



Fear and Loathing in Fitzrovia: The Bizarre Life of the Writer, Actor, and Soho Raconteur Julian Maclaren-Ross

Paul Willetts

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“Diligent, painstaking and bleakly hilarious.”

The Guardian - Book of the Week

“Assiduously researched and enthusiastic... a fascinating trawl through Soho’s bohemia.”

The Independent on Sunday

“For a full and really fascinating account [of the life of Julian Maclaren-Ross], it is to Willetts’s biography *Fear and Loathing in Fitzrovia* that one must turn. That wonderful book is so informative and so psychologically perceptive...”

The Spectator

Invariably clad in a sharp suit, augmented by dark glasses and a cigarette-holder, Julian Maclaren-Ross was a celebrated figure in mid-twentieth-century Soho’s pub and club scene. He was also one of his generation’s most brilliant writers, admired by the likes of Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene and Lucian Freud. Since the publication of *Fear and Loathing in Fitzrovia*, there has been a resurgence of interest in his groundbreaking work and flamboyant personality.

Synonymous though he is with Soho, his uniquely strange life included spells in the army and on the French Riviera. So chaotic was his existence that he makes Jack Kerouac and Charles Bukowski appear models of stability and restraint.

During fifty-two hectic years, Maclaren-Ross endured alcoholism, drug-induced psychosis, poverty, homelessness, imprisonment, near insanity, and a Scotland Yard manhunt. At one stage he even stalked and planned to murder George Orwell’s glamorous widow. *Fear and Loathing in Fitzrovia* provides a vibrant and justly acclaimed portrait of Maclaren-Ross and the louche world he inhabited.

Richard Holmes, author of *The Age of Wonder*

“Very striking, very strange and altogether fascinating.”

Philip French, *The Observer* “Books of the Year, 2003”

“I especially admired [*Fear and Loathing in Fitzrovia* which] breaks new ground and revives [a] remarkable writer in the context of [his] times... Paul Willetts provides a vivid portrait of Julian Maclaren-Ross, the brilliant novelist, short story writer, memoirist, critic, parodist, sponger, dandy and bohemian.”

John King, *The New Statesman*, “Books of the Year, 2003”

“An inspiring read.”

D.J. Taylor, *The Spectator* “Books of the Year, 2003”

“Most of the books I enjoyed [this year] were works of non-fiction. They included Paul Willetts’s entertaining chronicle of the Forties literary legend J. Maclaren-Ross.”

Michael Arditti, The Times “Books of the Year, 2003”

“Willetts’s subtitle ‘The bizarre life of writer, actor, Soho dandy Julian Maclaren-Ross’ is the perfect precis. His book evokes not just the seedy flamboyance of a man who slept in Turkish baths and railway stations and was immortalised by Anthony Powell as X. Trapnel, but on a long-vanished bohemian world.”

The Evening Standard, “Books of the Year, 2003”

“A less beguiling side of dilettanteism is evoked in Paul Willetts’s Fear and Loathing in Fitzrovia. This exhaustive biography of Julian Maclaren-Ross is an inventory of flits from boarding houses, unpaid bills, drinking clubs, unfulfilled hopes. It should deter anyone who reads it from becoming a writer.”

The Guardian “Book of the Week”

“Diligent, painstaking and bleakly hilarious.”

Philip Oakes, The Literary Review

“Historical profiling of a high order, richly and racily done.”

Jonathan Meades

“Fear and Loathing In Fitzrovia is the proper stuff. Paul Willetts knows how to depress a depressive. It makes me wish I was an accountant, or anything other than a writer. Towards the end of his life I met the poet and London Magazine editor, Alan Ross, and, in the early hours, asked him the dumb question ‘What was Julian Maclaren-Ross really like?’ Alan didn’t demur: ‘Better not to have met him.’ I do feel I’ve met him now.”

The Independent on Sunday

“Assiduously researched and enthusiastic.”

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Stacey Thompson:

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