in 1771, in which the protagonist is carried forward in time and visits the ruins of Versailles,²⁸ In addition, Diderot had developed an aesthetics of ruins and anticipated ruins in his notes on the *Salons* of 1765 to 1775 in relation to the paintings of Hubert Robert ("Robert les ruines," 1733-1808), who was celebrated for paintings of ruins real, improved, anticipated and utterly imaginary. Diderot's ruinism quickly became outmoded, because his insistence that ruins as an artistic subject had necessarily to be grand was unwelcome to adherents of the picturesque. Yet only Diderot analysed how the representation of a ruin invoked not only the time when the ruined building had been intact, but the anterior moments in the foundation or development of the civilisation which the building, its inscriptions and statuary celebrated, and how this invocation prompted reflection on the impermanence of the historian's own civilisation.²⁹

Sviderzée, là où maintenant, dans le tourbillon de tant de joissances, le cœur et les yeux ne peuvent suffire à la multitude des sensations ; qui sait si un voyageur comme moi ne s'asseoir pas un jour sur les muettes ruines, et ne pleurera pas, solitaire, sur la cendre des peuples et le mémoire de leur grandeur?" [11-12].

²⁶ *Réponse de Volney au Docteur Priestley sur un pamphlet intitulé : Observations sur les progrès de l'infidélité, avec des remarques critiques sur les écrits de divers incrédules modernes, et particulièrement sur Les Ruines de M. Volney*, in Volney, *Ceuvres*, vol.2, H. & A. DENEYS eds. (Paris: Fayard, 1989) 7-180; a reply to Joseph Priestley, Letters to Mr. Volney, Occasioned by a Work of his Entitled Ruins, and by His Letter to the Author, (Philadelphia, 1797).

²⁷ "L'extraordinaire, en tout cela, c'est que Volney n'a jamais vu Palmyre!", Roland Martier, *La Poétique des ruines en France*, Geneva: Droz, 1974, 139; "Volney n'a poussé jusqu'à Palmyre et l'évocation qu'il en fait au début des *Ruines* est de pure imagination", Gaulmier, *L'Idéologue Volney*, 323.

²⁸ Louis-Sébastien Mercier (anon.), *L'an deux mille quatre cent quarante: rêve s'il en fut jamais*, London, 1771, *The Year 2440; a Dream if There Ever Was One*. For a valuable treatment of this work see Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (London: HarperCollins, 1996).

²⁹ Diderot, *Salons*, Jean Seznec & Jean Adhémar, eds. vol 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) 246; see also 242-47 and 227-29. Philippe Junod, "Poétique des ruines et perception du temps: Diderot et Hubert Robert," Anne-Marie Chouillet ed., *Colloque international Diderot (1713-1784), Paris-Sèvres-Reims-Langres, 4-11 juillet 1984* (Paris: Aux amateurs de livres, 1985) *Mélanges de la Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne* 8, 321-26.

Though space does not permit a full treatment of this subject, it is worth remarking that Sir John Soane (whose works, such as the Dulwich Art Gallery, solved in practice the problems of lighting which Robert had only posed in fantasy in his paintings), shared an obsession with anticipated ruins, having his Bank of England drawn as a future ruin by his draftsman, Joseph Gandy, and leaving a manuscript account of his own house in Lincoln's Inn Fields (now the Sir John Soane Museum) as it might be found by a future archaeologist.³⁰ Although Sloane's manuscript is a unique cultural phenomenon, in certain curious ways bearing little on the rest of the world, the year he wrote it, 1812, represents a high-point in the literary anticipation of the ruins of London, with the publication of Anna Barbauld's *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*. From 1810 to 1812 things looked bleak indeed for Britain. George III was ill, apparently insane. Despite British command of the seas after the Battle of Trafalgar, little had gone well for successive anti-Napoleonic alliances on land since the Emperor's destruction of Austrian and Russian forces at Austerlitz in 1805. By 1810 Napoleon had had control of most of continental Europe. Wellesley's campaign in the Peninsula had not yet borne fruit, and before November the magnitude of Napoleon's reverse in the face of the Russian winter in his retreat from Moscow could not be imagined. The general state of things can be learnt from the Prince Regent's speech on the dissolution of Parliament in 1818, when he spoke of the changes which had occurred since 1812, during the life of the present Parliament,

[H]e informed both Houses of his intention to dissolve the present and call a new Parliament, in making which communication he could not, he said, refrain from adverting to the great changes that had occurred since he first met them in that chamber. Then, the dominion of Bonaparte, whom he spoke of as the "common enemy," had been so widely extended, that longer resistance to his power was by many deemed hopeless; but that by the unexampled exertions of Britain in co-operation with other countries, Europe had been delivered from his oppression, and a contest the most eventful and sanguinary known for centuries, terminated with unparalleled success and glory.³¹

The dangers of these dark years may have motivated the poem *The Genius of the Thames* by Thomas Love Peacock (1810), which contains a relatively sustained description of London in ruins. A presentation of the Thames as it was when the busiest centre of trade in the world sets the scene for its subsequent decay:

Throned in Augusta's ample port,
Imperial commerce holds her court,
And Britain's power sublimes :
To her the breath of every breeze
Conveys the wealth of subject seas,
And tributary climes.
[...]

³⁰ Andrée Corboz, *Peinture Militante et Architecture Révolutionnaire : À Propos Du Thème du tunnel chez Hubert Robert* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1978); *Visions of Ruin: Architectural Fantasies and Designs for Garden Follies* (London: Sir John Soane's Museum, 1999).

³¹ Richard Rush, *A Residence at the Court of London* (London, 1833) 242-43.

The treasures of the earth are thine :
 For thee Golcondian diamonds shine:
 For thee, amid the dreary mine,
 The patient sufferers toil :
 Thy sailors roam, a dauntless host,
 From northern seas to India's coast,
 And bear the richest stores they boast
 To bless their native soil.³²

When it comes, the ruin is not specifically linked to the national crisis of the time, although it is difficult to believe that Peacock, working as he did in the India Office, perceived no connection, and it must be conceded that the old-fashioned, conventional poetic diction may conceal an urgent concern from the modern reader,

Perchance, when many a distant year,
 Urged by the hand of fate, has flown,
 Where moonbeams rest on ruins drear,
 The musing sage may rove alone;
 And many an awful thought sublime
 May fill his soul, when memory shows,
 That there, in days of elder time,
 The world's metropolis arose ;
 Where now, by mouldering walls, he sees
 The silent Thames unheeded flow,
 And only hears the river-breeze,
 Through reeds and willows whispering low [108]

A predictable moral lesson of universal mortality and mutability is proposed,

Where are the states of ancient fame ?
 Athens, and Sparta's victor-name,
 And all that propped, in war and peace,
 The arms, and nobler arts, of Greece ?
 All-grasping Rome, that proudly hurled
 Her mandates o'er the prostrate world,
 Long heard mankind her chains deplore,
 And fell, as Carthage fell before [106]

Peacock looks dated, "the hand of fate" doing the work usually attributed in modern times to socio-economic and political factors, and reducing the poet's achievement to poetic commonplace, which echoes greater examples from the past, such as a famous passage in Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581) which arises from a view of the ruins of Carthage. Although these lines are usually quoted simply as a reminder of *la fragilità umana*, they have a rightful place in the development of ruinism too,

Muoiono le città, muoiono i regni,
 copre i fasti e le pompe arena ed erba,
 e l'uom' d'esser' mortal par che sdegni:
 oh nostra mente cupida e superba! [XV, 181-184]³³

³² Thomas Love Peacock, *The Genius of the Thames; a Lyrical Poem, in Two Parts* (London, 1810) 31-32.

This is rendered by Edward Fairfax in his translation, *Godfrey of Bulloigne* (1600), as:

So cities fall, so perish kingdome hie,
Their pride and pompe lies hid in sand and grasse:
Then why should mortall man repine to die,
Whose life, is air; breath, winde; and bodie, glasse?³⁴

This moral lesson about Fate is paralleled in a hundred places, such as Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*,

All cannot be happy at once; because the glory of one State depends upon the ruine of another: there is a revolution and vicissitude of their greatnesse, and must obey the swing of that wheele, not moved by intelligences, but by the hand of God, whereby all Estates arise to their Zenith and Vertical points, according to their predestinated periods. For the lives, not onely of men, but of Commonweales, and the whole world, run not upon an Helix that still enlargeth, but on a Circle, where, arriving to their Meridian, they decline in obscurity, and fall under the Horizon again.³⁵

In a sense, Peacock's conjecture on the future fall of London is scarcely more modern than these examples. There is none of the economic and social causality which Lyttelton's poem contains.

In contrast Anna Barbauld, in her poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812), presents the nation's predicament in terms which up-to-date historians would have recognised. Gone is Fate and gone too is divine retribution. Indeed, although 1811 was "the year of the Comet" (still, incidentally, famed for the quality of its port vintages), she eschews mention of the celestial visitor even as poetic apparatus. In contrast, in another age, Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis* played heavily on natural expressions of supernatural agency in his attempt to construct a victory from a year of disasters (there were two comets in 1666), while several of Barbauld's contemporaries addressed the subject of Flaugergues's comet directly, Isabella Lickbarrow, Anna Liddiard, Thomas Dibdin and James Hogg among them. Cowper's Sodom and Gomorrah are also obviously off the scene. Instead we are presented with the consequences of what the poet held was originally an unjust war against Revolutionary France—although the resumption of hostilities in 1803 to oppose a new tyrant, Napoleon, was another matter. Barbauld shows the consequences of the war visited on the ordinary population, who are receiving daily reports of the loss of loved ones. There is a serious shortage of labour in the fields. Napoleon's Continental System, which was aimed at undermining the British economy, is seriously straining trade, and the stagnation of the Thames predicted by Peacock seems a real possibility. Where Barbauld scores over Peacock is in

³³ Torquato Tasso, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, XV, 181-84. [WWW] <<http://www.classitaliani.it/tasso/tasso15.htm>> [accessed 18 March 2003], electronic edition by Stefano D'Urso of *Gerusalemme Liberata*, edited by Anna Maria Carini, Milan: Feltrin Editore, 1961.

³⁴ Edward Fairfax Gent, *Godfrey of Bulloigne, or The recouerie of Ierusalem. Done into English heroical verse* (London, 1600) 270.

³⁵ Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* (London, 1642) 32.

the concreteness of economic and political setting and causality, including the broader understanding of the role of the City in the prosecution of the war, and the potential danger to the economy of the enormous financial advances made to the allies.³⁶

As soon as future travellers are confronted with the ruins of London, there is a flashback in which the metropolis is seen like Rome in its imperial prime, as a multi-racial hive of activity, and presented in terms reminiscent of Defoe's description in *Journey Through the Complete Island of Great Britain* and Lyttelton's prophetic vision, with touches which Adam Smith would have appreciated. London is commercially strong because it has not been subject to excessive regulation, and has grown to be "irregularly great," and, being "girt by no walls," is without local customs dues, such as still impeded the economic growth of many continental cities well into the nineteenth century. Its merchants have a high "state" or standing in the land, which gave them power over the rulers of less wealthy lands. Here a long tradition of loans to foreign governments is implied, as well as the enormous loans raised in the City by the British government to finance successive Alliances. In fact, these French wars, like the Seven Years War, could not have been won without the strength of the London money market.

But who their mingled feelings shall pursue
 When London's faded glories rise to view?
 The mighty city, which by every road,
 In floods of people poured itself abroad;
 Ungirt by walls, irregularly great,
 No jealous drawbridge, and no closing gate;
 Whose merchants (such the state which commerce brings)
 Sent forth their mandates to dependant kings;
 Streets, where the turban'd Moslem, bearded Jew,
 And wooly Afric, met the brown Hindu;
 Where through each vein spontaneous plenty flowed,
 Where Wealth enjoyed, and Charity bestowed.
 Pensive and thoughtful shall the wanderers greet
 Each splendid square, and still, untrodden street;
 Or of some crumbling turret, mined by time,
 The broken stairs with perilous step shall climb,
 Thence stretch their view the wide horizon round,
 By scattered hamlets trace its antient bound,
 And, choked no more with fleets, fair Thames survey
 Through reeds and sedge pursue his idle way [157-176]³⁷

The theme of this paper being the transfer of empire, we should note a fact well known to Barbauld's original reader: the position of Amsterdam during these events. Once more *Annus Mirabili* is relevant. Dryden's poem was written at a time when England was challenging Dutch naval, trading and banking supremacy, at first unsuccessfully. During the eighteenth century the struggle for dominance in world trade was three-way, between

³⁶ The dire financial situation of these years is summarised in John M. Sherwig, *Guineas and Gunpowder: British Foreign Aid in the Wars with France 1793-1815* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1969) 233-34.

³⁷ Anna Lætitia Barbauld, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (London, 1812); quoted from *The Poems of Anna Lætitia Barbauld*, William McCarthy & Elizabeth Kraft ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994) 152-61.

Britain, Holland and France. By 1811, power had shifted definitively. In 1793, with the French revolutionary army approaching, Amsterdam effectively relinquished its status as banking capital of the world, as the firm of Hope and Co. fled across the North Sea to London, with its shipload of bullion and specie guarded by the Royal Navy.³⁸ Finally the very Continental System, which was placing strain on Britain permanently, crippled Dutch trade. Barbauld's merchants really did dominate the world's finances.

The prospect for Britain, however, was altogether bleak in 1811, and Barbauld's vision of the future ruin of London seems to represent a more immediate prospect than any other we have examined. With "[t]he tempest blackening in the distant West," as war with the United States seemed inevitable, the poet chose to have some of her future tourists hail from Ontario. The centre of civilisation has moved to North America, American civilisation has extended westward, and its "youth" come to the decayed mother city in pursuit of their cultural roots. There is not space here to identify the components of this youth's heritage, but he does not stand for the emergent native American civilisation envisaged by Bishop Berkeley a century before in his much quoted poetic line, "Westward the Course of Empire takes its Way," which is connected with his pamphlet, *A Proposal for the Better Supplying of Churches in Our Foreign Plantations of 1725*.³⁹ For Barbauld's descendant of British settlers, a standard tourist itinerary seems to be in preparation, covering safe "great" figures, such as Shakespeare, Newton and Scott, plus Barbauld's more recent philanthropic heroes, many of whom are also leading supporters of the United States. By then new Lockes and new Paleys will have emerged beyond the Apalachians, in the inevitable *translatio studii*. Once again this is a loss of empire, which has the compensation of the emergence of a great new English-speaking nation, and a hope for liberty, as Europe seems doomed to perpetual, political darkness.

Yet then the ingenuous youth whom Fancy fires
With pictured glories of illustrious sires,
With duteous zeal their pilgrimage shall take
From the Blue Mountains, or Ontario's lake,
With fond adoring steps to press the sod
By statesmen, sages, poets, heroes trod ...[127-32]

The final call, "Thy world, Columbus, shall be free"[134] is the logical conclusion of Barbauld's views.

Barbauld's editors, William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, point out that the poet was under no illusion as to the reception her poem would receive at the hands of the Tory press, and Croker's notice of it in the

³⁸ "There took place during these years a wholesale flight of capital to London; the French occupation of Amsterdam was the final nail in the coffin for that city's financial future; and the transformation of Hope and Co. from a powerful independent house into a virtual subsidiary of Barings was eloquent testimony to the profound shift of fortunes," David Kynaston, *The City of London vol 1, A World of Its Own 1815-1890* (1994; London: Pimlico, 1995) 23. For a financial analysis of this shift, see James C. Riley, *International Government Finance and the Amsterdam Capital Market, 1740-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) 195-204.

³⁹ *The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Clynne*, A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop ed. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, [1948-1957]), vol 7, 369-73.

Quarterly Review is rightly notorious for its venom.⁴⁰ Disloyalty is now registered in opinions, with “French” thinking top of the list of horrors, a point laboured in an explicit riposte to *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* which was published by Anne McVicars Grant under the title *Eighteen Hundred and Thirteen*. With Wellington’s successes on the Iberian Peninsula, and Napoleon’s retreat from Moscow, Grant can assert that Britain will not be defeated and London need not be ruined. The nation had been weakened by French philosophy and irreligion, and Grant is detecting the heavy swing to Toryism which will characterise the remainder of the ‘teens. An interesting comparison can be made with a poem from the *Anti-jacobin*, “The New Morality,” in which Britain is taken over by France by means of French thought. London is not ruined, but is the seat of an alien philosophy.

So shall we brave the storm;—our ‘stablished pow’r
Thy refuge, Europe, in some happier hour.—
—But, French *in heart*—tho’ victory crown our brow,
Low at our feet though prostrate nations bow,
Wealth gild our cities, commerce crowd our shore,—
London may shine, but England is no more [460-465]⁴¹

This distinction between London and England is a distinguishing feature of Toryism.

Eighteen Hundred and Thirteen interestingly identifies itself as standing in a line established by Dryden’s *Annus Mirabilis*. To many it has seemed that Dryden did his poetic best to alchemize disasters into English triumphs in 1666, in an imposture exposed by the fact that the images of London immediately rising phoenix-like from the ashes of the Great Fire were absurdly optimistic. For those not enthusiastic about Stuart kingship, the loyalty attributed to the City is mythical. Yet Grant is unembarrassed by *Annus Mirabilis*, blinded by that fact that it shares her support of legitimacy and institutionalised Christianity. With a genuine affection for the America of her early childhood before the Revolution, she can conceive of no state happier than that of loyal subjection to the British throne.⁴²

The anticipated ruin of London appears once more in the opposition to legitimacy and the repression of liberty at the end of Shelley’s *Dedication of Peter Bell the Third* to “Tom Brown” (Thomas Moore’s pseudonym as author of the Fudge Family sketches), in which Shelley displays in a humorous tone the same relish at the fall of tyranny as he expressed in his Volneyesque sonnet, “Ozymandias,”

Hoping that the immortality which you have given to the Fudges, you will receive from them; and in the firm expectation, that when London shall be an habitation of bitterns; when St. Paul’s and Westminster Abbey shall stand, shapeless and nameless ruins, in the midst of an

⁴⁰ John Wilson Croker (anon.), review of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, *Quarterly Review* 7 (June 1812) 309-13.

⁴¹ Anne Grant, *Eighteen Hundred and Thirteen* (Edinburgh, 1814); “The New Morality,” George Canning & John Hookam Frere, *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin 1799* (Oxford & New York: Woodstock Books, 1991) 240.

⁴² Anne Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady (Catalina Schuyler): with Sketches of Manners and Scenery in America, as They Existed Previous to the Revolution*, 2 vols (London, 1808).

unpeopled marsh; when the piers of Waterloo Bridge shall become the nuclei of islets of reeds and osiers, and cast the jagged shadows of their broken arches on the solitary stream, some transatlantic commentator will be weighing in the scales of some new and now unimagined system of criticism, the respective merits of the Bells and the Fudges, and their historians, I remain, dear Tom, yours sincerely, / MICHING MALLECHO. / December 1, 1819.

The tourist from the future world power, America, is replaced in Shelley's vision, by a transatlantic literary critic, and by centring on a compliment to Thomas Moore and his satirical Fudge Family, he links anticipated ruinism with the rapid growth of middle-class tourism, which would continue throughout the century, accompanied by the inevitable fear that the culture of the old times (classical or "modern") will be trivialised. Tourists at the future ruins of London no longer have to be classically educated landed gentlemen, aristocrats or members of parliament, like Walpole's, Gibbon's or Lyttelton's. By the early eighteen-fifties, when organised tourism was at new heights (Thomas Cook had gone into business in the early eighteen-forties), H. C. Andersen published a futuristic vision of the package airtour from America to Europe, in which tourists rush round Europe under the guidance of a popular guide book, "Europe Seen in Eight Days,"⁴³ prefiguring the mass popularity in our own day of treading on the dust of empires.

From now on the river is in regular use as a symbol of economic prosperity or decay, linked sometimes to bridges, which Lady Holland, even before the early-nineteenth-century spate of bridge-building, conceded would make some of the best future ruins. Vivid examples follow in the eighteen-twenties. Joseph Bounden's poem "The Deserted City" of 1824, which ascribes the fall of London to repression and excessive taxation after a wasteful war, describes the Bank of England in ruins and a deserted Thames.⁴⁴ In a review of Mitford's *Greece* in 1824 Macaulay uses the image of the Thames in making vivid the notion of the imperishability of Athenian culture,

Surely it is no exaggeration to say that no external advantage is to be compared with that purification of the intellectual eye which gives us to contemplate the infinite wealth of the mental world, all hoarded treasures of its primeval dynasties, all the shapeless ore of its yet unexplored mines. This is the gift of Athens to man. Her freedom and her power have for more than twenty centuries been annihilated; her people have degenerated into timid slaves; her language into a barbarous jargon; her temples have been given up to the successive depredations of Romans, Turks, and Scotchmen; but her intellectual

⁴³ "There's a lot to see in Europe!" says the young American; 'and we have seen it in eight days, and that can be done, as the great traveller—a name is named which belongs to their age—has shown in his famous work: *Europe Seen in Eight Days.*' " 'I Europa er meget at se!' siger den unge Amerikaner; 'og vi have seet det i otte Dage, og det lader sig gjøre, som den store Reisende' - et Navn nævnes, der hører til deres Samtid - 'har viist i sit berømte Værk: *Europa seet i otte Dage*;' H. C. Andersen: Eventyr 58: "Om Aartusinder." ("In a Thousand Years") (1853) MS text, H. C. Andersen, [1805-75], Samlede eventyr Dansk Nationallitterært Arkiv (DNA), Det Kongelige Bibliotek, 6 Feb. 2003 <<http://www.kb.dk/elib/lit/dan/andersen/eventyr.dsl/hcaev058.htm>>.

⁴⁴ Joseph Bounden, "The Deserted City," *The Deserted City; Eva, a Tale in Two Cities; and Other Poems* (London, 1824) 4 and 62-64.

empire is imperishable. And when those who have rivalled her greatness shall have shared her fate; when civilisation and knowledge shall have fixed their abode in distant continents; when the sceptre shall have passed away from England; when, perhaps, travellers from distant regions shall in vain labour to decipher on some mouldering pedestal the name of our proudest chief; shall hear savage hymns chaunted to some misshapen idol over the ruined dome of our proudest temple; and shall see a single naked fisherman wash his nets in the river of the ten thousand masts;—her influence and her glory will still survive,—fresh in eternal youth, exempt from mutability and decay, immortal as the intellectual principle from which they derived their origin, and over which they exercise their control.⁴⁵

This vision might at first seem to correspond closely to Volney's, but the Enlightenment note of confidence in the ability of modern philosophers to enable their own civilisations to survive is quite missing. The pragmatic doubt at the perfectibility of mankind almost echoes a lesson learned by Swift's Lemuel Gulliver, when he discovers the futility of his grand hopes for communing with the *Struldbrugs*, who live for extraordinary lengths of time,

These *Struldbrugs* and I would mutually communicate our observations, and memorials through the course of time; remark the several gradations by which corruption steals into the world, and oppose it in every step by giving perpetual warning and instruction to mankind; which, added to the strong influence of our own example, would probably prevent that continual degeneracy of human nature so justly complained of in all ages.

Add to all this the pleasure of seeing the various revolutions of states and empires; the changes in the lower and upper world; ancient cities in ruins, and obscure villages become the seats of kings; famous rivers lessening into shallow brooks; the ocean leaving one coast dry, and overwhelming another; the discovery of many countries yet unknown. Barbarity over-running the politest nations, and the most barbarous become civilized.⁴⁶

In 1829, Macaulay mounts a case which runs counter to Volney's reliance on Enlightenment reason to produce a perfect political system, arguing instead that a *mistaken* application of reason (in this case leading to the universal suffrage advocated by James Mill) will bring about that collapse of civilisation which barbarism can no longer achieve,

The civilised part of the world has now nothing to fear from the hostility of savage nations. Once the deluge of barbarism has passed over it, to destroy and to fertilise; and in the present state of mankind we enjoy a full security against that calamity. That flood will no more return to cover the earth. But is it possible that in the bosom of civilisation itself may be engendered the malady which shall destroy

⁴⁵ Review of William Mitford, *The History of Greece*, *Knight's Quarterly Magazine*, (November 1824), quoted from *The Miscellaneous Writings of Lord Macaulay*, 2 vols. (London, 1860) vol 1, 179-80.

⁴⁶ Jonathan Swift, *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World. In Four Parts. By Lemuel Gulliver*, in *The Works of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's* (Dublin, London, 1768) vol. 2, 283.

it? It is possible that institutions may be established which, without the help of earthquake, of famine, of pestilence, or of the foreign sword, may undo the work of so many ages of wisdom and glory, and gradually sweep away taste, literature, science, commerce, manufactures, everything but the rude arts necessary to the support of animal life? Is it possible that, in two or three hundred years, and few lean and half-naked fishermen may divide with owls and foxes the ruins of the greatest European cities—may wash their nets amidst the relics of her gigantic docks, and build their huts out of the capitals of her stately cathedrals? If the principles of Mr. Mill be sound, we say, without hesitation, that the form of government which he recommends will assuredly produce all this.⁴⁷

This is powerful political language in the service of a Whig view of the world. The prospect of universal suffrage on Mill's model was remote, and Macaulay's rhetoric as much calculated to delight Mill's opponents as to rouse them to arms. As a vision of the ruin of London, it resembles Guardi's paintings of a decayed Venice and its Lagoon, in which humble fishermen replace a once proud navy and rich argosies.

The Victorian period had its own future tourist to the ruins of London, who, like Volney's anticipated traveller, would "sit down upon the banks of the [...] Thames [...] and weep a people ignored, and their greatness changed into an empty name." In this age of mechanical reproduction, this tourist's image, verbal and visual, was more widely propagated than any of his predecessors' because of the steam printing press. In 1840, in reviewing Austin's translation of von Ranke's *History of the papacy* for the *Edinburgh Review*, Macaulay gave a lengthy and coherent summary of the liberal account of English history and the English religious settlement, which to him and his contemporaries was the guarantee of freedom, democracy and individualistic economic success, and so one of those factors which distinguished Britain from the "less happier lands" of the Continent. He concluded his review with a salutary reminder of the strength and antiquity of the Roman Catholic Church, which "may still exist in undiminished vigour when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's."⁴⁸

It is tempting to suppose that this vivid image stands as a fearful warning of the consequences of Catholic Emancipation and the so-called "Papal Aggression" of the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in Britain. However there seems little to back this view. There is scant feeling of doom in Macaulay's writings about Britain, and his image has the effect of awakening the mind of his readers to the great sweep of history, rather than warning them about a terrible fate. He is asking for a recognition that, although Britain seems to have reached a state of power and prosperity unparalleled in the history of the world, it is in the nature of things to be impermanent. The New Zealander is less a harbinger of doom than a

⁴⁷ T.B. Macaulay, "Mill on Government," review of James Mill's *Essays on Government*, *Edinburgh Review* (March 1829), quoted from *The Miscellaneous Writings*, vol 1, 314.

⁴⁸ Macaulay's review of Leopold von Ranke's *The Ecclesiastical and Political History of the Popes During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* [*Die römische Papste*], trans. S. Austin, 3 vols. (London, 1840); *Edinburgh Review*, 72 (October 1840) 227-58.

prompt to self-awareness and self-criticism. This is the function of the historian when he plays the role of superior journalist.

Frances Trollope certainly interpreted the image of the New Zealander in this less than urgent way when on the feast of St Thomas à Becket (29th December) that year she heard “a very striking sermon from the learned and amiable principal of the English Roman Catholic College” in Rome, who described with considerable force and eloquence the enduring nature of the *Roman* Catholic Church, pointedly contrasting it, in that respect, with all other faiths and congregations whatever. There were many distinguished English Protestants present, and there was nothing in the discourse that could reasonably shock or offend any of them [...] for assuredly there is nothing offensive in the assertion of a bishop of one persuasion that his faith is likely to endure longer than the faith of any other.

In it, he quoted a passage from the *Edinburgh Review*, eloquently but strangely alluding to the comparative immutability of the Romish faith above all others. [...] The sentence formed the peroration of a very spirited passage, and was to this effect. That Saint Peter’s would still stand uninjured, intact, and entire, as we now behold it, when the travelling antiquarian shall be seen, standing upon a broken fragment of London Bridge, in order to take a sketch of the ruins of Saint Paul’s.⁴⁹

Macaulay was challenging simplistic Protestant and Enlightenment views about the inevitable collapse of the Roman Catholic Church, memorably expressed by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*, when discussing the power of the Church in the middle ages:

The constitution of the church of Rome may be considered as the most formidable combination that ever was formed against the authority and security of civil government, as well as against the liberty, reason, and happiness of mankind, which can flourish only where civil government is able to protect them. [...] Had this constitution been attacked by no other enemies but the feeble efforts of human reason, it must have endured for ever. But that immense and well-built fabric, which all the wisdom and virtue of man could never have shaken, much less have overturned, was by the natural course of things, first weakened, and afterwards in part destroyed, and is now likely, in the course of a few centuries more, perhaps, to crumble into ruins altogether.⁵⁰

Or perhaps Macaulay was thinking of Corinne’s farewell to St Peter’s when she is leaving Rome in de Staël’s *Corrine, ou l’Italie*. “Drawing near to St Peter’s, her first thought was to visualise this building as it would be when it became a ruin in its turn, the object of admiration of centuries to come. She imagined these columns now standing, reclining on the ground, the portico broken, the vault uncovered.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ Frances Trollope, *A Visit to Italy*, 2 vols (London, 1842) vol 2, 299-301.

⁵⁰ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (V.i.g.24), R.H. Campbell, A.S. Skinner & W.B. Todd ed., 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 802-3.

⁵¹ Anne Louise Germaine de Staël, *Corinne ou l’Italie*, 3 vols (London, 1807) vol 3, 41-42. “En approchant de Saint-Pierre, sa première pensée fut de se représenter cet édifice comme il serait quand à son tour il deviendrait une ruine, objet de l’admiration des siècles à venir. Elle

As we have seen, Macaulay had practised the image of London in ruins for years before bringing it to its final degree of memorable perfection. The crowning touch is to select a new origin for the exotic tourist, whose name will become shorthand for the “coming man,” and designate the entire phenomenon of the anticipated ruin of the city and empire. Presumably Macaulay has him come from New Zealand by association with Gibbon’s “the Hume of the Southern Hemisphere.”⁵² Significantly in 1840, a “New Zealander” would have been a Maori, and not the descendant of European settlers, whose numbers were insignificant at that time, and Macaulay (almost reverting to Berkeley’s position) has gone one better than Lyttelton, Barbauld and Shelley, in predicting, as befitted his father’s son, a new civilisation founded by another race.⁵³

As soon as the image was sonorously expressed and neatly named, it could take root in the popular imagination. In the following decades it is so frequently used that it is doubtful whether much meaning was attached to it beyond a future perspective on the present, since frequent use of a phrase may leave people with little notion of its original application. In the eighteen-forties Anthony Trollope used Macaulay’s image to provide the title for an unpublished, Carlylean attack on English society and hypocrisy, but although his preface contains a detailed elaboration of the New Zealander himself, with his jewelled cane, the ruins of London are not imaginatively relevant.⁵⁴ The image recurs many times throughout the rest of the century. By 1860 we find that it has already become in its turn the subject of research, and continues to be so throughout the century — a sure sign that its impact is more rhetorical than prophetic. Its origins are first discussed in a letter to *The Times* in 1860, and the subject generates a surprising secondary literature.⁵⁵ Writing in 1866, Francis Jacox that the New Zealander, who had made “such a sensation in the House of Commons when he first appeared, was “by this time voted a bore.”⁵⁶

This exotic figure finally enters the culture permanently when drawn by Gustave Doré for his evocative response to the metropolis, *London, a Pilgrimage* in 1872,

s’imagina ces colonnes à présent debout, à demi couchées sur la terre, ce portique brisé, cette voûte découverte.”

⁵² See note 13.

⁵³ Zachary Macaulay (1768-1838), anti-slavery campaigner and evangelical philanthropist, had been Governor of Sierra Leone in Freetown in the seventeen-nineties. Anthony Trollope (see next note) has the New Zealander “speak in his native tongue to the English guide who will show him the wonders of London.”

⁵⁴ Anthony Trollope, *The New Zealander*, N.J. Hall ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) 3-11.

⁵⁵ W. Bolton, Letter to *The Times* (13 Sept 1860) 11(e). For further examples of use and analysis of the image, see Michael Bright, “Macaulay’s New Zealander,” *The Arnoldian: a Review of Mid-Victorian Culture* 10 (Winter 1982) 8-27; and Robert Dingley, “The Ruins of the Future: Macaulay’s New Zealander and the Spirit of the Age,” *Histories of the Future. Studies in Fact, Fantasy and Science fiction*, Alan Sandison & Robert Dingley ed. (London: Palgrave, 2000) 15-33.

⁵⁶ Francis Jacox, “About the Coming Man from New Zealand; a Forecast Shadow (and Irrepressible Bore),” *New Monthly Magazine*, 138 (November 1866) 282.



THE NEW ZEALANDER.

It is from the bridges that London wears her noblest aspect—whether by night or by day; or whether seen from Westminster, or that ancient site, which the genius of Rennie covers with a world-famous pile [i.e. London Bridge]. Now we have watched the fleets into noisy Billingsgate; and now gossiped looking towards Wren's grand dome, shaping Macaulay's dream of the far future, with the tourist New Zealander upon the broken parapets, contemplating something matching—

"The glory that was Greece—
The grandeur that was Rome."⁵⁷

In Doré's rendition, Saint Paul's is still the most notable structure left from imperial times, but with his characteristic perceptiveness, the artist has allowed one ancient inscription to be legible. Although the remains of St Paul's are illuminated, the eye is drawn by the New Zealander's gaze to the words "Commercial Wharf." So the basis of the empire which has passed is pictured as being memorialised to the last. Alive as he must have been to the architectural superiority of other capitals, especially Paris, Doré accurately registered the strength of London, which, over the previous century and more, had established Britain as the "top nation," and the British Empire as the most extensive ever known.

⁵⁷ Gustave Doré & Blanchard Jerrold, *London: a Pilgrimage* (London, 1872) 190, and illustration facing page 188.