



BURNINGBOOKS

MATTHEW FISHBURN



Burning Books

Matthew Fishburn

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For Sarah

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Preface

It was never meant to be about book burning.

This book started as a much broader project, a cultural history of the symbolism of fire, concentrating on how the imagery of flames is commonly used as a potent image of language itself. I had in mind something like Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*: 'till my ghastly tale is told', he says to the Wedding Guest, this 'heart within me burns'.¹ It seemed an interesting idea, but not a particularly savvy one, as my research fast became overwhelmed with an unending accumulation of stories, metaphors, anecdotes, and clichés. Daunted, I had a notion that shifting the emphasis to book burning proper, to moments when the metaphorical link between fire and language became tangible, might make the project more manageable, the examples fewer, the conclusions simpler.

I was wrong. Instead, like most people who begin to research this topic, I was rapidly swamped by a seemingly endless proliferation of stories, ranging from flippant asides to the most rigorous acts of censorship. And, like most people, I have found myself drifting towards two simplistic reactions: the first is exhaustion, as the Sisyphean task of even attempting to catalogue so many fires starts to sink in. ('The longer I have investigated this phenomenon, the more I have been struck by the plenitude of examples', noted the sociologist Leo Lowenthal forlornly.)² The second, which sometimes succeeds the first, is the growth of a certain sympathy with destruction, a desire to climb out from under the forbidding weight of text. This might be parodied as the Nietzschean stance.

Paradoxically, while I was being buried in this avalanche of examples, it became apparent that in the popular imagination book burning was commonly contained to a handful of proverbial events, with the most obvious contender being the Nazi bookfires of 1933, a role bolstered by a few photographs commonly recycled in museum exhibits to adumbrate the conflagrations of the war. Indeed, this seems to have evolved into a rather neat equation: book burners are fascists, and fascists are book burners. This may well be true, but only if fascism is taken, as Orwell quipped, to mean little more than 'something we dislike'.³ If the Nazi fires are the most recognized event, the most familiar story was that of the loss of the library of Alexandria, closely followed by an awareness of, notably, the attacks on Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, the burnings of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books in some parts of the United

States, or the destruction of the library of the University of Louvain in the First World War.

Animating this slim catalogue is a much-repeated warning from Heinrich Heine's play *Almansor*, which is set among the Moors of Spain as they endure the first attacks of the Spanish Inquisition: 'Where one burns books, one will soon burn people.' And yet, the fact that this connection is taken to be axiomatic makes it all the more curious that almost nothing has been written on the broader symbolism of such fires, nor on how they have been appropriated.⁴ It is notable that the Nazi bookfires, for example, provide little more than background colour to most histories of the period. In part, as the early chapters of this book show, this relative silence is based on the fact that the most famous book burning of the twentieth century was not as anachronistic as many commentators have since implied. Its scale and pageantry were unparalleled, particularly in the capital Berlin, but recourse to the fire for subversive literature was still a regular, if debated, method, and many commentators throughout the 1930s refused to dismiss such a curiously attractive exploit. Thus, this work is not meant to belittle the real effect of censorship, but to better understand it, by showing that an over-reliance on only the most well-known historical events lends itself to platitudes, most commonly the conviction that burning a book merely advertises it, a robust and unsentimental belief that is founded on the staggering resilience of the book as an object. Indeed, the focus on the major events has tended to proscribe a parallel history, which acknowledges the illicit pleasure and excitement of destruction, the desire for cleanliness, purity, weightlessness.

As my research went on, stories of other, lesser known, fires accumulated faster than I could use them. This was emphatically the case when I discussed my work with friends and colleagues who, with rather startling regularity, recounted stories of book burnings they had witnessed, or initiated, or enjoyed. One had cheerfully burned David Malouf's *Fly Away Peter*, another, William Shirer's *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* and a pile of romance novels she found on the side of the road. A woman I met over lunch commented that her mother had burned Peter Carey's *Bliss*, while a colleague said that his grandfather had been so appalled by Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* that he had immediately thrown it in the basement furnace – whether it was a moral or a literary decision was no longer clear. At the same time, literary anecdotes stacked up, in large part through the efforts of my fellow hack-cyclist Damian O'Reilly. Our weekend rides were regularly enlivened with updates from his own reading, such as the story of art critic John Ruskin burning a volume of etchings by Goya, or Anthony Burgess' step-mother having to be physically restrained from burning a rare, but exceedingly grubby, chap-book the novelist had brought home. Voltaire, Damian told me on another day, renounced

martyrdom for irony, and not only disowned any writings which seemed likely to get him in trouble, but actually turned up to watch them burned by the common hangman on several occasions. Of all Damian's stories, the most intriguing was that of Graham Greene refusing Capri's annual Malaparte Prize. Shirley Hazzard, the source of the story, noted that the Prize was named after Curzio Malaparte (Kurt Eric Suckert), one of Mussolini's propagandists, and well known for exhorting Italians to 'burn the libraries and disperse the vile families of Intellectuals'.⁵ Is it wrong, asked Damian, to have a book prize named after an anti-intellectual book burner?

What is clear is that underwriting such destruction is an older tradition that warns against exposure to books. While it is rare for authors to insist that books should be carted off to the incinerator, many warn against bringing them too close to the fires of the heart. Stoic philosopher Seneca created a benchmark, commending devotion to a few vital books as good for the tranquillity of the soul, advising not to 'wander here and there amongst a multitude of them'.⁶ Such thrift is a popular theme in moral fiction, and has an exemplar in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which is, in essentials, a tale of redemption wrought from a return to the necessities of life and constant meditation on the Bible, miraculously saved from the wreckage. In strict contrast, Seneca's warning can easily be set alongside countless examples of wariness about the effect of books. Little surprise that in Karel Čapek's science-fiction melodrama *R.U.R.* (1921), it is the robot trained to be a librarian who leads the bloody rebellion.

Despite it being obvious that books make all sorts of people uneasy, a truism of modernity continues to be rehearsed: with the invention of print, book burning became futile (or, if the critic has literary pretensions, "symbolic"). If the wowsers scurry off to get the matches, such critics imply, then the author has had some success, not least because the hint of scandal can benefit sales. One thinks of Kafka's friend and executor Max Brod, who reneged on his promise to burn most of the literary estate, and then deliberately advertised his decision in a self-exculpatory postscript to *The Trial*.⁷ This refusal was used to good effect by the playwright Alan Bennett, who staged a scene in which the shades of Kafka and Brod meet in the afterlife. In Bennett's set-piece, the cagey executor is forced to explain why he published everything he could lay his hands on, including all of the short stories and novels, the unfinished *Amerika*, letters, diaries, even his own biography of Kafka. Unabashed, Brod tells his astonished friend that the nightmare of totalitarian bureaucracy had, as Kafka predicted, soon engulfed Europe. Worst of all, in Germany the Nazis had burned decadent literature. Kafka's ghost is appalled, the more so when he realizes that he does not feature on the list of condemned authors. 'Maybe I can fix it', announces Brod:

BROD: I can see it now: a shot of flames licking round a book jacket, the name Kafka prominently placed.

KAFKA: Dreadful.

BROD: Sure, but burn one and you sell ten thousand. Believe me, if the Nazis hadn't thought of it the publishers would.⁸

And so the relationship between books and fire persists. Writing, Nietzsche demanded, must burn, and will; George Steiner agreed: 'Books burn long before and after they are burned.'⁹ This has the rhythm of a paradox, that books only burn because they are already on fire. In turn, the language of destruction is so thinly separated from the language of renewal, that there is something emotionally rich in the prospect of a great purging bonfire of the dead accumulation of the past. Into the furnace go heretics and their writings, but also the poisoned and the infectious, the redundant distractions or the debilitating clutter.

As a result, while this study depends on a much broader literary history of book burning and censorship, it concentrates, not coincidentally, on the period which began with the Nazi fires in 1933 and ended with the publication of *Fahrenheit 451* (1953). It was in this 20-year period that the iconic role of book burning in the popular imagination took hold, and an orthodox position on book burning was forged. This was chiefly due to the Nazi bookfires, a heavily photographed and documented demonstration that has since become one of the most infamous political events of the twentieth century; in part because the enormous crowd took second place to ranks of photographers and film-makers, cementing National Socialism's abiding habit of documenting its own violent spectacles. But this is not only a study of one infamous event, but of how deeply embedded the metaphor of book burning is in cultural and literary history, whether in regard to now largely forgotten uproars such as the proposed burning of 'pro-British' books by Chicago Mayor 'Big Bill' Thompson in 1928, or one of the most interesting and curiously ignored institutions of the 1930s, the so-called 'Library of the Burned Books' in Paris, founded in triumph by German exiles in 1934, but closed in ignominy in the *drôle de guerre*, its members imprisoned by the French as enemy aliens.

Indeed, this work seeks to show how during this period the imagery of book burning was appropriated by everyone from staunch Communists to fellow-travellers, from dystopian novelists to bored literary critics, many of whom toyed with the notion that a great purging fire might still be something that refreshes society. It was only in the first years of the Second World War that a genuinely orthodox position was elaborated, but even then, it quickly became so inflexible that it was ill-suited to the dilemmas facing the occupation government in Germany, especially as the process hastily christened 'denazification' got

under way, a catch-all phrase that encompassed everything from questionnaires, fines, and re-education, right through to the trials at Nuremberg. In this setting books were potent symbols: on the one hand, those issued under Nazi rule were feared as contagious, and debates about disposing of them bitterly contested; while, on the other, the production of new textbooks became a symbol of the necessary re-education of the German people. Nor has the fate of looted books ever garnered quite the attention of similar actions in the world of fine arts, meaning that while the story of the postwar restitutions of fine art is justly well known, neither then nor since has much been published regarding the restitution of books. This relative silence may be due, in part, to the effect the enormous book depots had on their visitors, who often described a feeling of alarm, even distaste, at being confronted with such vast numbers of books. Nonetheless, these millions of looted books, the remnants of private collections and institutions alike, brought home the significance of Heine's insight, and intimately showed the connection between acts of cultural dispossession and genocide.

My work concludes as the Cold War began in earnest, when it often seemed that no books would be burned, so long as nobody was interested in them at all. By concentrating on book burning in these crucial 20 years, this study is able to trace the decisive evolution of one of modernity's most pervasive symbols. In the process, while it relies on the broader history of censorship, and the connection between cultural and physical destruction, it is more interested in the desire to destroy print, rather than the history or the impact of such suppression. It is a work of cultural history in the widest sense, demonstrating that it is writers who are most troubled by the uncanny quality of the bonfire; and writers, too, who are infused with an attraction for the fire. It also serves as a reminder of the ways in which the destruction of cultural goods, the razing of a library, or the burning of an archive, signifies a letting go of the past that makes deeper and more total the loss of physical life. It is a study of how, despite all the proscriptions, book burning has not relinquished its personal or redemptive currency: the dream, forever tarnished, of beginning with a blank slate.

Sydney, December 2007

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book burning in Essen (Figure 4), is from the Archiv der Alten Synagogue Essen. The photographs of the book burning on the Opernplatz in Berlin; the destruction of the books of a trade union; the burning of church goods in Barcelona in 1936; and 'The Day of the Free Books' in Berlin in 1947; as well as the SPD poster depicting the burning of Arthur Koestler's books (Figures 5, 6, 12, 21, and Plate 8), are all reproduced with the permission of Ullstein Bild. The Sidney Strube cartoon (Figure 7) is reproduced with the permission of Express Newspapers. The Library of the Burned Books letterhead (Figure 8), is copyright unknown, but is reproduced with the kind permission of the William Ready Archives of McMaster University. The recent photograph of Boulevard Arago (Figure 9) is reproduced courtesy of Bruce and Victoria Fishburn; while the photograph of the opening of the Library of the Burned Books (Figure 10) is from the collection of Marcus Patka (Vienna, Austria). John Heartfield's cover for *AIZ* (Figure 11) is licensed by VISCOPY, Australia, and reproduced with permission. The burning of lay books in Tolosa (Figure 13) is copyright EFE News Service/Ceferino. The photographs of the looting in Vilna, Lithuania, and of the Offenbach Archival Depot (Figures 15 and 16) are from the Yad Vashem Photo Archive. Bill Mauldin's cartoon on denazification (Figure 18) is used courtesy of the Mauldin Estate. The two stills from the American newsreel (Figures 19 and 20) are courtesy of the Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The photograph of Micha Ullman's 'Bibliothek' memorial (Figure 22) is courtesy of Mark Tewfik and Celine Goetz.

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Permission to quote from the papers of G.E.G. Catlin was kindly granted by Baroness Williams. Excerpts from the Vera Brittain material are used by permission of Mark Bostridge and Timothy Brittain-Catlin, Literary Executors for the Estate of Vera Brittain, 1970.

I have made every effort to trace the copyright and rights holder for the official seal of the Comstock Society (Figure 3), and of Gert Keller's painting of the Berlin bookfires (Figure 14), but without success. I would be pleased to rectify

this omission, if possible, in future. While every effort has been made to trace rights holders, if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publishers would be pleased to make the necessary arrangements at the first opportunity.

Chapter 5 of this book first appeared, in a slightly different form, as ‘Books are Weapons: Wartime Responses to the Nazi Bookfires of 1933’, *Book History* 10 (2007), 223–51. My thanks to the editors of *Book History*, Jonathan Rose and Ezra Greenspan, for permission to use this article.

* * *

In no small part this book is a love song to the long-suffering lads from Team Lucky Strike: *mon vieux*, Mark Tewfik, and the *lanterne rouge*, Damian O’Reilly. ;TLS forever! It is for Harriette and Mick Conway, and the lovely Tika Willow; I hope finishing this book means more time to visit.

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This book, with my love, for Sarah Mury. I hope we light our pipes with it, beyond the Bosphorus.

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Introduction

When you have thrown the ancients into the fire, it will be time to denounce the moderns.

Lord Byron

The most popular of all parables of book burning is the story of the burning of the library at Alexandria by the Caliph Omar in 642 AD. The basic story is familiar: after the fall of the city, the Caliph was approached by an unfrocked priest called John the Grammarian, who requested the unwanted books of the library. Omar is alleged to have replied: ‘Touching the books you mention, if what is written in them agrees with the book of God, they are not required; if it disagrees, they are not desired. Destroy them therefore.’¹ Some versions of the story even say that the books were used as fuel in the fires of the city’s bathhouses for months. It is an arresting scene and a fascinating moment of clarity, with its implication that one great fire could remove the distraction and clutter of books. It is also almost certainly apocryphal, as the story is not mentioned by any contemporary sources, and appears to date from the thirteenth century. Even so, fires did take their toll on the Alexandrian library: it is thought that some part was lost during Caesar’s conquest in 48 BC; there were significant losses during the conquest of the city by the Emperor Aurelian in the late third century; the Serapeum or ‘Daughter’ library was burned during the suppression of pagan works by the Emperor Theodosius in 391 AD; and there may have been more damage during the Muslim conquest of 642 AD.² At different times each of these fires has been singled out to represent the definitive collapse of the library (Gibbon, for example, was infuriated by the ‘mischievous bigotry of the Christian’ Theodosius). While each clearly had an impact on the library, modern scholarship suggests that rather than a great conflagration, it more likely simply went into decline, and was lost through neglect rather than catastrophe.

This is not the place to revisit the long, rancorous debate about the destruction of the library. Suffice to say that the Alexandrian library is commonly depicted as the repository of the wonders of ancient civilization, and that its loss is therefore commensurate with the fracturing of heritage, progress and history.

And yet, even where the loss is acknowledged it is not always lamented. As Jon Thiem has described in his essay on Alexandria, far from being universally imagined as a great cultural loss, writers as diverse as Seneca, Alexander Pope, Jacob Burckhardt and Jean-Jacques Rousseau were not disposed to miss it. To the contrary, Thiem shows, the burning is more often mockingly ‘invoked and celebrated; cited as a model for action; or put forth as a sacrilegious jest’, particularly among the book-rich moderns.³ Thiem usefully characterized this as the tension between the historian and the ‘*philosophe*’, between the desire to salvage or horde the past, and the forlorn hope of being freed from its weight. It is an insight which confirms the difficulty of deriving an orthodox response to the question of book burning, especially since debates about the limits of information – about censorship – are central to the definition of any society.

As the stories told about the library of Alexandria show, book burnings are often overloaded into cliché or twisted into myth, and while the destruction of unorthodox or heretical writings has long been an almost routine part of government, only a few well-known acts are commonly remembered. The first recorded state-sponsored book burning is the destruction ordered by Grand Councillor Li Ssu in Ch’in China in 213 BC. The country had been newly unified under Ch’in Shih-huang-ti, and he signified his rule with the order to burn the books of any historian or partisan of the defeated Shih or Shu. The Emperor is also known for beginning construction of the Great Wall, and even forced people convicted of protecting books to work on its construction; condemning, as Borges incisively commented, ‘those who adored the past to a work as vast as the past, as stupid and as useless’.⁴ This was not, as Lois Mai Chan has emphasized, unmediated destruction. There were exemptions for all manner of practical or scientific works and, just as importantly, even the objectionable books were preserved in imperial archives and allowed to be kept by the official scholars.⁵ As is often the case with such suppression, it is difficult to assess the extent of the initial destruction, but it is certain that this centralization of the written record increased the devastation when the Imperial Archives were attacked and destroyed in 206 BC. The association between censorship and aridity has its symbol in the legend that grass never grew on the spot where the books of the scholars were burned.⁶

In the Western tradition it was the Romans who were obsessive about the formal destruction of writing, leading Rosalind Thomas to argue that the ‘image of the urban centre as burdened with records – or even inscriptions – seems peculiarly Roman’.⁷ Without discounting the anecdotal evidence from archaic and classical Greece, Thomas listed the deliberate burning of an archive in 115 BC as the first such action in the West, but also pointed to diverse events such as the Emperor Augustus refusing to allow the dying Virgil his wish to burn *The Aeneid*, the loss of 3,000 bronze tablets on the Capitoline Hill at

the end of Nero's reign, or the burning of the Sibylline books by General Flavius Stilicho in 405 AD. Among this litany of fires, the telling instance of modern censorship was the destruction of the writings of the passionate republican Labenius around 6–8 AD.⁸ As Michel de Montaigne later wrote, Labenius 'could not suffer this loss, nor survive these his so dear issue; and therefore caused himself to be conveyed and shut up alive in the monument of his ancestors, where he made shift to kill and bury himself at once'.⁹ The death of the author, but not necessarily of text: Cassius Severus announced that if 'they really want to destroy the works of Labenius, they must burn me alive. For I have learned them by heart.'¹⁰ Severus was, indeed, next in line, banished to Crete and his own writings fired. The work of both men, however, survived: it had been saved and guarded by their friends, and their names were later rehabilitated.

This theme of the futility of burning also has biblical antecedents, as a result of the Lord's command that Jeremiah write down the words he had spoken against Israel. The scribe Baruch read the scroll to the house of Judah, but when a few pages had been pronounced the outraged king took it and cut it with his knife, and cast it into the fire. The Lord instructed Jeremiah to take another roll and write out the first, and 'added besides unto them many like words' (Jeremiah 36:32). Thus, the first biblical lesson, asserting that the word of the Lord cannot be destroyed by fire (when St Dominic debated the heretical Cathars, the works of both were thrown into a fire, but while the heretical works were consumed, the books of Dominic were miraculously cast out). The second, more often emulated biblical example of the health benefits of book burning is the destruction of sacrilegious works at Ephesus, a reputed centre of magical practice, in the first century AD:

Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. (Acts 19:19–20)

Here, the burning of their books (in Greek, literally 'superfluous works') is presented as a voluntary renunciation which symbolizes conversion and, more pragmatically, removes the temptation. It might be compared with the destruction of the tribal gods by the missionaries to Pacific Islanders in the nineteenth century.

The imprimatur of this scene should not be underestimated. Constantine ordered the destruction of the godless books of Porphyry and Arius, and books of alchemy and those of a new Manichaean sect were burned under Diocletian during the 'Great Persecution' of 303–05 AD.¹¹ Indeed, the creation of the

biblical canon relied on debate about the purity or impurity of text, meaning that the early Church Fathers culled the increasing fanciful martyrologies, ordering that many of these later fictions ‘be not read in the churches, but be committed to the flames’.¹² An early catalogue of forbidden books was prepared in 496 AD, and over the following millennium many individual works were forbidden by various papal edicts.¹³ Such precedents became more urgent after the invention of the printing press, and the first known *Index* was printed in Paris in 1544 in order to assist the nascent Inquisition (although there may have been an earlier Louvain edition in 1510). Renaissance scholars such as Natalis Comes reacted with horror, describing ‘such a conflagration of books, that one was reminded of the burning of Troy’.¹⁴ But the example of Ephesus was powerful; many editions of the *Index* subsequently took the passage in Acts as their epigraph, and some early modern editions even feature an engraved title-page depicting the converts casting their books into a fire (*Figure 1*).

Religious censorship had dire consequences for the Jewish populations of Europe. Twenty-four cartloads of Jewish writings were burned in Paris in 1242, ten martyrs were incinerated with their books in 1288 in Troyes, and more books were burned in England in 1299.¹⁵ In the 1240s the Talmud was regularly burned as it ‘threatened’ and ‘insulted’ Catholicism, and expurgations of the text were ordered in Spain in the 1260s. The real mechanism for censorship began with the papal bulls regarding the mass conversion of the Jews, most famously the early fifteenth-century *Etsi doctoris* of Benedict XIII.¹⁶ Once again the main target of these attacks was the Talmud, culminating in its burning by the Inquisition in 1554 and, three years later, the prohibition against Jews from owning anything in Hebrew except the Bible. In 1564, Rabbi Menahem Porto wrote that ‘the delight of our eyes, in whose shadow we thought we could survive among the nations, has been made into firewood’.¹⁷ Thus began a long series of reversals as successive popes continually revised and adjusted the official stance on publishing in Hebrew: by no means the least significant of the side-effects of these prohibitions was that from 1553 to 1810 Hebrew printing in Rome effectively ceased.¹⁸

One of the ironies of book burning is that it is popular with both orthodox and dissenting alike. The purging fire was commonly used for the persecution of dissent and heresy, whether it was the burning of Jan Hus at the stake in 1415, or Pascal’s *Lettres* being burned for being too free with the secular authorities of France over two centuries later. Conversely, on less orthodox occasions the protest fire has been a carnivalesque symbol of discontent, as with the ‘Bonfire of the Vanities’ in 1497. Preached by Fra Domenico Buonvicini, a disciple of Savonarola, on the last day of Lent, traditionally a riotous pagan day of excess, he called on the citizens of Florence to rid ‘the city and its homes of smut, vanity, and frivolity’.¹⁹ To signify their rejection, a great



Figure 1 The engraved title-page of the 1758 Rome edition of the Catholic *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. This image was used in several editions.

Rare Book Collection, Monash University Library.

pyramid, reputed to have included the works of Ovid, Dante and Boccaccio, was erected on the town square and set alight. Savonarola's grip on orthodoxy was never strong, but the process of censorship was, as always, so hurried, inconsistent and fallible that although he was burned as a heretic in 1498, it was not until around 1560 that his *Dialogo della verita prophetica* and 15

sermons (including the one given at the bonfire) were listed. As examples such as the Bonfire of the Vanities attest, nor should it be assumed that the *Index* has been universally disliked: its great historian, while personally unhappy about its ‘narrowing’ influence, nonetheless admitted that it was commonly held to have had a ‘largely wholesome effect on the character of Italian literature’.²⁰ As Savonarola’s example suggests, protest fires are a common symptom of social upheaval. A few years later, fires would mark the beginning of a more lasting revolution, when Martin Luther burned the bull demanding his excommunication along with the writings of his enemies under a large oak outside the walls of Wittenberg. The Catholic authorities responded in turn, with his 95 Theses ordered burned as heretical by the Theological Faculties of Louvain and Cologne in 1519, and after his excommunication by Leo X he was burned in effigy alongside his books.

If such burnings were initially the preserve of religious orders, they came to be broadly adopted by secular authorities as well. The practice had a lengthy vogue in early modern France, a period of great turmoil regarding the press; as Darnton has noted, between 1659 and 1789 around 1,000 people connected with the book trade were imprisoned in the Bastille alone.²¹ Voltaire had several works burned in Paris and Geneva, while Rousseau’s *Émile* was condemned by the Parliament of Paris to be torn and burned at the foot of the great staircase. As with all regimes of the censor, it was not without its critics, most of whom followed the well-worn path of mocking its inefficiency: elegantly, the satirist Louis-Sébastien Mercier claimed that the Koran had been passed as having ‘nothing contrary to the Christian religion’.²² French censorship could be said to culminate in the annihilation of in excess of 4 million books, including 25,000 manuscripts, in the suppression of the monasteries after the French Revolution (*Plate 1*).

By the beginning of the nineteenth century French censorship was increasingly criticized. The French librarian Gabriel Peignot wrote his ‘Dictionary of the Principal Books Condemned to the Fire’, one of the first studies of suppressed books, collecting an impressive list which included Beaumarchais, Rousseau, Saint-Évremond and Voltaire, as well as a series of nine-day wonders such as the 1737 *Almanach du Diable* (published with the imprint ‘aux enfers’). He was not immune to the prospect of criticism, although he pre-empted it on the grounds of the purity of his intentions and the growing acknowledgement of the value of many of the authors on his list. It is not, however, a comprehensive rehabilitation of all condemned authors: the works of Sade, to cite an obvious example, are dismissed as depraved, and exuding a ‘*miasmes pestilentiels*’.²³

In England in the early sixteenth century, books were regularly burned by the authorities. Fires, and the rituals that accompanied them, were common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with suppressed books burned at

Cheapside, the old Exchange in Cornhill, the new Palace yard at Westminster, and Smithfield. Such royal fires were always acts of pageantry, but this doesn't mean that it was mere theatre. Luther's works were torched in London in 1521 (although there is a report that they were burned in Cambridge one year earlier), and five years later there was the infamous burning of Tyndale's *New Testament*. Printed in Cologne, the imported sheets were publicly burned by dignitaries of the Church: John Foxe nicely claimed that this act of destruction inadvertently financed the second edition, because the Bishop of London bought the whole edition in order to destroy it.²⁴ The historian of this censorship, Charles Ripley Gillett, has catalogued the myriad Royal bonfires of this era in great detail, beginning with the burning of the monasteries by Henry VIII, only to be followed by the counter-Reformation of Mary, under whom the number burned 'can scarcely be determined' while Elizabeth burned 'a good many'.²⁵ The fires ordered by her successor James I, as Cyndia Susan Clegg has shown, developed into elaborate ceremonies, rather than simpler annihilation, important because under James the burning of books was 'designed to call public attention to the book's status as officially censured – as condemned by King James'.²⁶ In turn, Charles I made the burning of books part of his everyday suppressions; under the Parliaments many books were burned, and the writings of the period were, in due course, attacked after Parliament's collapse in 1660.²⁷

It was at mid century, during the tumultuous rule of the Long Parliament, that John Milton published his essay *Areopagitica* (1644), the most recognized English-language polemic against censorship. A few readymade quotes from *Areopagitica* have become the standard bearers of most polemics against censorship, most famous of all his statement 'as good almost kill a man as kill a good book'. This was not, however, meant as a blanket encomium, and Milton was at pains to reach a cautious definition of which books were actually 'good'. That is, while he imagined a world in which books were allowed to issue as freely from the brain as 'the issue of the womb', he continued with the proviso that 'if it proved a monster, who denies but that it was justly burnt, or sunk into the sea'.²⁸ Having made such concessions, however, Milton refused censorship, writing that a bad book may be little more than 'dust and cinders', but these should not be cast away because they might 'polish and brighten the armory of truth'.²⁹ All of the well-turned and much-rehearsed phrases aside, this compelling image is the heartbeat of Milton's essay. Impossible, now, not to think of Derrida's similarly tentative definition of language itself as a 'cinder', a metaphor which gestures to a relationship between language, ashes and mourning.³⁰ This is why one of the clear implications of Milton's *Areopagitica* is that books, like fire, can be imagined as human. Nor is this

an uncommon metaphor – not for nothing were the books proscribed in early modern England and France burned by the Common Hangman.

Simply put, book burning is as old as books, and yet, books are improbably difficult to burn. The audience might be dispersed, the author persecuted or silenced, but the books themselves have a habit of surviving. Walter J. Ong, in his history of the technology of writing, commented that after ‘absolutely total and devastating refutation, it says exactly the same thing as before. This is one reason why “the book says” is popularly tantamount to “it is true.” It is also one reason why books have been burnt.’³¹ The irony of this association is that books are not good fuel and, as the book collector John Burton Hill wrote,

In the days when heretical books were burned, it was necessary to put them on large wooden stages, and after all the pains taken to demolish them, considerable readable masses were found in the embers; whence it was supposed that the devil, conversant in fire and its effects, gave them his special protection. In the end it was found easier and cheaper to burn the heretics themselves than their books.³²

Books are revered for this, but they can also be feared.

This reverence means that while not all critics have called books the tool of the devil, many have tested the argument that they could be worth more than a human being. Hence, for example, Milton’s uneasy definition of books as ‘not absolutely dead things’, a double negative that works as a reminder of the book’s state between life and death – they become, in *Areopagitica*, a type of spectre. Montaigne set himself a ‘monstrous’ test when he wondered whether it would be worse to ask St Augustine ‘to bury his writings, from which religion has received so great fruit, or on the other, to bury his children, had he had them, had he not rather chosen to bury his children’.³³ Five centuries later, George Steiner wrote cautiously that any honest doctrine of high culture necessarily implies that the burning of a library is ‘out of proportion with common deaths, even on a large scale’ (after all, wrote William Faulkner, ‘The Ode on a Grecian Urn’ is worth any number of old ladies).³⁴ Such lucidity can be difficult to sustain, and when Ray Bradbury described the effect of the Nazi bonfires he was almost apologetic: ‘when Hitler burned a book I felt it as keenly, please forgive me, as his killing a human, for in the long sum of history they are one and the same flesh’.³⁵ What is hinted at by Bradbury’s careful ‘please forgive me’, is the possibility that any analogy between books and people is dangerous or frightful. With the Enlightenment, book burning became unfashionable, and the last book condemned to the public fire in England was *The Present Crisis* of 1775. Yet, as the rest of this work is devoted to exploring, the end of book burning was greatly exaggerated.

1

The Fear of Books

What progress we are making.
Sigmund Freud

In 1667 the saucy French novel *L'Escole des Filles* was condemned and burned in London. Samuel Pepys, although sternly disapproving of the work, was unable to resist buying a clandestine copy, hurrying home with the 'idle, rogueish book', and staying up all night reading it. The following morning he burned his copy, 'that it might not be among my books to my shame'.¹ A century later, Goethe displayed a more robust sentimentality. Disgusted by the burning of a comic French novel in the marketplace at Frankfurt am Main, he determinedly sought out a copy for his own library.² Goethe's is the modern taste, and appropriate to an age when official book burning was being proscribed as anachronistic or 'medieval'. His distaste for the practice signals the eighteenth century as the period which saw the dismantling of the elaborate book burning rituals of the early modern period. Around the turn of the nineteenth century Isaac Disraeli, for example, was incredulous about a practice which he dismissed as archaic and symptomatic of prejudice: 'The Romans burnt the books of the Jews, of the Christians, and the Philosophers; the Jews burnt the books of the Christians and the Pagans; and the Christians burnt the books of the Pagans and the Jews.'³ It was because of this new revulsion for burning as both futile and barbaric – an uneasy dialectic – that modern critics would confidently assert that book burning had become redundant.

It is easy to oversimplify this apparent proscription of book burning, and nowhere is the lingering appeal of the bonfire clearer than in the utopian tradition, where fires routinely featured as a meaningful example of a new beginning, a purification from the influence of the past. This chapter traces this theme to the early decades of the twentieth century where, on the one hand, the destruction of the University of Louvain in the first month of the First World War returned book burning to international prominence as a universally abhorred symbol of barbarism, while, on the other, debates about censorship

and the anxiety of influence meant that books were still being thrown into fires. In passing, this chapter also shows how even the more cogent attacks on censorship all shared the theme of the comic ineptitude of censors: for example, while the story is surely apocryphal, one commentator in the 1920s said that she visited a public library in the US where Jean-Henri Fabre's *Social Life in the Insect World* had been put in the cabinet because it had been objected to 'on account of one very passionate chapter'.⁴ Book burning, the tone of such critics optimistically implied, could never be successful, and the notion that publicly burning a book only advertised it became a literary commonplace. And yet, the proscription of book burning had been more apparent than real: debates about its efficacy continued, and zealots, anarchists, utopians and social reformers continued to cluster around hoping that one last fire might do the trick. Without this background the tenor and the effect of the student fires of Germany in 1933 cannot be clearly understood.

UTOPIA

In the most famous metaphor of Plato's *Republic*, the 'Myth of the Cave', the benighted and chained cave-dwellers are forced into the harsh but beautiful light of the sun. The senses are flooded, a new learning is begun, and nostalgia for the past is forcibly banished. This metaphor of rebirth has powerful ramifications throughout Western thought, and especially for the utopian genre, with its complex reliance on the dream of a clean break with the past. Furthermore, it is no coincidence that utopian writings have often exhibited an explicit anxiety about the book – it is also in the *Republic* that Socrates sorrowfully demanded the right to censor writers and expel the poets. Socrates was no incendiary, but such an injunction has proved to be attractive, and a quick excursion to the incinerator is often part of the theatre of faking any new identity. Perhaps perversely, it is often scholars who make the trip: David Hume wanted to vet libraries for books which did not meet the criteria of abstract reason and relation to 'fact and existence'. Where any volume failed, and this is the ultimate sentence in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), Hume advised tossing it on the fire: 'Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.'⁵

As Hume's command suggests, writing is often feared as a contagion that destabilizes the new world. Borges summarized the mood, to quote just one of the examples he included in his *Other Inquisitions*, with the comment that 'in one of the popular parliaments convoked by Cromwell it was seriously proposed that the archives of the Tower of London be burned, that every memory of the past be erased, and that a whole new way of life should be started'.⁶ It is a stance much favoured by reformers, who are often brisk with

the past. The students and German patriots who gathered at Wartburg in 1817, for instance, hosted a famous burning explicitly imitating Luther's burning of the bull threatening his excommunication in 1520. They burned those books they considered un-German (including the Swiss legal author Karl Ludwig von Haller, whose *Restauration der Staatswissenschaften* gave its name to the entire period) as well as other symbols of repression: an Austrian corporal's cane, a uniform from the Ulanen cavalry and a pigtail from a Hessian officer's wig.⁷ Such fires define a programme, and publicly affirm it. This is the classic utopian moment, not only a break with the past but an interdiction against even remembering it, a development which shows why the rhetoric of the cleansing fire – why book burning – is never far away from the borders of utopia.

Indeed, it is a truism to say that one of the main conceits of the utopian tradition is purity, which is why its ideal location has always been a protected hamlet, an inaccessible citadel, or, best of all, an island: whether it is the metal walls of Plato's Atlantis or the vast channel dug by King Utopus to separate his newly formed kingdom from the mainland. Utopia relies on a radical separation from the stale political realities of the old world, which is why, from the seventeenth century on, the vast emptiness of the imagined Terra Australis was such a popular destination.⁸ Order, purity and symmetry are the dominant notes of the genre. In the Dominican friar Campanella's *City of the Sun* (written 1602, published 1623) the city is protected by a series of seven walls and takes as its founding philosophy 'first it is necessary to eradicate and cleanse and then to build and plant', while the principal city of Mezzorania in Berington's *Gaudentio di Lucca* (1737) has been cut off from the outside world for over 3,000 years.⁹ Nor is it coincidental that so many protagonists in this genre end up running – or being chased – from their various realms of rational calm. The utopian societies are often so dull as to be uninhabitable: such is the malaise of the protagonist Sadeur in Gabriel Foigny's *La Terre Australe*, who, after a decade or two of sexless bliss, rational debate, calisthenics and gardening, cannot wait to make off into the wild. Fiction, it is apparent, is not particularly amenable to rational calm.

This obsession with purity has distinct implications for the utopian fixation with language and text. More's Utopians provide the model here: well-read, educated, and with a language that is noted for being 'copious of words and also pleasant to the ear, and for the utterance of a man's mind very perfect and sure'.¹⁰ More's protagonist Raphael Hythlodæus even lists the texts which they esteemed and profited from (although he laments that a marmoset had plucked some pages from his copy of Theophrastus).¹¹ As the inclusion of the marmoset suggests, there's a sense of deliberate implausibility here, which succeeds in drawing attention to the opposite of what is being claimed. Nonetheless, the notion of a perfect or universal language took hold in the utopian tradition.

In Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing New World* (1666) the universal language is fundamental to their political stability, while Thomas Northmore's *Memoirs of Planetes* (1795) recommended 'the establishment of a universal language'.¹² And, if language can be perfected, books might be expected to follow suit. In some cases this is little more than a continuation of the rigorous censorship of obscenity. In James Burgh's *Cesares* (1764), a South American utopia which relied on religious conformity, surveillance and censorship, 'all immoral and obscene books, prints, pictures &c; are ordered to be burnt; and those that have them, to be fined, as encouragers of vice'.¹³

Book burning as panacea would have its fullest elaboration in the Enlightenment, which fostered the genre of the 'eutopia' (good place) – utopia distilled of any irony. In the early nineteenth century Charles Fourier legislated the future with absurd precision, imagining a leap through chaos into harmony. He was astute enough to realize that the order and symmetry of his proposed new world order are made more desirable by setting them against the existing state, especially when it is derided as being chaotic, degenerative, dead:

The scene is changing, and the truth you pretend to be seeking is about to die and overwhelm you. There is nothing for you to do but to die honourably, like defeated gladiators. Prepare the hecatomb you owe to truth, seize the torch, set up the stake, and consign the rubbish of your philosophical libraries to the flames.¹⁴

Not with sternness but with joy, Fourier (whether metaphorically or not) calls for the simplicity of a library, and thus a world, cleansed of dross. Even if this revolution has some odd side-effects (the oceans may taste a little like lemonade), this new world will be triumphantly cultured, with 37 million poets like Homer, and as many geometricians like Newton and dramatists like Molière – 'these estimates are approximate', said Fourier modestly.¹⁵

Such an appeal to newness is not necessarily utopian, but the idea of 'no-place' does provide the perfect setting. In the first major work to shift utopia into the future, Louis-Sebastien Mercier's *L'An Deux Mille Quarante Cent Quarante*, contemporary France is implicitly compared with its future version. Among a raft of improvements, the library of the future has been streamlined, and the astonished traveller is told: 'You see this room: it contains all the books that escaped the flames: there is only a few; but those that remain have earned the approval of our century.'¹⁶

The burning of the library is couched in terms which liken it to the destruction of chaff: healthy library, healthy society. So too in the most popular of all nineteenth-century utopian writings, Étienne Cabet's *Voyage en Icarie* (1839), where the visitor is taught to admire the example of the Caliph Omar's burning of the library at Alexandria, especially because the Icarians have perfected

the sentiment: ‘We do in favour of humanity what its oppressors did against it: we have made a fire to burn bad books while brigands or fanatics set fire to pyres in order to burn innocent heretics.’¹⁷ A conclusion which brings to mind Freud’s quip to Ernest Jones about the Nazi fires a century later: ‘what progress we are making. In the Middle Ages they would have burnt me; now they are content with burning [my] books.’¹⁸

It is particularly interesting that book burning took on such a role in French writing, as the backlash against the Enlightenment was particularly vitriolic in France, especially in the wake of the Ultra-Royalist purge of 1816 (the ‘White Terror’).¹⁹ Many conservatives were horrified by planned collected editions of Voltaire and Rousseau, two authors popularly associated with the worst excesses of the Revolution. Books were held to blame: the frontispiece to Élie Harel’s *Voltaire* (Paris, 1817) had Christ reigning supreme over a fallen Medusa, who vomits the *Encyclopédie*, *Émile*, Voltaire’s *Dictionnaire philosophique*, and other works. Indeed, Sheryl Kroen has demonstrated that the state’s amnesty placed it in open conflict with a Church which sought a more thorough expiation.²⁰ A publishing war began, with the Catholic Right publishing hundreds of *bons livres* to counteract the effect of the just as numerous *mauvais livres*. Logically enough, given these tensions, between 1817 and 1828 at least twelve different fires are recorded: wrote the Archbishop of Bourges in 1829 ‘Ahh! burn these loathsome books that have caused so many evils!’ An enterprising publisher even bought out a fireproof edition of Voltaire, representing it as a useful precaution.

Throughout Europe these rubbish fires built towards a crescendo in the nineteenth century, an era in which, as George Steiner has written, ‘intellect and feeling were, literally, fascinated by the prospect of a purging fire’.²¹ Although the integration of popular science and fiction was already an old device by the time it was being worked over in the Enlightenment, it became one of the decisive tropes of the late nineteenth century in the guise of early science fiction, modernity’s clearest heir to utopian writing.²² As a genre, these books were routinely complacent about the end of the world, which usually functions as not much more than a convenient offstage catalyst to the action. In W.H. Hudson’s *A Crystal Age* (1887) the bucolic simplicity of the world to come is predicated on a ‘sort of mighty Savonarola bonfire, in which most things once valued have been consumed to ashes ... like so much worthless hay and stubble’.²³ Indeed, the reference to Savonarola’s fifteenth-century ‘Bonfire of the Vanities’ in Florence would be completely unintelligible to his new companions, even as it palliates the destruction for Hudson’s readers, suggesting that there is something desirable, or at least voluntary, about the conflagration. Nor does the destruction torment the protagonist of *A Crystal Age* who, having found love in the future, can serenely announce that ‘if the

old world was consumed to ashes that she might be created, I am pleased that it was so consumed'.²⁴

The corollary of this renewal by fire is often a refusal to believe that the losses are damning; what Luciano Canfora has neatly described as 'a certain teleological optimism'.²⁵ Canfora took his cue from Edward Gibbon's rather muted rage at the destruction of the Library of Alexandria, suggesting that Gibbon's sardonic attack on religious prejudice did not preclude him from being confident that the right things had been salvaged from the wreckage. A better example of this optimism is Nathaniel Hawthorne's story 'Earth's Holocaust' (1844), in which weary pilgrims erect an enormous pyre in order to burn the chattels of civilization. Newspapers, letters, money and weapons are some of the first to go, followed by alcohol and tobacco, and even abstract symbols of state or religion. A neglected 'American author' throws in his manuscripts. Books are the last things to be burned, an implausible but convenient fiction which allows the narrator to fashion an elegant riposte, for even as the books are shovelled in, yet they burn distinctively: Voltaire is consumed in sparkles and jets of flames, and Byron in 'fitful and lurid gleams and gushes of black vapour'. Shakespeare, notes the narrator, 'gushed a flame of such marvellous splendor that men shaded their eyes as against the sun's meridian glory', and, the narrator surmises, may yet be 'blazing as fervidly as ever'.²⁶ In a useful plot contrivance, the very last thing added to the pyre is the Bible which, rather than being blackened to ashes, is purified into a 'dazzling whiteness', even if – and again the wry voice of the narrator obtrudes – some of its marginal notes have gone missing.²⁷ A first conclusion is reached, depicting book burning as a futile redundancy because books live like salamanders inside the furnace. And a second follows, which reiterates the act's redundancy because burning is merely the play of surfaces, and the heart is unaffected: 'unless they hit upon some method of purifying that foul cavern, forth from it will reissue all the shapes of wrong and misery – the same old shapes or worse ones – which they have taken such a vast deal of trouble to consume to ashes'.²⁸ Shakespeare is inextinguishable, and the Bible cannot be burned: the canon is merely tested by fire. It implies, circularly, that the things we have salvaged are the things that we need. A familiar homily is here simply expressed: the truth is only burnished by the attempts to destroy it (thus *Areopagitica*).

An identical result was wrought by the eighteenth-century poet William Cowper in two poems on the burning of Lord Mansfield's library in the Gordon Riots of 1780. Cowper was outraged that the 'mob' had torched the library, but dismissed any idle regret, when Mansfield yet lived, and his 'sacred head' had been kept from harm:

There mem'ry, like the bee fed
 From Flora's balmy store,
 The quintessence of all he read
 Had treasur'd up before.²⁹

If this glorious result is a staunch example of Enlightenment optimism, its twentieth-century counterparts are less dazzling. Ilan Stavans recently published an essay on his personal anxiety of influence, recounting his fear that his obsession with Borges had left him at best mute, at worst derivative. Suffocating, so the story goes, he resolved that the only solution would be to burn his entire collection, starting with the two main offenders, the *Aleph* and *Other Inquisitions*, but not omitting his extensive collection of ephemera and journals. With the fixity of anguish, he dumped the whole pile in his garage and set it on fire, a miserable but relieving spectacle. 'Could a symbolic burning have achieved the same end? I knew the answer: I had tried repeatedly, and mere symbolism never sufficed.'³⁰ Despite this grudging admission, Stavans' dream of newness is satirized by his comment that, while his intention had been to include everything he owned, the only two books to escape the conflagration were the two he was most tormented by: 'cheap paperbacks of *The Aleph* and *Other Inquisitions*, which I had misplaced and then discovered after the deed was done'.³¹

BURN BUT HIS BOOKS

The past is not sublimated by such paltry fires, but it does not mean that the *theatre* is useless or meaningless. This is adumbrated in the rhetoric of 'modernity', which routinely announces that everything that is to come is founded on the rejection of the old (followed, much later, with an acknowledgment of patterns, influence, old lineages and new saints). Thus, the incomparably modern philosopher Nietzsche: 'Must the ancient fire not some day flare up much more terribly, after much longer preparation? More: must one not desire it with all one's might? even will it? even promote it?'³² This sort of tough talk reinforces the active forgetting which is a familiar trope of Nietzsche's writing, most especially his image of the person tormented by the past as a 'dyspeptic' who 'cannot "have done" with anything'.³³ Yet he was incensed with some acts of destruction, especially those committed by the orthodox or resentful against his own favourites: 'Lord Byron wrote a number of very personal things about himself, but [the poet] Thomas Moore was "too good" for them: he burned his friend's papers. Dr. Gwinner, Schopenhauer's executor, is said to have done the same.'³⁴ The apparent rejection of the past bears comparison with the scathing disdain he evinced for books in many

of his later works. As Thomas H. Brobjer has shown, Nietzsche's disdain often drifted into active dislike, as in *Ecce Homo* where he announced that 'a reading room makes me ill' and that 'for years I read nothing'.³⁵ This was, as Brobjer makes abundantly clear, entirely a fiction, a stance maintained despite the clear evidence in his library and letters that he was a 'rather substantial reader', even in his last active years.³⁶

Nietzsche's pronouncements also hint at the paradox that it is often the most scholarly readers who are tempted by the fire – it is hard to imagine a more learned figure than the seventeenth-century polymath Sir Thomas Browne, but he could still wish for the consolidation of all learning into a few good authors, 'and to condemne to the fire those swarms and millions of *Rhapsodies*, begotten onely to distract and abuse the weaker judgment of Scholars, and to maintaine the Trade and Mystery of Typographers'.³⁷ A similar anxiety can often be glimpsed in nineteenth-century histories of censorship. In many such works book burning was dismissed as anachronistic, but it still had an appealing resonance, explicitly so in James Anson Farrer's *Books Condemned to be Burnt* (1892). Farrer argued that the practice was better suited to the savagery of antiquity or barbarism of the Dark Ages, and didn't regret its passing, but his belief in progress is compromised by a baleful note regarding his contemporaries. It would be a 'bold man', he wrote, 'who would assert any lack of burnworthy books'.³⁸ A few years later the collector William Blades was similarly complacent, approving the 'cleansing fires' of book burning, that had 'removed mountains of rubbish from our midst'.³⁹

It is clearly useless, as things are, to pretend that there is much preciousness about the book as an object. Such indifference is only exacerbated by the fact that using pages from a book to light a fire has long been a favoured insult among literati. Byron hit just the right tone of disdain in the second edition of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, announcing that although he will be beyond the Bosphorus when the inevitable critique is published in the *Edinburgh Review*, he will 'yet hope to light my pipe with it in Persia'.⁴⁰ Books have been treated badly with such regularity that in the 1930s the bibliophile Holbrook Jackson published two significant studies on the subject, *The Anatomy of Bibliomania* (1930) and *The Fear of Books* (1932). Taken together, the two works provide a startling catalogue of every emotion from outrage to indifference. Napoleon on campaign is rumoured to have thrown books from the windows of his carriage as he finished them, while both Edward FitzGerald and Charles Darwin inveterately cut up their books, keeping only the sections of which they approved and discarding the gutted remnants – a form of note-taking that was endemic before the days of photocopying.⁴¹ Jackson is usually content to simply report such foibles, although he does reserve his particular bile for those who are mesmerized by the bindings of

books rather than their contents, whether it is the gauche trend for gutting attractive bindings to make cigarette boxes ('desecrators of the temple' he mutters, enraged), or, ironically enough, the dummy shelving in the gallery of the British Museum Reading Room.⁴²

This disinterest in actual books is exacerbated by the cameo appearances of book burning in some of the central works of Western literature. Books play a typically equivocal role in *The Tempest*, the play often fondly imagined to be Shakespeare's last. It is because Prospero spent too much time in his library that he was usurped by his brother, yet it is because he was able to carry some of his books into exile that he can rediscover his power. The dispossessed Caliban, in turn, knows that he will be freed if only he can persuade the shipwrecked sailor Stephano to destroy them: 'Burn but his books.'⁴³ Lastly, Prospero renounces his power by breaking his staff, but also by throwing his book into the ocean (it is tempting to see one last moment of equivocation in this decision, as if the books might yet be salvaged). Books play a similar role in *Don Quixote*, in which the library of Quixote is vetted by a kangaroo court composed of his niece, housekeeper, curate and barber. Anxious to curb the influence of Quixote's favourite romance literature, the scene is famous for its mordant wit, as the group debates the merits of Cervantes' own *Galatea*, cruelly deciding that it is 'more conversant with misfortunes than with poetry', but reprieving it on the grounds that it may improve in the second part.⁴⁴ The most vivid staging of the fearsome inertia of books, however, comes in yet another standard work of the Western canon. In the final scene of Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, as the damned scholar is being dragged from the stage, he wishes that he had never been to 'Wertenberge' nor 'read booke'.⁴⁵ And his last lines are meant as a categorical rejection:

Ugly hell gape not, come not *Lucifer*,
Ile burne my bookes, ah *Mephastophilis*.⁴⁶

This offer, this final failed negotiation, is an insight into the uncanny power of the book itself: Prospero, Don Quixote and Faust, three of the foundation figures of literature, each theatrically mimic the desire or the pledge of the blank slate, but also imply that the subterranean influence of books cannot simply be legislated against.

Nor have such scenes really dented the notion that books should exude a little warmth, a sense of necessary flammability captured in the mannerist conceit of Jonathan Swift's sonnet 'On Burning a Dull Poem'. Overcome with a feeling of deadly cold at the 'frigid fustian' of some verse he was reading, he threw it into his hearth fire where, to his affected surprise, it burst into flames:

How could I more enhance its fame?
 Though born in snow, it dy'd in flame.⁴⁷

Its physical destruction only mirrored, weakly, what the verse should have been able to generate – warmth, and by extension, passion. An endless succession of authors have burned their own discards with less pious relief. It's another first for the shade of Plato, who is, probably apocryphally, reported to have burned his youthful writings when he renounced poetry for philosophy. Other examples abound. Thomas More said that if anyone attempted to translate Erasmus' *Moria* into English he would burn it, together with his *Utopia* (the two works were published together in 1518) 'wyth myne owne hands'.⁴⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein regularly caused his papers to be burned in the outhouse of his cottage on Killary Harbor, Freud burned his papers in 1885 and again in 1908, and Byron was pleased to report that he had 'sense enough to burn' his first childhood attempt at drama.⁴⁹ Gaston Bachelard, who suggested that fire was fundamental to consciousness and imagination, succumbed to irony when he burned his manuscript of the *Poetics of the Phoenix* a few weeks before his death.⁵⁰ Even more quaintly, the first person to try and stifle *Lolita* in a fire was Nabokov himself, who kept trying to burn his manuscripts, but his wife Véra just as patiently retrieved them – out at the bins with a draft of *Lolita*, writes Stacy Schiff, Vladimir was confronted by his wife, who 'fished the few sheets she could from the flames' with the stern admonition 'We are keeping this.'⁵¹ This familiar destruction by authors also creates the impression that burning is still the appropriate result for false starts and early drafts, for dead-ends, which can contribute to the sense that what has been saved is the purified ideal.

Conversely, the desire to salvage as much as possible is routine for the keepers of literary archives, who often seem to be in open conflict with the authors they revere. It is a commonplace for the introductions to collections of letters to discuss, even tentatively quantify, the letters which remain lost, either through deliberate or accidental destruction. In the archive every letter is imagined as something that has narrowly escaped burning, and the more narrow the escape the more exciting the material. Not surprisingly, then, the great American collector A.S.W. Rosenbach singled out love letters as especially attractive, reasoning that they are nearly always the first to be destroyed. His comment is revealing: 'the fireplace must have consumed many precious examples that collectors would give their very souls to possess'.⁵²

Candour like Rosenbach's helps explain why writers have not always been anxious to hand over their manuscripts and letters. Jane Austen would not have been surprised to learn that her sister Cassandra duly vetted their correspondence, scissoring out and destroying anything she disliked, taunting scores

of biographers with the remnants in the process.⁵³ Charles Dickens incinerated a huge collection of letters he had received, and dreamed of burning every letter he had sent. In the fields outside Gad's Hill he set up a great bonfire that overcast the skies, sending up 'smoke like the genie when he got out of the casket on the seashore'.⁵⁴ Henry James had a similar preoccupation, and explained to one correspondent that he had 'made a gigantic bonfire and have been easier in mind since'.⁵⁵ Indeed, in the digital age it is easy to be sympathetic with his admission that his 'sole wish is to frustrate as utterly as possible the post-mortem exploiter – which, I know, is but so imperfectly possible'.⁵⁶ This theme can even be traced in his short stories, and the happiness that comes from burning the terribly indiscreet correspondence of a public figure (*Sir Dominick Ferrand*), can usefully be compared with the intoxication and horror of those who venture too far in their pursuit of the relics of the literary greats (*The Aspern Papers*). Nor should one expect consistency in this regard. James positively revelled in the published correspondence of Balzac, Flaubert and Robert Louis Stevenson, and particularly, as Edel noted, 'in the sex and anguish of George Sand's life and loves'.⁵⁷

A third nineteenth-century author who was agitated at the demands of posterity was Elizabeth Gaskell, who included a reverential scene of cleaning up the family archive in *Cranford*, as the elderly spinster Miss Matty burns old letters one by one in the hearth fire so as to keep them from the 'hands of strangers'.⁵⁸ In her personal life Gaskell was far from indifferent to the paper trail she was leaving, reminding her daughter at least once, 'Pray burn my letters'.⁵⁹ It is in a note to her publisher that she provided the clearest insight into this authorial anxiety, as she explained a system she had devised whereby every letter which begins with a drawing of a star may be kept, but 'otherwise *please burn them, & don't* send them to the terrible warehouse where the 20000 letters a year are kept. It is like a nightmare to think of it'.⁶⁰ This nightmarish warehouse, if it existed, would delight most biographers (even if their introduction would be assumed to include an aside about life in a dusty archive), and, of course, many letters escape even the most rigorous system. More, even the confirmed destruction of the offending item does not always ensure peace, as some known acts of destruction have only encouraged biographers to try and fill the resulting gap with every possible conjecture. Perhaps the most famous act of such literary hygiene is the burning of Byron's notorious memoirs, which had been left with his friend the poet Thomas Moore, ultimately the editor of the three stately volumes of his *Letters and Journals*.⁶¹ Within days of the report of Byron's death reaching England the manuscript was burned. Moore seems to have been genuinely anguished about the destruction, but acquiesced in a fire so actively approved of by almost all the other interested parties, including representatives from both Lady Byron and

Augusta Leigh. One hesitates to draw a lesson from such fractured history, but it appears that when everything has been kept (the warehouse or mausoleum), it may promote indifference. Or there is the conclusion wrought by Maurice Blanchot, who wondered whether the only way to save a book from its fans and detractors was by having it ‘put aside, condemned to the nether regions of libraries, or burned, or forgotten’.⁶²

LOUVAIN

By the beginning of the twentieth century book burning was widely considered to be out of fashion, but this proscription was often more apparent than real. It would be more accurate to say that governments erred on the side of caution, and that the taste for public bonfires was distinctly out of fashion. In effect, these two factors meant that while fires were still common, they are not as well recorded. This appears to be the case with the patriotic fires that heralded the beginning of the First World War, when there were apparently many superstitious attempts to remove any supposed pro-German or pacifist taints, particularly from newspapers and journals, by recourse to the old-fashioned expedient of burning. Very little work has been done on these patriotic fires, but suffice to mention here that in the 1930s the British essayist Osbert Sitwell refused to become animated about events in Germany when he could remember how in England during the Great War ‘the setting alight of printed matter became a national recreation’. He even goes so far as to remember these great patriotic outbursts with mock affection: ‘Who can ever forget those enjoyable bouts of newspaper burning?’⁶³

Significantly, however, these quotidian fires have been eclipsed by one of the most famous library fires; indeed, one of the most famous cultural losses of the twentieth century: the burning of the library at Louvain University in the first weeks of the war. Louvain had been overrun by the German advance on 26 August 1914, and much of the town was destroyed in a fire which the Germans were reputed to have deliberately lit; or, at least, to have made little attempt to contain (*Figure 2*). International outrage was compounded when a contemporary report commissioned in Germany exonerated the military command from any deliberate intent, alleging that French irregular forces inhabiting the library had contributed to its destruction.⁶⁴ These findings were largely dismissed elsewhere, and in countless official and unofficial reports the occupation of Louvain was cited as evidence of what was christened German ‘incendiarism’, meant to signify the deliberate and systematic destruction by fire of any occupied area.⁶⁵ An editorial in *The Times* was the first time in which the paper openly referred to the German forces as ‘Huns’, and was the moment when the paper turned away from its earlier reserve regarding reports of atrocities in Belgium.⁶⁶



Figure 2 The streets of Louvain in the wake of the 1914 fires. Les Halles of the University are to the left.

Bain Collection in the Library of Congress.

The destruction of Louvain was one of the biggest cultural losses of the First World War, and postwar rebuilding was taken very seriously. Although some of the losses were irreplaceable, the general library holdings were restocked by acquiring the libraries of deceased scholars and by donations from around the world. Most of the rebuilding came about through a stipulation in the Versailles Treaty compelling restitution from German libraries; these books all included a bookplate which showed a book being rescued from the flames by seated Wisdom over the caption '*Ouvrage restitué par l'Allemagne*' (although a popular misconception had it that the bookplates showed a German soldier setting the halls of the university alight).⁶⁷ The Belgian prelate Cardinal Mercier also commissioned a new library building from the American architect Whitney Warren after an international fund-raising drive.⁶⁸ By the time the new library was approaching completion in the mid 1920s it was slated to become a benchmark of library design.⁶⁹

The rebuilding took place during a period which also saw entrenched cynicism about the use of propaganda during the war. The reaction was summarized by Lord Ponsonby, who patiently dismantled some of the stories of the war, and showed that some of the more infamous (the Corpse Factory,

the crucified Canadian, the Belgian baby with no hands) had little or no basis in fact.⁷⁰ Despite this reappraisal, the destruction of Louvain, and especially the loss of its prestigious library, was still bitterly resented, and as the library neared completion conflict erupted regarding one architectural detail: running along the top of the building, woven into the stonework of the balustrade, Warren's design included the ornamental inscription 'Furore teutonica diruta, dono americano restituta' (Destroyed by Germanic fury, restored by American generosity). Despite the fact that the style of the inscription was so baroque that it was difficult to decipher, as the library prepared for its official reopening on 4 July 1928 a furious debate erupted about whether such an inscription was relevant to the new political climate, or appropriate for inclusion on a university library.

Protests against the inscription were lodged by the University's Rector, the then President of the United States Herbert Hoover, the King of Belgium and even a papal representative. Warren, however, adamantly refused to countenance any alteration to his design, quoting the recently deceased Cardinal Mercier to the effect that it would 'constitute for the future a safeguard against the recurrence of similar destructions'.⁷¹ However, the new Rector was equally inflexible, arguing that one could hardly expect German citizens to use any library which carried a 'proclamation calling them barbarians', and it was on his authority that a temporary, unornamented balustrade was erected. It was a poor interim solution. An angry crowd gathered at the library to protest the bowdlerization of the design, making the nature of their complaint explicit by carefully destroying the blank balustrade without causing any damage to any part of the actual library.⁷² A timber and plaster façade was installed and survived until the opening, even though another infuriated Belgian flew his aeroplane over the ceremony scattering green leaflets printed with the censored inscription. However, it was only a temporary reprieve, and less than two weeks passed before the blanks were once again destroyed, this time by Edmond Felix Morren, the Belgian foreman of the library's construction. Morren was caught in the middle of the act by a policeman, but it was considered too dangerous to try and apprehend him. Repeatedly asked to come down from the building, he is said to have coolly replied: 'I am doing a job and I am not quite finished.' He later told the police who had taken him into custody that not to have protested would have 'looked too much like we had forgotten'.⁷³ Morren was sentenced and fined, although his costs seem to have been defrayed by supporters of his actions.

Louvain and its twice-destroyed balustrade retreated from the headlines, especially after Warren's attempt to demand the reinstatement of the balustrade through legal channels was finally quashed in late 1930. It would not, in fact, ever be installed, even though the library still hosted the only slightly

less controversial 'Our Lady of Victories', a Madonna armed with cuirass, sword, and the helmet of a French poilu, who crushed under her heel an 'Evil Spirit' which bore, it was commonly held, a noticeable resemblance to the German eagle.⁷⁴ Nor was the controversy over the balustrade extinct. In June 1933, five months after Hitler had come to power and only weeks after the book burnings in Germany, the blanks were once more systematically destroyed when the indefatigable Morren again climbed carefully on to the roof and patiently smashed every one of its 108 pillars: he wanted, he was later quoted as saying, to protest the 'anti-Semitic atrocities' in Germany.⁷⁵ Morren, at least, seemed to have a prescient understanding of the relationship between book burning and social repression. The rebuilding of Louvain may have returned book burning to prominence as the mark of the barbarian, but it would be glib to take this image too far in a period during which bonfires of books were common.

BANNED BOOKS

During the interwar years book burning and censorship was always on the cusp of popular attention, and the 1920s had seen renewed debate about both the morality and the efficacy of censorship. Just how common censorship was in this period is neatly illustrated with a vignette from the opening pages of Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* (1930), where the protagonist and sometime author Adam Fenwick-Symes returns to England from the continent, where he has been working on a manuscript. After a horrible channel crossing he is subjected to the ordeal of customs, where his blithe assurance that he has nothing but some old clothes and books is met with fierce suspicion from a customs man cheerfully working on the principle that if 'we can't stamp out literature in the country, we can at least stop its being brought in from outside'.⁷⁶ After consultation with a shadowy superior and the help of a printed list, judgement is passed down:

You can take these books on architecture and the dictionary, and I don't mind stretching a point for once and letting you have the history books, too. But this book on Economics comes under Subversive Propaganda. That you leaves behind. And this here *Purgatorio* doesn't look right to me, so that stays behind, pending inquiries. But as for this autobiography, that's just downright dirt, and we burns that straight away, see.⁷⁷

Of course, this pre-emptory burning avoids the novel stalling for lack of plot, forcing Fenwick-Symes into all manner of hack work, but Waugh's deft scene serves as a reminder not only of the ubiquity of censorship at the time, but also

of the censor's reliance on the literal movement of literature and the possibilities for surveillance it provided. During the period few could be found to defend an open press, and even one of the great studies of the period, Anne Lyon Haight's *Banned Books* (1935), commented that of the 739 titles banned by the Post and Customs Office, many 'should decidedly be refused admittance'.⁷⁸

Cataloguing censorship in this era is a full-time occupation, but a few examples suggest its tenor. In the 1920s the public library in St Louis ordered three copies of John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* burned because some of the characters used vulgarities, and the New York Book-of-the-Month Club voluntarily censored *All Quiet on the Western Front*.⁷⁹ The decade also witnessed the suppression of a familiar list, many of which have since been recognized as the classics of the age, with obvious contenders including *Ulysses*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Sun Also Rises*. H.G. Wells was out of fashion as often as he was in, and protests were heard against Bertrand Russell and Thomas Hardy, Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis.⁸⁰ In Britain, the London Public Morality Council (founded 1899) under the leadership of the Bishop of London, Arthur Foley Winnington-Ingram, continued to be prominent, and was particularly active in the suppression of *The Well of Loneliness* (famously likened to a 'vial of prussic acid').⁸¹

This period also saw the development of a cogent attempt to catalogue and resist the incursions of the new censorship through legal defences, argument and, especially, satire. By the beginning of the 1930s, this movement reached critical mass, with germinal contributions to the study of literary censorship like Charles Ripley Gillett's *Burned Books* (1932), a catalogue of the neglected history of English books destroyed in government-sponsored bonfires. Gillett's study relied on the uncanny ability of books to survive even the most stringent persecution, but it was also a product of the abiding irony of early modern censorship, which not only blazoned forth the books condemned for destruction, but which transformed the destruction into a bureaucratic process, replete with an extensive record of its own actions. Working from within these records, Gillett's study confirms that books condemned by government censorship are only rarely completely destroyed. Even then, like any good book collector, Gillett usually only listed the loss of any given work as provisional.⁸²

Gillett's study is a bibliographer's history, concentrating, naturally enough, on the survival of the book rather than the contemporary effects of any given censorship. It is a valuable work, but also a complacent one; at one stage Gillett mused that the 'proceeding savors so much of the medieval spirit' that it is not supposed to have persisted to a time that is within the memory of men still living.⁸³ Writing in 1932, one year before the most famous book burnings of the twentieth century, the notion of an officially sanctioned book burning was being discussed as a subject for the antiquarian. The best example he could

muster is a hazy anecdote about a lecturer at Exeter College becoming so infuriated with James Anthony Froude's *Nemesis of Faith* that midway through a lecture he dashed it into the fireplace. The story dates from 1849. Not only is this an unlikely inclusion in a book devoted to officially sanctioned attempts at suppression, it is also a patent half-truth: to cite only the most famous example, customs and post office authorities in both the United States and Britain were routinely confiscating and burning copies of Joyce's *Ulysses*.

The inglorious publishing history of *Ulysses* was the signature battle of the period. Early installments of the novel in the *Little Review* had been burned by the US Post Office, each time announced with a note to the publishers reading 'BURNED': it was, wrote one of the publishers, Margaret Anderson, 'like a burning at the stake as far as I was concerned'. The ensuing trial was not without farce, as Anderson later remembered that there had been outcry in the courtroom when it was proposed to read one of the offending passages into the record in the presence of a woman. When her attorney explained that she was the publisher so could hardly be supposed to be unfamiliar with the material, the judge was ready for such decadent argument: "Yes, but undoubtedly she didn't know the horrible significance of what she was publishing," responded the Judge, regarding me with tenderness and suffering.⁸⁴ Nor was Joyce himself ever far from the fire. In his introduction to the famous first American edition of 1934, he noted that 22 publishers refused his first major work, *Dubliners*, and when it finally got to press 'some very kind person bought out the entire edition and had it burnt in Dublin'.⁸⁵

The first two editions of *Ulysses* were published in Paris and distributed singly, but of a third edition of 500 copies printed by Harriet Weaver at the Egoist Press in January 1923, all but one were destroyed in 'the King's Chimney' after being seized at Folkestone under the Customs Act of 1867; another edition of 500 met the same fate at the hands of the US Post Office Department.⁸⁶ In the United States, Joyce's novel was prosecuted under the steadfast gaze of Anthony Comstock's Society for the Suppression of Vice. The Comstock Society's official seal depicted a book being engulfed in flames (*Figure 3*). In a career spanning over four decades, Comstock made his career on the now-familiar mantra of protecting children from any possible harm: in 1913, Comstock boasted to the *New York Evening World* that he had personally driven several purveyors of obscenity to suicide and destroyed 160 tons of obscene literature, a quantity which included such inglorious titles as *The Lustful Turk* and *Kate Percival, the Belle of the Delaware*.⁸⁷ *Ulysses* was not successfully published in the United States until 1934, when Judge Woolsey issued his famous decision that pornography be defined with regard to the author's intention – a legal victory and a philosophical quagmire. Joyce's novel was allowed through the post, that is, because it was not intended as pornography.⁸⁸



Figure 3 The official seal of Anthony Comstock's New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, founded in 1873.

The fight around *Ulysses* was only the vanguard of nationwide battles in the United States. Arguing for the control of the mails in the US Senate, Reed Smoot (Republican, Utah) announced 'I would rather keep out a thousand, than have one mistake made.'⁸⁹ Meanwhile, in Chicago, the laurel for the silliest attack on literature could be given to Mayor William 'Big Bill' Thompson of Chicago, in his long-running feud with the school superintendent William McAndrew. Big Bill had been an outspoken critic of American intervention in the First World War (earning him the nickname 'Kaiser Bill'), and in the late 1920s affected to be appalled by what he regarded as the pro-British stance of his public officials, a horror that he backed up with a standing offer to punch King George 'on the snoot' if he ever dared visit Illinois. In order to back up this stance, Thompson, acting on a tip-off from the self-styled Patriots' League, deputed his friend U.J. 'Sport' Herrmann to take four of the most invidious pro-British books to the shores of the lake and torch them.⁹⁰

As is often the case with stories of book burning, myths accumulate much faster than facts, and the whole event quickly developed into a circus. Foyles' bookstore in London wrote offering to take the marked books, while two taxpayers' suits were initiated to stop the projected burnings. The local warden, one Edward Fogarty, was informed that the task of setting the pyre alight might fall to him as the hangman for the district, and promptly proclaimed himself

ineligible for the job.⁹¹ Meanwhile, a rumour circulated that Herrmann had been prevented from destroying library property, so had resorted to buying his own copy of one of the books so as to have something substantial to set on fire, while Frederick Rex, the municipal reference librarian, took his own initiative and destroyed works such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's *The International Mind Alcoves* and T. Miyaoka's *Growth of Internationalism in Japan*. He told reporters: 'Now I have an America First library.'⁹²

The fate of the four books seized by Herrmann is not as clear. They were quarantined, but it is not certain that the books were ever burned (although Chicago did continue the library tradition of referring to their cabinet of sequestered books as the 'inferno'). The whole event ended in abject farce, with Herrmann assuring reporters that he hadn't actually read any of the books, and Thompson likewise insisting that he could burn the books if he wanted to, he just didn't want to. The library, in turn, issued a statement thanking its British benefactors, including Queen Victoria, Benjamin Disraeli and Lord Tennyson, who had contributed huge quantities of books and funds after the disastrous fire of 1871. Confirming the advertising potential of fire, in October over 1 million books were borrowed from the library for only the second time in its history.⁹³

In the same period, Boston became famous for its censorship, beginning with the Red Scare raids of 1920 by the Justice Department, which not only led to the arrests of around 1,000 "radicals", but also led to the confiscation of large quantities of books and literature.⁹⁴ More famously, the Watch and Ward Society took advantage of Massachusetts state law, which left the bookseller (not the author or publisher) ultimately responsible for obscenity. And publishers were, as one study noted, 'easier to influence'.⁹⁵ As a result, the Boston list was prodigious, with titles ranging from Aldous Huxley's *Antic Hay* (1923) to Harland William Long's *Sane Sex Life* (1922). The censorship peaked in 1929 when over 60 books were newly listed.⁹⁶ Boston also became known as an arena for authors to make sport with their suppressors, especially after the attack on Sinclair Lewis' novel *Elmer Gantry*, submitted to review by a reporter fishing for a story. When the Society took the bait, booksellers flippantly submitted a supplementary list of 57 titles; each, they announced, just as naughty as Lewis. If this was meant to make a mockery of the whole proceeding, Boston officials proved recalcitrant: they tired of the farce and made the announcement that they were going to begin seeking jail sentences. Spooked, the booksellers withdrew half of their list, but not before there were problems with titles including Lion Feuchtwanger's *Power* (1926) and Julia Peterkin's *Black April* (1927). Boni and Liveright were fined for trying to release Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, while Upton Sinclair was so offended by the suppression of his novel *Oil* that he paraded through the

city trying to get himself arrested by reading out racy works of literature (his particular favourites were Act III scene ii of *Hamlet* and Genesis 19:30–8).

Concomitantly, in parts of Europe book burning was anything but a question for the antiquarian. The ruling Horthy party in Hungary sponsored a burning of political-economic heresies soon after their accession to power. An interesting rehearsal for the later burnings in Nazi Germany, it prompted a wry contemporary essay ‘On the Burning of Books’ by historian Louise Fargo Brown, describing how White Guards had gathered to burn the works of Marx, Engels, Jaurès and Bebel, ‘and that the shelves of the Budapest library alone had furnished fifteen thousand volumes for a bonfire in its courtyard’.⁹⁷ Although it was missing the sense of mass spectacle which would characterize the burnings in Germany, both the process and the result were effectively the same. This is why Brown’s deeply ironic response is worth quoting at length:

Americans, accustomed during and since the war to conscientious efforts on the part of their government to protect their minds from revolutionary propaganda, ought to hear this news with admiration for the Hungarians, in thus setting the world an example of efficiency and thoroughness in the policy of fighting ideas by the method of extermination. And yet ... somehow the practice seems to us mediæval; not in harmony with the spirit of the modern world.⁹⁸

Her use of the dismissive epithet ‘medieval’ is droll (especially as the essay appeared in *Vassar Mediaeval Studies*), but it confirms that those who write about book burning are eager to depict it as anachronistic, even as Brown satirically praised its political relevance.

Brown, at least, did not fall for the trap of regarding the act as benign or whimsical. However, the Hungarian burning barely caused a ripple in the international media. In 1922, the Hungarian government’s blacklisting of several Communist writers had at least generated a testy editorial in the *New York Times* about ‘the neo-medievalists of Hungary’, chiefly because the list dared to include Walt Whitman.⁹⁹ Writers like Whitman have rarely sat easily with critics: one of his contemporaries, the writer and abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson, had drolly observed that it was ‘no discredit to Walt Whitman that he wrote *Leaves of Grass*, only that he did not burn it afterwards’.¹⁰⁰ In 1922, it was too late to still be burning Whitman, although the editorial deriding such superstition is rather dulled by the less than subtle juxtaposition of another story on the same page. Under the heading ‘Punishment Well Deserved’, the paper applauds the expulsion of Victor Marguerite from the returned soldiers Legion of Honour, because his novel *La Garconne* is ‘plainly and intentionally indecent’, and lacks even ‘the excuse of being a work of art’.¹⁰¹

Gillett's *Burned Books* is one of the great histories of censorship, and his ultimate insight into the curious genre of suppressed books is succinct:

The purpose to be achieved by burning an offending book was quite intelligible, though the procedure was far from intelligent. It was a lurid logic, but its premise was wrong and its conclusion was false. As an argument, fire has never been conclusive either in the case of a man or a book.¹⁰²

This might be called the optimism of the librarian, and it depends on imagining that an imperishable canon ('truth') will endure, no matter how many books are destroyed. One of the most familiar arguments in much of this historiography assumes that because the regime of the censor has passed, and the books that had once been reviled return to the shelves, censorship is simply ineffectual. It implicitly defines the core of a library as salvageable because it is rational or ethical, rather than rhetorical. This is comforting, but specious, as the famous bibliophile Umberto Eco has shown in his *The Name of the Rose*, where the young novice Adso of Melk asks his mentor William of Baskerville, 'what is the use of hiding books, if from the books not hidden you can arrive at the concealed ones?' His teacher replies: 'Over the centuries it is no use at all. In a space of years or days it has some use. You see, in fact, how bewildered we are.'¹⁰³ Yet a great deal of writing on censorship does not effectively address its short-term efficacy. In doing so, such writings often resemble the popular parlour game of imagining which books to save as the ship is sinking or the house burning. It is a form of literary brinkmanship that is often indulged, as in George Steiner's comment that if 'only the Bible of 1611 and a dictionary survived, the English language would stand in no mortal danger'.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Arnold Bennett thought that the Master of Baillol was 'probably being sprightly' when he told the Library Association that if one could save the Bible, Shakespeare, Plato's *Republic* and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, then everything else might well be burned.¹⁰⁵

In turn, this points to the submerged crisis in works that satirize censorship as ad hoc, flawed and necessarily fallible. This approach is meant to imply that censorship must needs be abandoned; but it has rarely stopped those who argue, to the contrary, that it really signifies the need for a 'better' (read 'consistent') system. Even the use of the familiar epithet 'medieval' does not account for the real history of book burning as a metaphor at the very heart of the Enlightenment. Which is why the book collector Holbrook Jackson's witty and personal *The Fear of Books* is a useful primer to understanding the attraction of book burning. Jackson's book collates hundreds of examples of the destruction of books, including the bonfires of social disorder, but is more concerned with the individual and atavistic desire to throw a book into the

fire – book burning as a private act. Amongst scores of examples he notes, for instance, that ‘quite recently, I found the Dean of St. Paul’s bragging, in an evening newspaper, that he *burnt* the first two volumes of Havelock Ellis’s *Psychology of Sex*’.¹⁰⁶ With mordant irony, Jackson sums up the conundrum with a conspicuously unhelpful quote from Hartley Coleridge: ‘let no book perish ... unless it be such an one as it is your duty to throw into the fire’.¹⁰⁷ Most importantly, Jackson, like many of the writers who try to fathom the question of book burning, is not completely immune to its charm. This is why his hard-earned conclusion is worth repeating: the ‘sum is this: men being so enamoured of destruction, no further encouragement should be given, and since in the long run prevention is better than cure, contraceptives are better than holocausts’.¹⁰⁸ Ominously, the same year as Jackson’s work was published, the value of a concentrated attack on a cultural centre was not lost on the planners for the Japanese air force, which raided Shanghai on 18 January 1932. Carefully avoiding the international sectors, their attack encompassed the locality of the distinctive Oriental Library, with its holdings of 700 periodicals and 600,000 volumes, including first editions from the Sung dynasty, and the Commercial Press, ‘the sole source of schoolbooks for a very large part of China and the location of a library of Chinese books, ancient and modern’.¹⁰⁹ Along with most other buildings in the sector, both were burned to the ground.

2

The Burning of the Books

I know that books don't burn well.

Heinrich Böll

On 10 May 1933, on the Opernplatz in Berlin, just off Unter den Linden, German student associations staged an elaborate book burning ritual, the result of several weeks' planning. Bolstered by uniformed brown shirts of the SA and marching bands, great ranks of students filed into the square in a torchlight parade. A carefully constructed timber scaffold full of books was set alight, as uniformed representatives stepped forward and proclaimed their so-called *Feuersprüche* ('fire incantations' or 'fire oaths'), little planned speeches in which they attacked the books they held responsible for the collapse of Germany. The impresario for the night was the propaganda minister – and erstwhile novelist – Joseph Goebbels. In lightly falling rain he spoke of his hope that from the ashes of the pacifist, defeatist and un-German books that had been burned, the phoenix of the new Reich would rise. That night, and over the next week, similar events were held in university cities across Germany, most of which explicitly followed the model of Berlin by including marching parades, torches and speeches. These fires have since become synonymous with the barbarity of the Nazi regime, but such an understanding was by no means automatic, and the international response to the events tended to be perplexed, even bemused. Through studying the tone of many of these reports, this chapter assays the initial reactions to the German bookfires, and returns them to their historical context.

FIRE INCANTATIONS

The first months of National Socialist rule had seen a series of impromptu attacks on 'un-German' literature. Marxist and 'decadent' literature had been banned as early as 28 February 1933, as part of the Emergency Decree put in place after the burning of the Reichstag. More generally, the mood leant itself

to spontaneous acts of defiance, as when students in Kaiserlautern raided the city library in late March, confiscating and later burning seven copies of Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*.¹ In Hesse, no books were burned in an impromptu protest, but a bronze statue of Heinrich Heine was toppled.² Yet these were minor acts of vandalism compared to the scale of what was to come. In early April, Leonidas E. Hill has shown, two national student organizations began planning an event which would signal their allegiance to the new Germany.³ A letter was sent to their members announcing the open burning of Jewish and decadent literature, and encouraging them to show their support by first cleansing their own private libraries, then encouraging their friends and acquaintances to do the same, and lastly calling on them to act against the public libraries. Over the ensuing weeks the students began to make forcible collections as well as accept volunteer donations, and circulated a list of 'burnworthy' authors which, as Hans-Albert Walter points out, not only included several errors but, tellingly, showed a degree of flexibility by noting exceptions to the general rules: Heinrich Mann to be burned, but his *Flöten und Dolche* to be reprieved, while only *Nachkrieg* was singled out to be burned from the works of Ludwig Renn.⁴

The crucial point is that far from being a spontaneous outburst, the fires were the result of meticulous planning, and imagined as part of an obsessive attempt to purify the German language. This was made explicit in their so-called 'twelve theses', which was printed on posters and pasted up on notice boards. Calling for the 'cleansing' of Germany from foreign influence, the ninth spoke explicitly of applying this to literature, demanding that the German students have the will to cleanse the German language of its impurities.⁵ The literature of the cities, of the Communist agitators, of the Jewish-Bolsheviks was to be staunchly resisted in favour of true German Volk literature: no more nihilism, internationalism or *Asphaltliteratur* would be tolerated. Such vague, effectively meaningless, rhetoric would be much-used by the apologists for the fires, a style mastered by one study on the New German Literature which described the pyres as 'the sign and the symbol of an inflexible will to purity, to all that is genuine and noble, real, and true ... O thou eternal longing of the soul to be free from degrading smut and trash!'⁶ They were to represent a theatrical break with the past. After all, prior to these fires, the most famous bonfire in Germany had been Martin Luther's burning of the papal bull *Exsurge Domine* in 1520, an act which the Nazi students and their supporters consciously imitated.

Pursuing this theme, at the University of Berlin the German philosopher and Nazi Party member Alfred Baeumler, gave his inaugural rectoral address to a packed theatre, exhorting the students to take part in the book burning due to take place immediately following his lecture.⁷ Conversely, one of the few

university towns not to have a student sponsored burning was Freiburg, where the newly appointed Rector Martin Heidegger apparently banned the event. Baeumler's inflammatory rhetoric signifies the unusualness of Heidegger's reticence, especially considering his early enthusiasm for National Socialism. In his infamous Rectoral Address on the 'Self-Assertion of the German University', delivered to students and party apparatchiks in 1933, he described the need to renew their 'moribund semblance of a culture'.⁸ There would be no book burnings, but the project Heidegger envisioned required a renunciation of any arbitrary work, meaning that so-called 'academic freedom' would be renounced on the grounds that it was merely a negative freedom. He was hardly a stormtrooper – he thought that such a project of renewal might take centuries to even define – but there was still time for one more moment of rashness: he concluded his speech with a rousing quote from Plato's *Republic*: 'All that is great stands in the storm.'⁹ This is, as Karl Löwith (for one) has noted, a mistranslation: in Book VI of the *Republic* Plato described not someone braving the storm, but a weary traveller sheltering from it.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the fires were forbidden. The historian of the bookfires Gerhard Sauder quoted an apologetic Freiburg student organizer who confirmed that the burnings had been halted. The student hastened to add that all of the students have been admonished to purge their own libraries.¹¹

Freiburg was an unusual setback, but the national student associations had a programme for the other fires, sketching out a template which would be followed, with small regional variations, in most cities and major university towns across Germany (*Figure 4*).¹² Generally speaking there was always a torchlit procession, a band (in Frankfurt am Main they played Chopin's funeral march) and some speeches. Rather than simply setting fire to a big pile of books, the event was usually marked by the 'fire incantations', where upstanding student representatives would focus attention on the specific authors they most reviled. A representative would parade next to the pyre and, in a booming voice, denounce a few much-hated authors as exemplars of the decadence of Germany. Marx and Karl Kautsky, for example, were burned because of their emphasis on 'class war and materialism'; Heinrich Mann, Ernst Glaeser and Erich Kästner as emblems of decadence and moral decline. In Berlin, Professor Baeumler assured the crowd that it was witnessing neither the destruction of the press nor of intellectual freedom, but an interdiction against poison (*Giftstoffe*).¹³ Moreover, each of the denunciations was paired with its desired opposite, so when Remarque was burned as the foremost example of literary treason against the soldiers of the First World War, it was meant simultaneously to signify the rebuilding of the martial spirit of the people.¹⁴ In doing so, the students fostered the illusion of a sort of philosophical renewal, implying that far from rampant destruction, here was a much more measured

purging of books by author and category. Yet the sense of formulaic obedience was reinforced when some of the regional burnings bungled the names of the writers: the name of ardent Communist Kurt Tucholsky, in particular, is reported to have caused many difficulties.¹⁵



Figure 4 Preparing for a burning in Essen, 21 June 1933 on the ‘Platz des 21. März’ (today: Gerlingplatz). Note the rather genteel crowd and the carefully constructed pyre.

Archiv der Alten Synagoge Essen, AR.6268.

Few of the regional variations had the panache of the fires in Berlin and some seem to have been rather desultory affairs. Berlin was clearly the emotional centrepiece, its importance underlined by the presence of Minister of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda Joseph Goebbels. The event was watched by an enormous crowd (perhaps as many as 40,000), including representatives of the international press, Nabokov’s wife Véra, and Erich Kästner – the only author specifically mentioned in the *Feuersprüche* to have the dubious honour of witnessing his books being burned.¹⁶ As they looked on, the parade of students marched through the streets singing Nazi and college songs, accompanied by trucks full of confiscated material. Finally they made their way to the great square between the opera house and the university where the log frame and gasoline had been erected – the organizers clearly knew that books don’t burn easily. With due ceremony, and mouthing the appropriate fire incantation,

representative books were thrown on amidst shouts and applause. After these preliminaries, the stage was ready for Goebbels' speech about the new Reich rising from the ashes, a speech regarded as important enough that at least one other ceremony, in Frankfurt am Main, featured a live broadcast.¹⁷ Most importantly of all, the German newsreels were included in the preparations in Berlin, a decision which has since underscored the visually iconic nature of this particular spectacle, especially as many of the most famous photographic images of the event are actually stills taken from this footage (*Figure 5*).



Figure 5 The book burning on the Opernplatz (today: Bebelplatz) in Berlin, 10 May 1933.

Ullstein Bild.

As such images attest, the bookfires took their place as a significant addition to the Nazi taste for spectacle and fire. The *New York Times* correspondent Frederick T. Birchall, like many other witnesses, picked out one passage in particular as the central message of the event: 'These flames do not only illuminate the final end of the old era, they also light up the new. Never before have the young men had so good a right to clean up the debris of the past ... The old goes up in flames, the new shall be fashioned from the flame in our hearts.'¹⁸ This reinforces how effortlessly the theatre of book burning meshed with the rhetoric of renewal and cleansing which National Socialism had adopted (*Figure 6*). Fire was the dominant metaphor of Nazi iconography. It is



Figure 6 A less spectacular example of book burning as censorship: the destruction of the books of a trade union, probably in Leipzig.

Ullstein Bild.

an obsessive motif throughout *Mein Kampf*, where Hitler described the ‘Aryan’ as the ‘Prometheus of mankind from whose bright forehead the divine spark of Genius has sprung at all times’.¹⁹ Nazi rituals were rarely complete without a bonfire, especially at midsummer, when the traditional fires were subsumed within the initiation rituals of the Hitler Youth, which culminated in the fire-leaps over the dwindling bonfire to the accompaniment of chants such as:

We are the fire, we are the flame.
We burn before Germany’s altars.
We carry the drums across the land:
We are the fanfares of the battles.²⁰

Nor is it surprising that they defined the swastika as a fire symbol, ignoring any of its other derivations.²¹

BIBLIOCAUST

The elaborate theatre of the burnings attracted the international press, but their reports are dominated by a tone of muted astonishment. This is not to argue that the fires were applauded, and there were dismissive attacks on their

vague and inarticulate symbolism. The *Manchester Guardian*, for example, published a pre-emptive editorial which appeared on the day of the planned fires, ridiculing the ceremony being organized by 'Brown shirt brigades of witless students'. While noting that the legend of the Caliph burning the library at Alexandria was baseless, it concluded that the German fires were one of the 'most unedifying examples of mob psychology that can be found in any history from the days of Alexandria's library onwards. This spectacle stands for the death of reason, with the Nazi regime, in the phrase of old Thomas Hobbes, "sitting crowned upon the grave thereof".²² The article is certainly marked by a tone of genuine indignance, even if the reference to Hobbes is cryptic, at best (it is from a passage in *Leviathan* where Hobbes had attacked the papacy as the kingdom of the fairies and their rule as the ghost of the Roman Empire).

One of the more popular newspaper gambits was to describe the act as necessarily ineffectual on the grounds that duplicates exist, as the *Literary Digest* noted rather vaguely, 'somewhere'. 'The elements were unfavorable in Berlin,' the article continued, 'for it rained; the books themselves would not burn easily, and finely bound volumes that were at first dedicated to the holocaust ... were removed from circulation and preserved under tabu.'²³ This was precisely the line adopted by Raymond Aron in his published letters from Germany, where he concluded that the 'fire is mostly symbolic' and that 'in reality very few books of value have been burned'.²⁴ Similarly *Time* magazine, whilst christening the event a 'Bibliocaust', also announced that the Berlin fires were carefully vetted for irreplaceable or rare editions and that there was no 'real effort made to destroy all copies of all books on the Nazi *Index*'.²⁵ The tone of these reports domesticates and contains the fires, reading them as evidence of student enthusiasm, tempered by watchful authorities. This sense of systematic review rather than wanton destruction also dominated in the *New York Times* and *London Times*, both of which used images of students sorting through books rather than of bonfires.²⁶ Indeed, a common point of comparison in the reports was with the long-familiar practice of American students, who were pleased to burn their textbooks on graduating.²⁷

The bulk of the attention the fires received was infused with mocking derision or amused condescension. It was hard to get the mood right when so little seemed to be achieved: witless students rifling through piles of books they failed to understand hardly seemed able to sustain much rhetoric about the 'death of reason'. Many writers focused on the fascinating but unconvincing pageantry, and most commented on how Berlin was deadened by cold rain. Birchall likened it to an enormously magnified Guy Fawkes Day, but said that to 'the uninspired observer it savored strongly of the childish' and, he concluded hypothetically, produced only 'ripples of amusement ... through

the outside world'.²⁸ The burning of about 100 books in the Koenigsplatz in Munich was described as the culmination of a 'picturesque torchlight parade'.²⁹ The French papers were unenthused, although the correspondent for the *Echo de Paris* did comment on the bitter irony of holding a burning in front of a university, describing it as one of the saddest expressions of the new German spirit, backing this up by quoting the famous story of Goethe's disgust and sorrow when he witnessed the burning of a French romance in Frankfurt.³⁰ The Paris-based satirical journal *Crapouillot* understood the proscriptions as a dangerous example of the crushing of dissent, but also commented that the world had scarcely reacted to an event seemingly designed to rid the country of the Jews and the liberals, but also of most of their great artists and scientists.³¹ In *L'Intransigeant*, the Paris evening daily, Hitler was caricatured as a paper-Nero.³² In far-away Australia it rated 100 words in the *Sydney Morning Herald*; still enough, however, for them to get their facts muddled.³³

The reports did agree that there was something incandescent and hypnotic about the burnings, but retreated into calling it simply 'symbolic'. On the rare occasions when there was an attempt to explain what this might mean, the general impression was that if they were indeed 'symbolic' it was of stupidity rather than a threatening state apparatus (*Figure 7*). Walter Lippmann stylishly bucked this trend by calling them a measure of Germany's preparation for war and an index of the 'moral and intellectual character of the Nazi régime', but the *Washington Post* published the 'Diary of a German Bookworm', a cute satire in which the fires are imagined as lending libraries and the diarist keeps getting in trouble from his wife for leaving ashes on the rug.³⁴ A *New York Times* editorial asked why 'special bonfire editions' of books could not be made, their cheap paper impregnated with chemicals to help it burn spectacularly and 'make the book cremation parties a roaring success'.³⁵ Another report commented, no doubt accurately if rather unromantically, the 'book bonfires of the Nazis probably will have little effect on the book trade here'.³⁶ Bookstores such as Doubleday, Doran, Brentano and Putnam in New York, the article continued, had reported some interest in the banned books, but no appreciable increase in sales, and although some store managers had 'started to set up special displays of these books yesterday morning', they had all abandoned the scheme.

The bookfires did generate some anxious enquiries from international associations of writers, wary of what was being planned. H.G. Wells, the newly elected president of the English branch of PEN (Poets, Playwrights, Essayists, and Novelists) wrote to the Deutscher Kulturbund seeking clarification about conditions in the German branch, specifically asking whether there had been a general push to purge 'liberal, advanced and "non-Aryan" elements'.³⁷ Yet such concerns were just as often trivialized. When J.M. Barrie, writing on behalf of



Charlie Chaplin: "And They Told Me It Was Impossible to Play a Serious Part with a Mustache Like Mine." from The London Daily Express.

Figure 7 Charlie Chaplin: 'And they told me it was impossible to play a serious part with a mustache like mine.' A contemporary cartoon by British cartoonist Sidney Strube.

© Express Newspapers, with permission.

the British Society of Authors, wrote that 'the intellectual life of their country will suffer greatly', the *New York Times* editor felt compelled to comment: 'Another way would have been for Barrie to write: "For Heaven's sake, stop being the eternal Peter Pan among the nations! Grow up and show a little adult common sense about your own best interests!"'³⁸ This derisive tone was used to best effect by the exiled German writers themselves. Oskar Maria Graf wrote from Vienna complaining that although he had been driven from Germany, his books were being promoted on Nazi 'whitelists', a 'disgrace' he hoped to erase by imploring the regime to 'burn me' as well.³⁹ Similarly, Emil Ludwig wrote dashingly from Barcelona that the burning will furnish him 'one of the greatest satisfactions' of his life and that he was looking forward to sitting down with Remarque to 'hear over the radio the crackling of the flames that are destroying our literary labors'.⁴⁰ His bluster and verve got him on to the front page in New York.

Despite such obvious diversity, it is routinely argued that there was an immediate and enduring reaction against the fires. Guy Stern, for one, has since described the 'remarkable and surprising appropriateness' of the American response.⁴¹ In order to support this, Stern dismissed many of the articles he

reviews as inadequate, particularly those that too frequently used adjectives like ‘silly’, ‘senseless’ or ‘infantile’, or made ‘ill-considered attempts at humor’.⁴² Thus, Stern singled out the newspaperman Heywood Broun’s ‘The Burning of the Books’ (published in the *World Telegram* on 12 May 1933) as an unrepresentative and ‘feeble satire’. In fact, the weight of evidence suggests that Broun’s tone is much more representative than Stern will allow.⁴³ Broun’s short article certainly includes many of the standard tropes, including a sarcastic query regarding why some indifferent authors had even been included, as well as a sardonic embrace of the whole event as an exciting and much desired honour for any writer: ‘What wouldn’t I give to have some forgotten book of my own suddenly become fortuitously a part of a pillar of fire by night!’⁴⁴ He concluded that Freud, for one, must be having a ‘pretty good chuckle’, and that the whole event betrayed a retreat into infantilism, evidence that the ‘I.Q. of the Hitler movement can hardly rate anything above six years of age. At that stage any one of us would like to dress up in a uniform and play with matches.’ This last quote in particular is indicative of the general mood. When H.G. Wells wrote of Hitler as ‘nothing more than one of my thirteen year old reveries come real’, he not only clarified his attack on fascism but also, and this point is not incidental, implicitly called for patience in understanding the new regime.⁴⁵ The bookfires, it was routinely held, were little more than jejune or adolescent posturing.

HISTORY HAS TAUGHT YOU NOTHING

The strongest and most unmediated denunciation of the event was a prescient open letter to the German students from Helen Keller, whose *How I Became a Socialist* was a rather obvious inclusion on the Nazi *Index*. In the letter, Keller expressed her disappointment that she should be singled out when she had given her royalties in perpetuity to ‘the German soldiers blinded in the World War with no thought in my heart but love and compassion for the German people’.⁴⁶ She criticized the students, in particular their naïve assumptions (‘History has taught you nothing if you think you can kill ideas’), and concluded that the event will not only be an added ‘stigma’ to Germany, but that it must necessarily be assessed in the light of the National Socialist political reforms, and especially their ‘barbarities to the Jews’. As Keller’s letter implies, although the book burnings were often the catalyst for international comment, contemporary reports made clear that the protest rallies in the United States in 1933 were more concerned with racial persecution than intellectual censorship. Many of the marches, although timed to coincide with the book burnings, were chiefly imagined as protests against anti-Semitism. Hence, at one such march in New York organized by the Jewish World Congress, Major

General John F. O’Ryan’s keynote address spoke of the horror of the civilized world at ‘the policies of intolerance inaugurated by the Hitler government against the Jewish element of the German population’, and his speech dealt exclusively with the racial persecutions.⁴⁷

In many reports, the book burnings were described as part of the racial attacks. *Newsweek* carried a photograph of the Berlin fire on the cover, but the actual article was rather dismissive of the book burnings, and specifically referred to American ‘parades protesting against the Nazis’ anti-Semitism’ (Plate 2).⁴⁸ At a protest in Chicago the fires were given a significant, but still blurred, role, as can be seen in the leading paragraph in the *New York Times* which inaccurately described the ‘burning of the works of Jewish authors’.⁴⁹ Similarly, one of the organizers in Chicago, Jacob Siegel (editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*), said: ‘while the books might be destroyed their ideals could never be seared out of Jewish minds’. Another speaker, Morris Siskind (representing the Federation of Jewish Unions), is said to have exclaimed passionately, if rather clumsily, that it was ‘just like what happened when Catholics burned the books of heretics. Hitler should be destroyed.’⁵⁰ An indication that the atrocity reports were uppermost for many marchers can be seen in some of the placards which are noted in the reports on the marches in New York and Philadelphia, with most focusing on Hitler’s dismantling of political rights and imposition of racial laws. The connection was also implied in a protest drafted by American students at the University of Cincinnati, which denounced the suppression of free speech and academic freedom, and urged ‘against any policy of destruction or confiscation of books or periodicals, otherwise acceptable, upon the ground of their being written by members of a particular minority or dealing with its ideals and culture’.⁵¹ This is not to undermine the intentions of these protestors, but it does reveal, firstly, that just which books had been blacklisted was not always well understood, and secondly, that while the protests were timed to coincide with the major burnings of 10 May, the bonfires were their catalyst rather than their rationale.

What the protests did grasp was that while the burnings may have been childish, they were also a succinct and ominous demonstration of the importance the Nazi government was according to ‘race deterioration’ versus ‘purity’. In this sense, one of the most important events on the Berlin schedule was the destruction of the Hirschfeld Institute of Sexual Science. The Institute, which had been established by the pre-eminent sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld in Berlin in 1919, incorporated a vast archive of material including detailed personal case studies of many patients. Hirschfeld himself was execrated in the contemporary German press as a Jew and a proponent of sexual perversion, and in the first week of May his institute was cordoned off, completely ransacked, and most of its archive confiscated. The great majority of this material would be burned in

the Berlin fires by Nazi acolytes holding a stolen bust of Hirschfeld over their heads. Fortunately Hirschfeld was abroad, so that although the students were able to burn an estimated 10,000 volumes as well as most of the manuscripts and case files, Hirschfeld himself could only be burned in effigy.⁵² Rather than the merely symbolic, here was evidence of the destruction of a genuine archive and the attempted eradication of an entire mode of thought.

There was plenty of room for cynicism about the motives behind this particular destruction: *Time* hinted at a rather pragmatic motivation for this particular attack, commenting that the pride ‘of the book burners was the seizure and destruction of the files of famed Sexologist Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, who has analyzed many an abnormal Nazi leader in his Institute for Sex Science’.⁵³ Generally, however, the papers were relatively unmoved. While not strictly approving, the London *Times* noted rather primly that the ‘destruction of books on sex by Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld and other books classified as “obscene” or “trash” will cause no regret to the great majority of Germans’.⁵⁴ Similarly, Birchall reported the destruction of the ‘*so-called* Institute of Sexual Science’.⁵⁵ Hirschfeld died in Nice two years later, just as the project of translating many of his works into English was getting under way. The preface to his *Sex in Human Relationships* says that in his last years he had just begun ‘to build up what he hoped would be a replica of the famous Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin, which had been destroyed by the Nazi barbarians’.⁵⁶

Here was a point where Nazi ideas deliberately took advantage of conservative or bourgeois morality, in particular the anxiety about the laxity of Weimar Berlin. During the 1920s, the sordid pleasure spots of Berlin were a natural trap for visitors, who would often head home to write about them with stern rapture. This mood was captured with singular ineptness by Wyndham Lewis, who wrote in 1931 that ‘the obscene publications for bookstall sale in Berlin would rouse Monsieur Chiappe to a minatory alertness inside a minute, but apparently leave Herr Grzesinski cold. They also leave the Nazis cold, I am glad to be able to say – they have something better to think about.’⁵⁷ When American foreign correspondent Edgar Mowrer published his *Germany Puts the Clock Back* (1933) he made it clear that he was no friend of the new regime, but nonetheless included a revealing passage describing how he browsed the shop windows of Berlin bookstores in 1932, recording titles such as *The Labyrinth of Sexuality*, *The Whip in Sexuality*, *Places of Prostitution in Berlin* and *Sadism and Masochism* (50 cents, reduced from a dollar). Also in the window, Mowrer noted, was a magazine called *The Third Sex*, which must have been at least tacitly associated with Hirschfeld (the researcher was pioneering investigation into the nineteenth-century notion of homosexuality as a third biological sex). These sort of books are emblematic of Mowrer’s

distaste for Weimar generally, and of an atmosphere ‘not so much vicious as sexually casual’.⁵⁸ As this suggests, there was often a relative acceptance – if not a distinct longing – for the cleaning-up of Weimar.

The superficial changes to the German literary scene were just as noticeable, and similarly debated. The journalist Käthe Merten visited Berlin lending libraries in 1932 and again in 1933, noting that in the last year of Weimar the libraries and bookstores were well stocked with a range of titles, especially of belles-lettres (Mann, Zweig, Remarque), but by May the following year not only were such books notably missing, they had been replaced by a uniform selection of titles headed by *Mein Kampf* and Goebbels’ potboiler *Kampf um Berlin*.⁵⁹ In the same vein, five years later after the fall of Prague, the anti-Nazi writer G.E.R. Gedye reflected on how within a couple of hours every copy of his book had disappeared from bookstore windows – the unspoken corollary being, of course, that the booksellers had made their own dive towards political expediency. In the same article, Gedye told the story of a young English colleague who had flirted with fascism but had returned from Berlin disillusioned: ‘Gedye, you can have no idea what it means to be able to see books – real books again’, he reported, because in Germany there is ‘literally nothing which anyone with a grain of intelligence can read’.⁶⁰

Between the images of brown shirts sorting through great piles to salvage any valuable books, and the mitigating tone which crept into the discussion about the destruction of the Hirschfeld Institute, the contemporary reports veered between understanding the book burnings as inherently futile and not particularly surprising. This had its most extraordinary denouement in the published comments of Hirschfeld himself. Almost immediately following his expulsion from Berlin he was given a special issue of the American *Medical Critic and Guide* to unpack his thoughts on the new Reich. In it, he wrote one simple and curious paragraph about ‘The Book-Burners’, worth quoting in full:

I do not devote much space to the public auto-da-fé of tons of books. I rather enjoyed the performance. It showed the mentality of the Nazis and made them ridiculous in the eyes of the whole world. And it didn’t really hurt anybody – except some annoyance and expense to the owners. And the books which had the honor of being burned by the Nazi executioners will be in greater demand because of it. No, if the Nazis were only imbeciles I would not mind much. But they are brutes and that I do mind. Yes, the burning of the books was a decidedly good thing. Let them commit a few more of such infantilities and they will be laughed off the map.⁶¹

This is a bravura performance for somebody whose entire institute and its archives were ransacked and destroyed to apparent public acclamation. It is

certainly evidence of the common belief that National Socialism could not last for much longer.

After the initial flurry of reporting, the bonfires dropped out of the news, largely dismissed as some sort of excessive college prank or saturnalia. Compared to the interest in the spectacle provided by the book burnings, an intimately related article in the *New York Times* less than a fortnight later speaks to the difficulty in reconciling the symbolism of the German fires: ‘Nazis Seize 500 Tons of Marxist Writings’.⁶² Rather than the exhibitions of the bonfires, this enormous quantity of books and pamphlets, confiscated from both public and private libraries, was to be sold for pulp with paper mills bidding for it at the rate of two marks per 100 pounds. It is designed, the paper writes, ‘to make good Captain Goering’s dictum that “in fifty years nobody in Germany will know what Marxism is”’. Compared to the amount destroyed in the bonfires, the planned destruction of 500 tons is a significant escalation, but this time, just like the rhetoric of absolute destruction surrounding the fate of Hirschfeld’s institute, it again failed to really spark much attention. A week after the fires in Berlin, on 17 May 1933, Hitler, in full dress uniform, addressed the Reichstag and declared that another European war would be madness, but the German nation could not be expected to allow itself to be further weakened. For the international press, the *recherché* symbolism of the fires was eclipsed by the corrosive reality (and the infinitely less symbolic) question of German rearmament.

ASPHALT LITERATURE

Very few foreign writers took the lead from examples like Helen Keller’s impassioned denunciation. It wasn’t until September of the same year that a few brief studies actively sought to understand how the book burnings were relevant to the development of Hitler’s Reich. It was in that month that Raymond Aron, as has already been noted, was content to describe the fires as uselessly symbolic, but other writers were struggling to come to grips with the wider implications. One of the more cogent contributions was by Vera Brittain, who gave a speech on the subject of censorship to the British Relief Committee for Victims of German Fascism. Singling out not only well-known authors like Ernst Toller, Feuchtwanger and Remarque, she also concentrated on lesser-known works like Nobel Prize winner Alfred Fried’s *Handbook of Pacifism* to support her conclusion that the fires and their attendant blacklists represented a prohibition effectively outlawing pacifism. What Brittain made clear, was that the new censorship in Germany was not simply relevant to literature, but had immediate ramifications for the political scene, which is why she pushed for the suppressed books to remain available, so as to

impress upon the younger generation that 'literature and art have no race and no nationality'.⁶³

Around the same time, H.G. Wells was invited to speak at the London bookstore Foyles for one of their Literary Luncheons. Wells was launching his latest utopian novel *The Shape of Things to Come*, but at Foyles he took as his subject 'Intolerance'. This speech does not seem to have survived, but it was widely reported, especially his description of National Socialism as the 'clumsy lout's revolution against civilization'.⁶⁴ Wells did single out book burning as a register of this clumsiness, although, tellingly, he thought it futile because books 'have a vitality exceeding any human being, and they go on speaking as if nothing had happened'.⁶⁵ As an homage to the resilience of books this is fairly standard; as evidence of the necessary failure of censorship it is much less convincing. Wells tacitly admitted as much himself when he went on to discuss the difference between an 'exceedingly lucky and pampered writer of radical ideas like myself to discourse valiantly and in a facetious manner about book-burnings' and the dangerous and compromised position of German writers.⁶⁶ Wells still saw Nazi book burning as an instance of stupidity, but also that censorship, rather than being excessive, was fundamental to the new regime. *The Times* even reported that Wells was apparently determined to break the popular impression that book burning was exclusively constrained to the works of German Jews.⁶⁷

His speech was not, however, simply a denunciation of the events in Germany but a much broader attack against censorship generally. It was directed against the censor in 'various countries' engaged in 'burning books, suppressing books, distorting books, censoring books, getting books held up at the ports, banned by customs officers or destroyed by the public executioner'.⁶⁸ Wells' position seemed clear, but it didn't stop the editor of the *Guardian* from putting his own spin, writing that like 'the savage who sticks pins into clay figures of his enemies, the emotional satisfaction of burning a book you violently dislike must be intense'. Once again, there is a tone of inertia to the reports, heightened by the editor's comment that international governments remained unlikely to be 'affected by Mr. H. G. Wells's opinion'.⁶⁹ Despite this, the editorial rather arbitrarily concluded that the actions in Germany are indicative of a 'short-term policy' to facilitate their own government. Even so, the concluding sentence tried to extract a reassuring moral from the shambles by drawing on the axiom that 'thought, if good and true, is indestructible by any bonfire'.

Wells, rather than Brittain, provided the dominant note of the contemporary reports: mocking, steadfast, unimpressed. For one exile from the new Germany, however, it was difficult to agree. The cosmopolitan novelist and newspaperman Joseph Roth had been based in Paris since 1925, but was a frequent visitor to Berlin until the rise to power of the National Socialists. From his own vantage

point in the French capital he now wrote an article on ‘The “Auto-da-Fé” of the Mind’ for a special double issue of the Paris- and Alexandria-based *Cahiers Juifs*, commemorating and applauding the role of Jews in German public and intellectual life.⁷⁰ Four months had passed since the burnings and they had proved to be, Roth asserted, a complete success, and evidence of the abject capitulation of the ‘European mind’. Crucially Roth started by dismissing the initial flurry of reports and the subsequent silence as a failure of understanding: ‘few observers anywhere in the world seem to have understood what the Third Reich’s burning of books, the expulsion of Jewish writers, and all its other crazy assaults on the intellect actually mean’.⁷¹ Roth continued with devastating éclat:

Let me say it loud and clear: The European mind is capitulating. It is capitulating out of weakness, out of sloth, out of apathy, out of lack of imagination (it will be the task of some future generation to establish the reasons for this disgraceful capitulation).

Now, as the smoke of our burned books rises into the sky, we German writers of Jewish descent must acknowledge above all that we have been defeated. Let us, who were fighting on the front line, under the banner of the European mind, let us fulfill the noblest duty of the defeated warrior: Let us concede our defeat.⁷²

What he is arguing for is complexity, and he does this by writing simultaneously as a Jew, a German and a European. But it is this complexity which is being driven to ground, replaced, as many of the marches held internationally protested, by the dismal collapse of the ‘European mind’. Roth elaborated the importance of seeing the burnings as a *sine qua non* of the racial policies of the Reich.⁷³ Where Wells had drawn parallels with an international recrudescence of censorship, Roth described the event as a German, or even better, a Prussian exercise in power, as the final term in the political development that had begun with Bismarck, calling Hitler’s Reich a mere extension of the ‘Prussian project anyway: to burn the books, to murder the Jews, and to revise Christianity’.⁷⁴ In making this argument Roth tried to write backwards through Weimar and the Second Reich, and marked the life of inner exile as fundamental to writers, but also to Jews, reimagined as people of the Book, in Germany.

Rather than seeing book burning and racial exclusion as an arbitrary connection, Roth saw it as a critical insight into National Socialism and a vital component of their self-definition. While the machiavellian flexibility of the National Socialists might mean that they could temporarily appropriate, for instance, the writings of Thomas Mann or Gerhart Hauptmann, this flexibility could never be extended to Jewish writers: ‘we writers of Jewish descent are,

thank God, safe from any temptation to take the side of the barbarians in any way. We are the only representatives of Europe who are debarred from returning to Germany.⁷⁵ On the one hand, he provided a refutation of the anecdotal evidence arrayed by Goebbels and his ilk; on the other, a sense of being necessarily outside, and necessarily opposed to the barbarians who have taken over Germany. Indeed, Roth even explored one of the fundamental premises spruiked by stormtroopers and students alike as they stood beside burning piles of literature: that literature had to be cleansed of its effete, Jewish, ‘asphalt-literati’ and returned to the true literature of the German pastoral. Critics sympathetic to Hitler would even go so far as to assume that ‘Jewish’ writing could be detected based purely on internal evidence in the text, although this also led to some awkward retractions when authors so denounced were able to disprove the accusation.⁷⁶ Far from retreating from this, Roth provided a preliminary list of Jewish and part-Jewish authors in the German language, concluding that Jewish letters have indeed bequeathed to German literature the ‘theme of the city’.⁷⁷ Roth’s feelings on the false nationalist pastoral of the National Socialists are evident: ‘[w]e have sung Germany, the real Germany!’ the article concluded. ‘And that is why today we are being burned in Germany!’⁷⁸ Bleak and uncompromising, Roth’s concession of defeat is both ironic and bitterly heartfelt in terms of his own experience of exile, the edges of which are glimpsed in his intimate parable – and final story – *The Legend of the Holy Drinker* (1939).

The last point to be made is that although each had a different agenda, Brittain, Wells and Roth all implicitly showed the necessity to *explain* the relevance of the bookfires. Roth tried to understand the book burnings not as mere theatre or a cheap mob spectacle, but as evidence of the resurgence of the machinery of political intolerance. Each attempted, moreover, to smash any indifference to the significance of book burning by singling it out as an inherently threatening symbol. In this sense they wrote against the current of popular opinion. The next chapters will explore how book burning was otherwise used, and the complicated history of its symbolism during a period when the exiles from Germany were anxious to unshackle the Nazi grip on fire symbols and to contest their use (neatly summarized in the names of two of the most important exile presses in Paris: Editions du Phénix and Editions Prométhée). But it wasn’t until 1941, eight years after the bookfires of 1933, that George Orwell called book burning ‘the most characteristic activity of the Nazis’.⁷⁹ Orwell’s typically adroit dismissal was made during one of his wartime speeches for the BBC in 1941, a period in which book burning was being massaged into one of the central tenets of anti-Nazi propaganda. Essentially, Orwell argued that ‘Literature’, if it meant anything at all, was a sort of barometer of society, a canary in the mine – if it was suppressed,

attacks on personal freedom would not be long to follow. It was an insight that had its fullest exposition in the fiery ‘memory holes’ with which Ministry of Information employee Winston Smith manipulates a party version of history in *1984*. Yet Orwell’s assumption that this was the ‘characteristic activity’ of the Nazis was neither automatic nor universal. A few months before his speech, the *New York Times* reported that the German secret police were raiding bookstores in occupied France to seize anti-German publications, noting that such farce ‘cheers the comic spirit between the acts of the tragedy’.⁸⁰

3

The Library of the Burned Books

Doch war es nur Papier, was sie verbrannt.
Wir sind noch da. Wir sind noch nicht begraben.
(That was only paper, that they burned.
We are still here. We are not yet in our graves.)

Erich Weinert, 'Der Brand auf dem Opernplatz' (1935)

Reports that the new National Socialist government in Germany was sponsoring a book burning led to varied responses from international commentators. As the last chapter explored, there were impassioned denunciations like Helen Keller's open letter to the German students, but the general tone was one of bemusement, and most of the international critics wrote vaguely about a 'hypnotic' spectacle or 'grand public sensation'.¹ Even among German-speaking authors, for whom the fires and blacklists had the most tangible effect, a certain audacity was considered good form, best seen in Oskar Maria Graf's insistence that his works be burned alongside those of his colleagues. Having one's books burned was a confirmation of a writer's importance and credentials, especially as it was commonly held that the German people would soon reject Hitler's new government. It was in this atmosphere that a small group of German-speaking anti-fascists met in Paris in February 1934 to begin planning one of the most unlikely ventures of the decade, the Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek, which became better known in English as the 'Library of the Burned Books'. The library is now largely forgotten, but at the time it was the first cogent attempt to make the German bookfires better understood. And, as the head of the library, Alfred Kantorowicz, would later write, it was significant in its attempt to show that while the fires may have been a grand spectacle, they were also meant as a dazzling distraction, not dissimilar to the 'brutal pageantry of a Roman circus'.²

THE REICHSTAG FIRE

In 1933 the fire at the centre of media attention and propaganda struggles was not the book burnings, but the arson attack on the Reichstag on the

night of 27 February. News that the German Parliament building was burning galvanized politicians and journalists alike; within hours the top Nazi officials were touring the still smouldering building. Although Hitler had long held the Reichstag's parliamentary function in contempt, and although the only person the police found to arrest at the scene was Marinus van der Lubbe, an apparently mentally disturbed Dutchman, the Nazis were quick to conclude the fire was the blazing signal for Communist insurrection. The *Völkischer Beobachter* rushed to print a new front page, beginning a propaganda campaign designed to influence the impending elections slated for 5 March. A Cabinet meeting was hurriedly convened, and President Hindenburg signed the hastily drafted Emergency Decree for the Defence of Nation and State the following day, meaning that only a few legal fictions preserved the impression that Germany was under anything less than full martial law. It was, wrote Hans Mommsen, the fundamental 'blank cheque' of Nazi rule.³ The decree enforced restrictions on personal freedom, free speech and the right of association; all forms of communication became subject to surveillance, houses could be arbitrarily searched, and Marxist writings were forbidden. Hitler was careful not to outlaw the Communist Party, but he shattered the German Left by dispatching many of its leaders into concentration camps. Those who remained at large scrambled into exile or went underground.

Over the ensuing days, the act of arson became key to National Socialist electioneering. Party posters continued to proclaim that Hitler would eradicate both the Communists and the Social Democrats, but now claimed that only he could put a stop to the revolution intended by the burners of the Reichstag. One poster, headed 'The Reichstag in Flames', announced that the whole country would be engulfed in such a conflagration within months if the Communists and Social Democrats were allowed into power. Another developed Nazi fire imagery by showing the pure fire of fascism (rather than the explosive arson of the Left), calling on the electorate to 'Light the Fire of Freedom'.⁴ As these posters imply, the Nazi Government used the rhetoric of impending Communist revolution as part of a propaganda blitz focused on the threat of Bolshevik incendiaries. Critical to this propaganda was the so-called League of German Anti-Communist Associations (usually known as the Anticomintern), which published *Bewaffneter Aufstand!* (Armed Insurrection), illustrating alleged Communist activities in Germany, based on material confiscated from raids on the Karl-Liebknecht Haus in Berlin.⁵ Like much contemporary propaganda, the book is a bewildering mixture of endless statistics and shocking photographs, giving the impression of an immense but shadowy conspiracy. It bristles with details of insurrection, of the frightening popularity of illegal underground publications, of endless street-brawls and arrests, and of vast illegal weapons depots uncovered by German police. The book even studies the effect of pro-

Communist graffiti on German walls. Designed for an international audience (it was published simultaneously in German, English, French and Spanish), the cover alone conveys the meaning of the work: on the front, the burning Reichstag is presided over by the Dutchman van der Lubbe and two armed workers.

By mid year, four prominent Communists were arraigned with van der Lubbe in a Leipzig trial. The accused now included Ernst Torgler, member of the German Communist Party and Reichstag representative, and the Bulgarian Georgi Dimitrov, head of the West European Section of the Communist International (the Comintern). However, this great show trial, designed to provide conclusive evidence of the necessity for the Nazi suppression of Communism, did not go to plan. Rather, by the end of the year it was widely assumed that the fire had been deliberately lit by the Nazi leadership, with Goering singled out in the press as having both the temperament and the opportunity for the job. This reversal had not happened by accident, but was due in large part to the agitation of prominent exiles and the persecutions in the wake of the Reichstag fire. Nazi rule forced many into exile, and a Geneva based commission on refugees estimated that some 10,000 people fled the country every month: 'People are escaping from Germany', wrote one commentator, 'as from a burning building.'⁶ The bulk of these refugees, particularly those politically on the Left, escaped to Paris, since the nineteenth century the traditional home of German political exiles, forming an exile community which included many of the most famous authors of their generation.⁷ Some of the first cogent attacks against National Socialism came from this Parisian milieu, most of them directed by one of the most controversial figures of the decade, the German Communist, former Reichstag member, and head of the Comintern in the West, Willi Münzenberg.

A former publishing mogul and, since 1924, publisher of the famous illustrated paper *AIZ*, one of Münzenberg's first decisions upon arriving in Paris was to take over a declining French publishing house called Editions du Carrefour. Around the same time, he helped stage one of his first and greatest cabarets, a mock Reichstag fire trial in London, which opened on 14 September 1933. Chaired by luminaries of the British and Continental bar, the trial was a genuine media event which adjudicated all five of the accused innocent of the charges. The only logical explanation of how the fire broke out, further, was that it had not only been orchestrated, but actually carried out by Hitler's cronies. H.G. Wells might complain that he had 'never attended a duller show',⁸ but Münzenberg's performance trampled the increasingly farcical trial in Leipzig, which limped to a conclusion just before Christmas. It was a public relations disaster for the Nazis, not least because the necessary pretence of legality in Leipzig had merely given Dimitrov the perfect stage to

openly debate both Goering and Goebbels in court. The Bulgarian gleefully used his forensic skills to infuriate them both, winning a great deal of attention and sympathy in the international press. This tactical victory was quickly followed by acquittal, as the bench had little option but to release Dimitrov and the three other Communist leaders. Only the increasingly unhinged van der Lubbe was found guilty, quickly beheaded and hastily cremated. He had sat in silence for most of the show, where his occasional utterances seemed fraught with meaning. At one point he announced: ‘Something simply has to happen. The whole trial has gone wrong because of all this symbolism and I am sick of it.’⁹ Nonetheless, the first propaganda victory went to the small exile community, and the belief that Goering was personally responsible became part of folklore.¹⁰ John Heartfield, to cite the best example, would delight in depicting the pudgy Nazi setting things on fire in many of his collages of the following years.

THE BROWN BOOK

The success enjoyed by the exiles in discomfiting their persecutors had a public hearing at the London mock trial, but the mainstay of their campaign was the publication of the *Brown Book of the Hitler Terror and the Burning of the Reichstag* in July 1933. Usually known simply as the *Brown Book*, it was the first major study to issue from any of the exile presses, and the most immediately influential polemic on the new Germany. Arthur Koestler, one of its contributors, justifiably called it ‘the bible of the anti-Fascist crusade’.¹¹ It was produced by several writers and Left-leaning intellectuals who had gravitated to Münzenberg’s circle. The Editor in Chief was Otto Katz, one of Münzenberg’s long-standing colleagues, and most of the significant contributions were made by other exiles, including the playwright Ernst Toller, the journalists Alfred Kantorowicz, Egon Erwin Kisch, Georg Bernhard and Arthur Koestler, and novelists Heinrich Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Anna Seghers and Romain Rolland. It was, in short, produced by a stable of Communists and fellow-travellers, but in one of his standard moves, Münzenberg distanced himself and his colleagues from Communist orthodoxy by publishing it anonymously under the aegis of the impressive sounding – and seemingly apolitical – World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism. He had a knack for creating vaguely defined coalitions of this sort (the Congress of Women Against War and Fascism was another). These coalitions attracted a wide cross-section of people to the anti-Nazi cause without necessarily alarming them (or warning them) of the group’s hidden relation to the Comintern.¹²

Despite being rushed into production, the *Brown Book* was an international success. It was uneven, but its reliance on German news clippings made it

a useful digest for international readers and journalists, and it was largely responsible for cementing the widespread belief that the Nazis had been responsible for firing the Reichstag. One edition published by Knopf in New York was released with a collage by John Heartfield on the dustjacket, showing a bloodied caricature of Goering in front of the burning building. Yet, the *Brown Book* had a much wider ambit, documenting the creation of martial law, the systemic mistreatment of Jews, and the conditions in the new concentration camps. Its protestations of strict documentary veracity were often taken at face value, despite the fact that the combination of exile, political divisions, tacit manipulation and personal anger meant that it was perilously uneven: Koestler later described the section on the Reichstag fire as ‘based on isolated scraps of information, deduction, guesswork, and brazen bluff’.¹³ It’s also clear that the English-language editions of Knopf and Gollancz are trimmed in the translation, and while some of these changes are simple expediency, others give an indication of more overtly tailoring it to the audience. Such is the replacing of the fiery pro-Communist introduction with a fundamentally different piece by Lord Marley, a doyen of the establishment (although the often clumsy invocations to Soviet Russia throughout the book suggest these changes are more cosmetic than sinister – one could hardly call the book’s tone insidious).

The *Brown Book* was the central document of protest and exile, so the inclusion of a chapter on ‘The Campaign Against Culture’ was an important development in contemporary responses to the book burning.¹⁴ The chapter was illustrated with an ethereal long-exposure photograph of the scene in Berlin, the huge crowds blurring at the edges while the immense fire at its heart burns the centre of the picture to white. A seemingly endless procession of torch-bearers flare into jagged lines, and film crews and their equipment, as well as huge spotlights are clearly visible. The description of the event is also worth quoting, not least because it displays the tendentious flair of the whole work:

The pyres of advanced literature in German city squares blazon far into the distance the message that the Brown barbarians intend not only to extirpate physically the most courageous and self-sacrificing anti-Fascists, but also to destroy everything of any vitality and worth and even anything that was at all progressive even from a bourgeois standpoint.¹⁵

This passage is a heavy-handed flourish in a section more notable for its adroit use of official National Socialist sources. The *Brown Book* advanced the theory that the bookfires were the most important evidence of a fundamental attack on dissent, which is why the section also included the apocryphal story of Caliph Omar burning the library at Alexandria. The story of Omar

was then (and remains) the most popular anecdote on the link between fundamentalism and book burning. By using it, the *Brown Book* provided a clear statement on the ramifications of the Nazi obsession with purity and order: ‘German Fascist reactionaries are determined in actual fact, and quite unsymbolically, to burn anything printed which does not suit them, just as they are determined physically to exterminate all writers and distributors of anti-Fascist literature.’¹⁶

Such an emphatic statement hints at the exiles’ increasing frustration that the fires were still being seen as futile pyrotechnics rather than representing the repression of education, literature and art, not least, as the *Brown Book* showed, because the absence of any official protest from German universities meant that they appeared, in practice, to have endorsed the fires. The work also noted the number of bonfires across Germany led by prominent academics and writers, singling out the poet Wilhelm Vesper in Dresden, Professor Bornhausen in Breslau and Professor Fricke in Römerburg for their rapt approval of the burnings. The Third Reich may still have been shrouded in mystery, the book proclaimed, but the book burnings and the exodus of scholars from the country made their position on culture unmistakable. Nor was this conclusion dismissed at the time, as many ad hoc committees and councils were hurriedly created throughout Europe and America to try and find positions for these refugees.¹⁷

WHY A LIBRARY OF THE BURNED BOOKS?

While preparing the two *Brown Books* (the second was an account of the Reichstag fire trial), Münzenberg’s group had accumulated hundreds of pamphlets and thousands of newspaper clippings from the German press. Utilizing every one of their meagre resources was a necessity for the political exiles, and at a meeting in December 1933 the group officially decided to create an anti-fascist archive and library, the Library of the Burned Books.¹⁸ Koestler was involved, but it was his old friend and Berlin roommate Alfred Kantorowicz who was named as its head. Kantorowicz, a veteran of the Western Front, member of the German Communist Party, a German Jew, and a journalist, had left Berlin in March 1933 and had since worked closely with Münzenberg. Partly because of a long-standing feud that developed between him and Koestler, Kantorowicz has been appraised as something of a Communist stooge or a humourless apparatchik (a reputation fostered, it must be said, by the standard photo of him as a tight-lipped Commissar in the Spanish Civil War).¹⁹ He certainly took his position very seriously and the library’s mission even more so: one of his colleagues later called him the ‘soul’ of the project, and he was not exaggerating when he later referred to

the book burnings as his *idée fixe*.²⁰ He was the author of at least a dozen articles on the need to resist the book burnings and his name recurs, as we shall see, not only throughout the political activities of the German exiles in Paris, but also in New York during the war, and in Berlin after it, where he temporarily became one of the public faces of the apparent intellectual revival in the city's Soviet zone.

The first report on the new library was published in the *Pariser Tageblatt*, the most important of the exile newspapers, on 24 February 1934.²¹ Published anonymously, but probably written by Kantorowicz and his colleague Max Schröder, it was effectively a manifesto, explaining how they planned to house copies of all of the books banned by the Nazis, and to make available their enormous archive of newspaper cuttings and pamphlets. In short, they were planning a centre for the study of fascism, especially its German incarnation. Because the Library was always planned as a working archive, the article presented it as an intellectual weapon to counter the symbolism of National Socialism. In place of the 'barbaric' burning and banning of books, a library; the most obvious but also the most intellectually vital riposte, showing the destruction was not complete nor the works lost. Moreover, it involved many who had been directly implicated in the fires, most particularly Georg Bernhard, former editor of the *Vossische Zeitung*, who had been specifically named in the *Feuersprüche* as symptomatic of the foreign 'democratic-Jewish' deracination of German journalism; now in Paris, he not only founded the *Pariser Tageblatt*, but also loaned the Library his personal collection of some 11,000 volumes.²²

It was the stellar international committee that garnered most of the attention, especially the honorary presidents: the exiled novelist Lion Feuchtwanger, the French author Romain Rolland and the English novelist H.G. Wells. First to fill one of the honorary positions was Rolland, and he had a faultless pedigree for such an undertaking. The Nobel Prize winning author had been enormously popular in the decade after the First World War, and although openly sympathetic to socialism, he was never officially affiliated with the Communist Party. He was, moreover, openly revolted by National Socialism, and had publicly mocked Goering's performance at the Reichstag trial, so infuriating the German authorities that they had ordered an edition of one of his books peremptorily burned.²³ He had protested vigorously against Hitler's policies in an open letter to the editors of the German newspaper the *Kölnischer Zeitung*, observing that even if all of the stories in the international press were, as many in Germany asserted, merely lies and calumnies, the 'authentic declarations of your own leaders' were damning enough. 'Do you deny', queried Rolland, the infamous '*auto-da-fé* of books?'²⁴ Rolland's pro-German leanings and spirit of rapprochement in the 1920s had led many German intellectuals to hope for his approval of new government, and his attacks were bitterly received. Indeed, his

letter was the catalyst for some grandstanding by the editors of the Cologne daily, who published a collection of six responses by German intellectuals in the hope, as they noted in their introduction, that it might help people all over Germany to understand the National Socialist revolution. Dismissing Rolland's letter as nothing more than evidence of his own failure to understand, they expressed no surprise that the revolution in Germany was getting neither support nor sympathy, even from the country's former friends.²⁵

Of the six responses they published, only one addressed the specific question of the book burning in any detail. Rolland's comment about the 'auto-da-fé of books' was almost an afterthought in his own essay, and it was clearly dismissed as ancillary by most of those who responded. The only writer to take up the issue was the Austrian novelist Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer, who commented that bookfires might not be to everybody's taste, but that people will have different opinions on these symbolic actions. Kolbenheyer himself did not have any doubts about their symbolism, calling on the whole 'civilized world' to make it the highest cultural duty to destroy the radical works Rolland extolled. The clear implication was that only fascism had the moral strength to confound decadence. Even after the burnings, Kolbenheyer concluded, libraries, publishers and all of Germany would remain true to their calling and forfeit nothing of their cultural worth.²⁶ Kolbenheyer was only one of many writers and intellectuals in Germany who aggressively embraced the fires and the reforms they heralded. His response might be compared to another spirited defence of the purging of literature by a Nazi by the name of Kube, who admonished the National Socialist Teachers' Federation to disregard the valueless sniping of the decadent West. His attack was widely quoted in anti-Nazi publications: 'What does the world say to the way things are developing in Germany? It is a matter of complete indifference to us what stockbrokers in London or Paris think about our culture.'²⁷

Such denunciations did not daunt the Münzenberg group, especially given the intense political activity on the Left sweeping France as the Library of the Burned Books was inaugurated.²⁸ They even felt confident about enrolling the support of the British establishment, especially after a small delegation of German exiles, led by the famous playwright Ernst Toller, visited London in late 1933, meeting with influential figures like Harold Laski and Margot Asquith. Toller also secured an interview between Kantorowicz and H.G. Wells, who had only recently delivered his lecture on 'Intolerance' at Foyles, and whose presidency of PEN meant that he was heavily involved with the cultural exodus of German writers, many of whom had written to the international group for intellectual or financial support.²⁹ In the wake of these visits by Paris-based committee members, Wells agreed to become President of the British Society of Friends of the Library of the Burned Books (*Figure 8*).³⁰

Library of The Burned Books

President: HEINRICH MANN

Honorary Presidents: André GIDE, Romain ROLLAND, H. G. WELLS, Lion FEUCHTWANGER

General Secretary: Dr. Alfred Kantorowicz, 65, Boulevard Arago, Paris XIII

BRITISH

COMMITTEE:

Prof. C. P. Blackett, F.R.S.
 Ronald Boswell
 Vera Brittain
 Prof. G. E. G. Catlin
 Louis Golding
 Margaret Goldsmith
 Prof. J. B. S. Haldane, F.R.S.
 Charlotte Haldane
 Prof. Harold Laski
 Hubertus Prinz zu Löwenstein
 Kingsley Martin
 Naomi Mitchison
 Lady Oxford and Asquith
 Eleanore Russell, F.R.S.
 Wickham Steed
 G. P. Wells
 Amabel Williams Ellis

16, Park Village East, N.W.1

Dear Sir or Madam,

A German Library of the Burned Books will be opened at 65, Boulevard Arago, Paris, on May 10th next. This, it will be recalled, is the anniversary of the date of the burning of books in Germany by order of the National Socialist Party.

Among the books which were burned or suppressed in Germany were such classics as the entire works of Heinrich Heine, and various writings by Lessing, Voltaire, Einstein and Freud. Further, the novels of such modern authors as Heinrich Mann, E. M. Remarque, Lion Feuchtwanger, and Jacob Wassermann, and the historical works of Emil Ludwig and Mehring were also destroyed.

The forbidden works also include a large number of scientific, economic and sociological books of international importance.

All of these, however, have been collected for purposes of study and reference in the Library which will be officially inaugurated on May 10th in Paris, in order that they should be available to students, research workers, and those to whom their preservation appears to be of the utmost importance.

In addition, the Library contains all those works which are indispensable to the study and analysis of Hitlerism, from H. S. Chamberlain to Rosenberg.

The work of maintaining and extending the Library and of making it available to the public is beyond the unaided powers of the eminent German men of letters and sociologists to whom its inception is due. We have, therefore, undertaken the task of forming in this country, as has already been done in France, a Society of the Friends of the Library of the Burned Books in the belief that there are many who will agree with our view that such an undertaking is of historical and sociological importance.

We should be most grateful if you would co-operate with us in this undertaking. If you are willing to do so kindly send us an annual subscription of Five Shillings by filling up the enclosed Banker's Order to that effect or a donation by using the Remittance Form. Cheques and P.O.'s to be made payable to Prof. G. E. G. Catlin, 19, Gledbe Place, S.W.1, Hon. Treasurer.

Yours faithfully,

For the British Committee:—

H. G. Wells (Hon. President),
 Margot Oxford,
 Louis Golding,
 Wickham Steed,
 J. B. S. Haldane, F.R.S.,
 Hubertus Prinz zu Löwenstein.
 Charlotte Haldane (Hon. Sec.).

FRENCH

COMMITTEE:

Gaston Baty
 Maître Campinchi
 Georges Dahamel
 Charles Dullin
 Edmond Fleg
 Gaston Gallimard
 Prof. Hadamard
 E. de Jouvenal
 Comtesse Karolyi
 Comte Karolyi
 H. R. Lenormand
 Frans Masereel
 Mela Muter
 M. Paulhan
 Prof. Wallon

GERMAN

COMMITTEE:

Prof. Georg Bernhard d.
 Dr. Ernst Bloch U.S.A.
 Hanns Eisler U.S.A.
 Bruno Frank d.
 Prof. Gumbel U.S.A.
 Dr. Alfred Kerr London
 Rudolf Leonhard Berlin
 Dr. Rudolf Olden d.
 Theodor Flieter Wetzlar
 Dr. Kurt Rosenfeld d. NY
 Joseph Roth d. ...
 Anna Seghers Berlin
 Ernst Toller d.
 Dr. Albert Malte Wagner d.

SWISS COMMITTEE:

Prof. G. Ferrero
 Dr. Hans Mühlstein
 Dr. Rosenbaum-Ducemmun

Alfred Kantorowicz

Figure 8 An appeal for funds on Library of the Burned Books letterhead. The manuscript notes appear to have been made by Alfred Kantorowicz himself, and evidently date from after the war. He has noted the deaths of no less than six of the German committee (including Joseph Roth and Ernst Toller), but also notes that many of the others remain in exile.

Meanwhile in Paris, on the Boulevard Arago, a quiet and provincial street in Montparnasse, the committee rented a tiny two-storey studio overlooking a courtyard garden, which they readied for the opening on 10 May 1934, the first anniversary of the fires in Berlin (*Figure 9*). Their intriguing project garnered notice from journals such as the *American School and Society* where Kantorowicz, who was not only fast becoming the recognizable face of the library, but could deliver a well-turned and innocuous phrase, was quoted as saying that it represented a ‘comprehensive offensive ... to save and preserve the cultural contributions of Germany to the evolution of humanity during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries’. Another notice appeared in the rarefied pages of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*.³¹ Kantorowicz also granted an interview to a correspondent from the *Manchester Guardian*, who arrived a few days before the gala opening to discover chaos – donated books stacked in piles on the floor and unopened packing cases strewn around.³² The studio apartment was too small to shelve even a fraction of the books that had been made available, but the Committee members managed to tidy things up for the opening where Frenchmen Edmond Fleg and Henry René Lenormand made speeches. They were followed by three very different men who, nonetheless, all had their writings burned in Germany: the former editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Alfred Kerr; Czech reporter Egon Erwin Kisch; and lastly the former head of the Sexual Institute in Berlin, Magnus Hirschfeld, each of whom clambered onto the chair serving as a makeshift podium (*Figure 10*). Their universal optimism regarding the success and importance of the new venture was reflected in a handful of complimentary news reports. In an upbeat piece the *New York Times* correspondent noted the special position the *Brown Book* occupied in the accompanying exhibit, and concluded that the library committee hoped to prove that ‘although the Nazis can burn books, they cannot destroy freedom of thought or the great teachings of the past’.³³

There was more tangible support from the Society of the Friends of the Library of the Burned Books in London, who held a fund-raising exhibition and tea party in Mayfair on the same night that the library was being opened in Paris. The party was hosted by the Countess of Rosebery and the exiled Prinz zu Löwenstein, and although Kantorowicz himself was in Paris, his future wife Friedel made the trip to London where, in a borrowed gown, she greeted the High Society guests and tried to follow Lady Asquith’s advice to just ‘shake hands and smile’.³⁴ While this glittering party did raise enough money to help guarantee the library’s continued existence, it was less successful in other ways.³⁵ Society President Wells was absent due to commitments in the United States. One committee member who did attend was G.E.G. Catlin (the husband of Vera Brittain), the British Treasurer for the Library of the Burned Books, who noted rather archly in his diary that he had been to ‘a show



Figure 9 The entrance to the former Library of the Burned Books on Boulevard Arago (Paris, XIII), in 2004. A plaque commemorating the library is high on the wall of the vestibule, and cannot be seen from the street.

Bruce and Victoria Fishburn.

(Burned Books)', where Margot Oxford talked about becoming a member of the Labour Party at the time of the German blockade as she 'pawed and patted my hand (not without charm)'.³⁶ Of the three speakers on the night, the spotlight fell on the winsome former editor of *The Times*, Wickham Steed, who concluded that there were clearly visible 'signs that Germany is already feeling uneasy about the effect her doings has created on British minds'.³⁷

Steed's optimistic assessment openly contradicted the conclusions of Kantorowicz himself, who estimated that some 3,000 books were currently proscribed, and that the censorship was now moving into its second stage: the blacklist prepared by the Ministry of Propaganda had been banned from open publication. They 'do not revoke the prohibition,' he noted, 'they merely prohibit the publication of details'.³⁸ Kantorowicz reached this conclusion in a threepenny pamphlet published in London, *Why a Library of the Burned Books?* He had originally been asked to draft a press release for his visit to London in March 1934, but accidentally left his lengthy lecture in a Paris taxi and was forced to give a drastically shorter, extempore speech to journalists. To his bemusement, his brevity was applauded, because his original speech would have taken a tick over an hour and a half (he wryly admitted that even at four pages the more media-savvy Lady Asquith still thought his revised speech a bit long). Nonetheless, when his original draft was fortuitously returned to



Figure 10 The famous Czech reporter Egon Erwin Kisch speaks at the 1934 opening of the Library of the Burned Books in Paris. He stands in front of a board protesting the ongoing detention of German Communist leader Ernst Thaelmann.

Collection Marcus Patka (Vienna, Austria).

him, he decided to turn it into a short printed catalogue to explain the library to an English-speaking audience.³⁹

The pamphlet is more guarded but also more polished than any of his interviews, and stands as the clearest expression of the library's development, its supporters and its mission, providing a concise history of the event from the viewpoint of the exile, as well as a clear exposition of the importance of censorship to National Socialism. The library was intended, Kantorowicz announced, to respond to the 'terror and arson' which Nazism deployed in lieu of any 'spiritual armoury'. It is a form of collapse, Kantorowicz continued, best seen in the enthusiastic embrace of the barbaric proceedings in the German press and the rococo language used to describe it. He felt compelled to note regarding one piece in the Berlin *Angriff* that it 'is almost

impossible to reproduce in another language the absurdities of style and content in the report of this cultural achievement of the “Third Realm” or in the speeches delivered to commemorate it’. The language might be, as he suggested, impossible to reproduce, but he evidently did not think it beyond the reach of satire reproducing a passage in suitably archaic English:

Amid the chaunting of ancient warsongs and antique ballads, amid the rattle and clangour of German military marches up the street drives the procession, flanked by lampadaphori. With the rapidity of the lightning the purifying flame is attached to the heavy scaffolding. Little crepitations rattle as the flamelets trickle heavenwards. Up aloft they surge, meet above the mighty pyre and fling the radiance of their Titan fires over the rainsodden night.⁴⁰

Kantorowicz was equally bitter about the role played by the students, whom he described, like Roth before him, as having been derailed by leaders who preferred the parade ground to the classroom. Not only did he comment in this general fashion about how the burnings ‘symbolised the return of Germany to barbarism’, he also drew out a more sophisticated analysis of the conditions in the country:

It is no longer possible to compute the numbers of the books destroyed, because there is now no means of obtaining information of the thousands of cases of private malice on the part of minor party leaders, of provincial committees, librarians, professors, students, municipal officials and the like, from one end of Germany to the other.⁴¹

Here is the fundamental conceit of his project. Kantorowicz insisted that there must have been thousands of private acts of destruction, proved, he inferred, precisely because of the lack of evidence – the books were being burned, even if the fires weren’t being reported in the press.

Kantorowicz’s surmise was not far from the mark. After the war, Heinrich Böll, for one, remembered that at his lower-middle-class school a rather modest pile of books was arranged and didn’t burn at all well (‘Someone must have forgotten to pour gasoline over them’). As a spectacle, Böll concluded, it was rather embarrassing but not simply a farce: none of the books reappeared on the school curriculum.⁴² Similarly, Guy Stern, a German exile and one of the most important historians of the book burnings, remembered that at his school he was compelled to cut pages from his school histories and anthologies, creating an atmosphere of fear and repression that inspired Stern and his Jewish youth group to purge their own library in fear of the Gestapo.⁴³

The immeasurable scale of these private purges is also reflected in an unsigned children’s story called *Gift im Bücherschrank* (Poison on the Bookshelf) from an illustrated magazine for schools of November 1936.⁴⁴ It told the story

of an eleven-year-old Hitler Youth member called Karl-Albert who returns home from one of his meetings determined to see whether any of the books in his home had Jewish authors. It is particularly interesting because the boy's father initially defends many of the suspect books (authors such as Ludwig Fulda, Georg Ebers, Jacob Wassermann and Olga Wohlrück) as works he had enjoyed, had found innocuous or even positive. It is only when he is confronted with an index of Jewish authors published in the newspaper that he ruefully acknowledges his error. Karl-Albert conquers his father's initial scepticism by convincing him of the urgent necessity to resist the influence of the pre-Hitler Jewish controlled press. The story finishes with the father's uplifting promise that on Sunday evening the whole family will sit down together and purge the shelves of their 'Jewish poison' (*jüdischen Gift*).⁴⁵ A childish parable of the need for continued vigilance, the tale was consistent with the presentation of the index as a scholarly apparatus: the father is, for instance, delighted that his son is being urged to read newspapers both at home and in the classroom.

Recognizing that it is impossible to quantify this secondary censorship does not dim its importance, especially when accounts of the destruction of books were regularly met with bemused scepticism. As the historian Leonidas E. Hill has pointed out, the temptation to deride the burnings as student high jinks often took precedence over any subtler understanding of the implications of the fires, in particular the countless private burnings by people anxious to avoid the wrath of the new regime: private individuals, book clubs and libraries, booksellers, even if they disagreed with the repressions, were coerced into outward conformity.⁴⁶ Hill's research backs up Kantorowicz's hunch. Quantifying this relies on anecdotes and broad estimates, and this is why Kantorowicz was adamant that the burnings on the Opernplatz were a symbolic flourish designed to distract people from the ongoing destruction of books. One of the things that most upset Kantorowicz was not that the burnings might be considered 'symbolic', but that the symbolism was being misconstrued. When he was interviewed by the *Manchester Guardian*, he estimated that some 2 million volumes had been seized from public and private libraries, and pulped.⁴⁷ Little wonder that Heinrich Mann, writing on the opening of the Library of the Burned Books in Paris, described the important task it had assumed, and quite rightly called it the first genuine attempt to protect the 'cultural goods' of Germany and the world.⁴⁸

As befits someone announcing the opening of a library, the tone of *Why a Library of the Burned Books* is nonetheless sanguine about their mission. Indeed, he starts with the hopelessly cheerful enthymeme that burning a book only confirms its position as part of the 'essential, imperishable possession of all those who seek to preserve the great heritage of the past and the achievements of the present'. This is hyperbole, but he was on firmer ground when he mocked

the Nazi purifications as cheap symbolism because their influence ‘does not reach as far as Paris, London and New York’. He argued that the persecution had succeeded in creating an extraordinarily literate and diverse group of exiles who now have one thing in common: a sense of their banishment not as ‘a tragic destiny but as a call to service’.⁴⁹ And, he concluded, the National Socialist movement had created an ex post facto Popular Front of ‘Conservatives and Socialists, Jews and Catholics, Pacifists and Communists’ all working together to preserve their common ‘cultural heritage’.⁵⁰ That the library represented the vanguard of this anti-fascist movement can be seen in a letter of support from Feuchtwanger: ‘In your archives and your library you have founded an arsenal in which can be forged the weapons that are needed for the fight before us, a fight which will be bitter but which cannot but end in victory.’⁵¹ This was persuasive and militant rhetoric, en suite with the general mood of the exiles in their first years abroad, a period when many believed Hitler’s revolution would be short-lived, and that they would soon be able to return to their homeland.⁵² Dieter Schiller reports, for instance, that Kisch’s speech at the opening of the library expressed the certainty that the library would soon be transported to Berlin.⁵³

Alongside such rhetoric, the hopes Kantorowicz expressed in the *Guardian* article were less substantial. More realistically, he was set on cementing and building on the support and international goodwill that had been set in place, and the article was a platform for him to ask for financial support for the library. The *Guardian* tacitly gave its endorsement throughout, and the article concluded unambiguously with an appeal for donations ‘for this deserving cause’ to be forwarded to the British Treasurer, Catlin. Yet even here, Kantorowicz reiterated that the library planned to do more than simply subsist on charitable donations, and that it planned to provide viable and professional research facilities for interested individuals and organizations. Perhaps, he elaborated at one point, it might be helpful for ‘Jewish organisations in America who may want full particulars on the position of the Jews in Germany’. Kantorowicz even surmised the support from Britain was so great that it might be useful and appropriate for them to move the premises to London.⁵⁴ Indeed, no lesser figure than Allen Lane of Penguin publishing fame, wrote on behalf of the Relief Committee for the Victims of German Fascism to Catlin in August 1934 about the possibility of founding a second library in London.⁵⁵

FAILURES IN TRANSLATION

There were initially great hopes for the Library of the Burned Books to have a broader meaningful role, but they did not come to fruition, as international attention evaporated. In Britain, the attempt to make political capital out of

the book burnings foundered, and the Society of Friends of the Library of the Burned Books quickly faded from the press. Although the library had an impressive list of sponsors, their participation quickly wavered. Most of the British committee had little involvement beyond having their name appear on the letterhead, and, although sincere enough, most were, after all, serial joiners of clubs and societies. Wells would join anything, sometimes out of expedience, sometimes from genuine concern, and sometimes from what looks a little like carelessness. To be fair, his was a genuinely honorary position, as is confirmed by a letter to him from the Society's Secretary Charlotte Haldane, in which she asks for nothing beyond Wells' cheque and signature, and signs off by noting: 'For my sins I was elected the secretary of this committee, and, as I know how you hate to be bothered, I shall make it my first business to bother you as little as possible.'⁵⁶ Most of the other supporters likewise appeared in name only. Editor of the *New Statesman and Nation*, Kingsley Martin, for example, allowed his name to appear on the letterhead, but it rated only two scant mentions in his influential newspaper. Even worse, while the first was a rather general appeal for the library, the second was a letter which mocked Society President H.G. Wells, wondering where refugees would escape to in his World State.⁵⁷

The society's fate is neatly reflected in the difficulty of finding any mention of its creation in the published memoirs or biographies of most key participants. Biographies of Wells skate past, rightly devoting attention to his real interests for the year, his PEN presidency and meetings with Roosevelt and Stalin, and it rates nary a mention in the lives of central figures Wickham Steed, Naomi Mitchison or Prinz Löwenstein.⁵⁸ This failure in translation was in part a rejection of the Left-wing sympathies of the German exiles. One of the few people to even discuss the undertaking was Charlotte Haldane. In her 1949 memoirs, written at a time when she openly reviled the British Communist Party, she brushed over the event, remembering chiefly the 'back-bitings and intrigues' of an unprepossessing bunch of émigrés for whom, after an initial burst of enthusiasm, 'English sympathy had been temporarily exhausted'.⁵⁹ She even writes of her sense of relief at easing herself 'out of that particular saddle'. Similarly, in Vera Brittain's *Testament of Experience*, in the middle of a passage about the seismic effect of the Reichstag fire trial, she makes passing reference to the fact that her husband George Catlin was installed as Treasurer.⁶⁰ Even Catlin's papers at McMaster University include only incidental references to the library, such as a letter from Count Karolyi, his counterpart as Treasurer in France, instructing that the money collected in London be deposited in the Credit Lyonnais on Rue de Rennes.⁶¹ The lacunae in reporting are more informative than the rare outbursts like Haldane's: there was an empty gulf between Kantorowicz's confidence and Haldane's repudiation.⁶²

The dispersal of the British society was mirrored by a related project, the American Library of Nazi Banned Books, mooted by the reformist Brooklyn Jewish Center in April 1934. It seemed like a good time to be setting up such a library in the United States, where only a few months earlier the prohibition on *Ulysses* had been lifted. Morris L. Ernst, one of the attorneys for Joyce's publisher, Random House, had announced ecstatically that the 'New Deal in the Law of Letters is here'.⁶³ The Brooklyn venture was an autonomous project, although it did have assistance from the Paris library which provided, amongst other things, a list of banned authors.⁶⁴ It was inaugurated with fanfare before a crowd of 500 guests in December 1934, allowing the organizers plenty of time to prepare for an official opening planned for the second anniversary of the fires in May 1935. The opening attracted many of New York's intelligentsia, but it was even less widely reported than its French cousin, apart from articles in some of the important Jewish-American newspapers such as the *Jewish Tribune*.⁶⁵ This relative silence would have disappointed the keynote speaker, Albert Einstein, who had hoped that this American library might snatch some of the banned literary works from oblivion.⁶⁶ The second of two speeches on the night was by exile Heinz Liepmann. He described the cauterizing of intellectual life as an integral part of any attempt to stifle protest or dissent; to abandon, in his analogy, Dreyfus without Zola. At the British tea party the voices of genuine exile had been strangely curtailed by their hosts, and now it was the turn of the Brooklyn Jewish Center's founding Rabbi, Israel H. Levinthal, who spoke at length on the need to follow Moses in choosing the eternal validity of the book rather than the realpolitik of the sword. Levinthal's conclusion expressed the truism that recurs in almost every response to book burning: 'You may burn books, but the letters of the books are indestructible.'⁶⁷ Once again, book burning was proving to be much more versatile as a catch-all symbol rather than a pragmatic event. As in London, prominent figures including Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise and Einstein himself were included on the board of the Brooklyn library, and once again interest in the library failed in the breach, though it later became the basis for an important collection of Judaica.

Only the original library in Paris, catering to and supported by a politically active exile community, consolidated its position. Even so, only the barest descriptions of the library remain, and it is known chiefly through a scattering of photographs that are reproduced in monographs on the exiles. Although these pictures are not really distinct, the interview with Kantorowicz for the *Guardian* provides a rare glimpse into the rooms, showing in particular that although the walls were covered with posters, one image dominated: 'On the walls was a picture of Dr. Goebbels supervising ecstatically a vast bonfire of books, with the appropriate comment, "From Light to Darkness".' Although

the reporter appears to be unfamiliar with the image, the poster he described is unmistakable: it was the cover of *AIZ* for 10 May 1933, a photomontage by John Heartfield where the uncontrollable flames of a bonfire of books are spreading to engulf the Reichstag (*Figure 11*). To reinforce the notion that this was a retrograde step, it was entitled 'Durch Licht zur Nacht' (Through Light to Night). Heartfield, who fled Berlin in May 1933, and was forced from Prague in 1938, here created an image that reiterated the connection between fascism and arson. He was adept at creating montages that relied on a series of juxtapositions of otherwise familiar images, in the process connecting the glorified images of the Nazi hierarchy with their grubby reality. His montages routinely depicted industrial money as the mechanism behind the spectacle, and here all of these factors combine to become the literal catalyst behind Goebbels' rhetoric: in the foreground stands a gasoline can advertising Deterding-Goering & Co.'s 'great arsonist's oil' (Deterding was a Dutch oil millionaire who had given financial support to the Nazi Party). By hanging this poster on their walls, the librarians sought to make an iconic statement about the links between the Nazi book burnings and the Reichstag fire.

In Heartfield's collage, the titles of many of the books on the pyre are still clearly legible, with generic titles by Marx and Lenin alongside works by exiles Kisch, Remarque and Thomas Mann. This makes it an unusually personal image for Heartfield, who not only knew most of the exiles, but had designed several of the dustjackets being incinerated. Unlike most cartoons of the time, which showed Hitler presiding over the bonfires, Heartfield more accurately portrayed Goebbels as the key figure, seizing on the propaganda minister's attempt to indulge in a little Nietzschean posing. The irony of the banner headline is unmistakable, as is the obvious allusion to Nietzsche's Zarathustra in the subtitle:

Thus spake Dr Goebbels: let us kindle new fires so that the blind do not wake.

Quite apart from making an important associative connection between the Reichstag fire and the bonfires of books, Heartfield also conveyed the impression that the fires were a spectacular sleight of hand. The phrasing parodied the Nazi slogan 'Deutschland erwache', while the notion of 'waking' the blind creates the impression not that the Germans could not see, rather that they were too fatigued even to try. Heartfield made the same argument as Kantorowicz, that the fires were literally fireworks, designed to dazzle the senses. Like many of his colleagues, Heartfield hoped that once people stopped being blinded or distracted, whether by propaganda, political allegiance, tired traditionalism or effete despair, they would be compelled into action.



Figure 11 John Heartfield's famous book burning cover of the AIZ for 10 May 1933. This issue was published from Prague. Heartfield designed the covers for Plivier, *Der Kaiser ging, die Generale bleiben*; Ehrenburg, *Die Heiligsten Güter*; and Iljin, *Fünf Jahre, die die Welt verändern*.

A similar hope animated many of the refugee writers, who published prodigiously in the newly created exile presses. The library became not only a meeting place but a research centre for an almost unimaginable number of articles and full-length books. A consistent pattern developed: the staffers at the library would help prepare a series of reports on one aspect of National Socialism which would be, in turn, published at an émigré press such as Carrefour in Paris or Querido in Amsterdam. As the book came off the press there would be advertisements and editorials in the *Pariser Tageblatt* and, to complete the circle, the library would mount a special exhibit to complement the book and promote its theme. Thus, for example, when the *White Book* on the ‘Night of the Long Knives’ (the 20 June 1934 assassination of Hitler’s old cronies from the Sturmabteilung, or SA) was published, it was launched with a function and accompanying exhibit at the library. A speech by Kisch on the political and moral crisis in Germany was, in turn, splashed in the *Tageblatt*.⁶⁸ On this occasion Kisch dwelt at length on the burgeoning underground movement within Germany; in particular, the enormous number of underground publications being circulated, most masked by false imprints and dummy covers – the *Brown Book*, he commented, was widely available in a mock edition of ‘Hermann und Dorothea’. As this speech implies, the introduction of illegal literature under the cover of false imprints and phony editions into Germany was one of the regular functions of the Münzenberg group, a practice that even had a fictional outing in Gustav Regler’s *Im Kreuzfeuer* (1934) where an old ferryman smuggles the book burning issue of *AIZ* into the Saarland.⁶⁹

The Library of the Burned Books took its place as a research archive for much of this publishing, helping with the production of many of the more sophisticated titles for both the censored German market and the international press. By no means a simple conduit for undiluted Communist propaganda, they were the originals of several of the more important publications issued by Victor Gollancz in England, especially through his influential Left Book Club.⁷⁰ After the first success of the *Brown Book*, however, the anti-Nazi press in the West was not faring too well either. By mid-decade even the *Left Review* was critical of the reliability of exile publications and, in a scathing attack on a book by Heinz Liepmann, took the opportunity to vent its dislike for all the ‘pretentious scribblers and journalists on the make’ who were publishing similar material, fulfilling their dictum that ‘even horror finds a market’.⁷¹ This cynicism about the vast majority of publications emanating from the exiles contributed to a sense of inertia rather than satiety; introducing *Six Years of Hitler*, Neville Laski commented with palpable languor that of ‘books about the Nazi regime and the persecution of the Jews there seem to be no end’.⁷²

Indeed, the profusion of contemporary books and articles published in English on the German revolution is daunting.⁷³

Ironically, one of the central themes of these works is that conditions in Germany have to be seen to be understood. In 1935, for example, in the same book attacked by the *Left Review*, Liepmann stated that he knew it was imperative to resist only *after* he had been imprisoned in a concentration camp and saw ‘how they burned books, kicked women to death, martyred children’.⁷⁴ This necessary witnessing permeated all manner of reports from Europe, and confirms that the implications of the bookfires were not easily grasped. When the American newspaperman Ralph McGill saw the burning of books in the aftermath of the Anschluss, Hitler’s annexation of Austria, in 1938, he described a feeling of revelation:

One day I went to watch them burn books. A great pile blazed in the center of a square. It was a foolish thing and that was how it seemed ... Suddenly I knew that the disappearance of books and newspapers was not just foolishness by a lot of boy bullies.⁷⁵

The book burnings, pieces like this affirm, cannot be understood until they are witnessed.

This realization filtered through to the staff and friends of the Library of the Burned Books, especially when the first anniversary of the opening (second of the bonfires) was duly celebrated in 1935. Most stuck to platitudes. Joseph Roth sent his congratulations, and at the official party René Lalou declared the library a continuing weapon in the war for the independence of thought.⁷⁶ Heinrich Mann applauded the project once again, particularly the way that it kept the attention of the world on the barbarism of Germany, and revealed the provincialism at the heart of Nationalism. The books banned within Germany, he wrote, were precisely those that the rest of the world chose to read: German literature, and the real Germany, was in the library. It was not by crushing its home and barricading the land, he averred hopefully, that literature is destroyed.⁷⁷ Kantorowicz published another article in the *Pariser Tageblatt*, an upbeat assessment of the library’s successes in guarding the heritage – and thus the future – of Germany.⁷⁸ However, he was one of the few to register the necessity of continuing to explain the significance of the bookfires, and he debunked any argument that they had been a spontaneous (or meaningless) outburst. Rather, Mann’s address reached behind the spectacle to show that the combination of the politics of distraction and the draconian controls on the press was lethal, compelling the German public to renounce any knowledge of the ‘real state of affairs’ because the conditions for genuine critique had disappeared.⁷⁹

The sense that the lasting ramifications of the bookfires took some time to set in is echoed in an earlier article by the American journalist Frederick T. Birchall, who had witnessed the fires in Berlin. In his 1933 article Birchall had described the event in some detail, but had surmised that it had caused little more than ‘ripples of amusement ... through the outside world’.⁸⁰ Writing an anniversary piece for the *New York Times* in 1934, he continued to deride the event as an adolescent prank, but also saw it as evidence of a much more insidious threat, demonstrating their relevance to the increasing isolation of the German public because of the rigid controls on the press. Within this context, he argued, the control of publicity and the manipulation of public opinion were indistinguishable, and a ‘good bonfire’ was the first signal in a series of repressions – auxiliary policemen to filter everything (including incoming trains), the press sacrificed to governmental expediency, the extirpation of controversy and, as a final term, the concentration camp.⁸¹ These controls had created, he saw, an increasing gap in understanding between the Germans and the rest of the world. On the smaller scale of the library, Kantorowicz saw the same crisis unfolding. The enlightened rhetoric of their supporters which spoke of inextinguishable and indestructible books, did not respond directly to the ongoing wastage of critical thought in Germany. Indeed, he tentatively alluded to the possibility that by continually talking about the capacity of literature to resist the impredations of barbarians, the brutal short-term efficacy of censorship was being ignored. The books might survive – they had always been remarkably resilient – but the society that could understand them could be annihilated or dissipated.

This realization is why Kantorowicz’s 1935 report is more tempered, and his general tone less emphatic. Now he spoke of the many difficulties faced in two years in exile, even as his comrades continued their protest in publications like the forthcoming exposé of anti-Jewish legislation in Germany, *Die Gelbe Fleck* (published by Gollancz as *The Yellow Spot*). Now he also felt the need to insist his work was not futile, that he was restrained but not subdued by the difficulties: that the library would continue to stand because we ‘carry it all in our hearts and our brains’.⁸² The initial euphoria was being tempered and, worse, the Library of the Burned Books was becoming increasingly indistinguishable from other political entities. Kantorowicz claimed that it did not become crudely political until after he had departed for the Spanish Civil War, but, as Schiller and Köster have both noted, its newsletter, produced from April 1935 through January 1937, only rarely included any articles that could strictly be called literary, and was almost exclusively devoted to People’s Front and political articles.⁸³ The Spanish Civil War, of course, changed everything, not least because so many of the Paris exiles disappeared into the ranks of the international brigade. Kantorowicz was one of them, and his occasional pieces

for the Paris papers on the Library of the Burned Books became occasional pieces on the progress of the war. The library continued to be a meeting place for the exiles right up until the fall of France in 1940, and Büttner has rightly called it a spiritual centre for their community, but now it played host to more aggressive Popular Front coalitions.⁸⁴ Much later, Kantorowicz tried to explain away the comparatively more muted role of the library between 1936 and 1939 by pointing to the more immediate concerns with war in Spain and the impending war in Europe.⁸⁵ This is not untrue, but it ought to be contextualized with the library's increasingly orthodox position as most of the early 'anti-fascist' initiatives lost their broader support under the rough handling of the Comintern.

The memory of the book burnings was still a potent force throughout the decade, and many exiles continued to appropriate them as an index of authenticity and relevance. Inclusion on a blacklist became an imprimatur and something to be advertised. Romain Rolland was clearly delighted that his *Jean Christophe* was displayed in a glass case at the Oranienburg concentration camp 'along with the works of Marx, Engels, and German or Russian Communists, in the "museum" of books burned, or about to be burned'.⁸⁶ Similarly, the insider account of *Germany's Air Force* (1935) by Otto Lehmann-Russbuehdt proudly stated that all of his works 'were publicly burned in Germany'.⁸⁷ Ernst Toller's introduction to his *I Was a German* (1935), an account of his philosophical rejection of the 'barren pageantry' of the new regime, introduced it with a simple manifesto on the need to resist the 'yoke of barbarism'. He signed it on the 'day my books were burnt in Germany'.⁸⁸ It constituted a sort of merit badge in anti-fascism or a hard-won campaign medal. When Erika Mann published her *School for Barbarians* (1938) in the United States she scarcely referred to the event, but her publishers knew better, issuing the paperback edition with flaming books on the cover (*Plate 3*).

Later, much later, Koestler called the mid 1930s the period of 'the great anti-Fascist crusade which, with drums and fanfares, advanced from defeat to defeat'.⁸⁹ I am getting ahead of myself, for the next chapters will be devoted to this unravelling of European anti-fascism, and especially to the curious role played by the symbol of a burning book, but a glimpse of the first months of the war is apropos. After the first declaration of war, German exiles were imprisoned as enemy aliens, released, and then rounded up a second time soon after because their continued freedom might otherwise antagonize Hitler.⁹⁰ Kantorowicz, along with many of his compatriots, was twice interned at the former brickyard of Les Milles, near Aix-en-Provence until finally, after many dangerous months in the south of France, was finally granted a transit visa in Marseilles on 7 March 1941 and arrived in New York later the same year.

At some stage during the *drôle de guerre* French authorities closed the Library and, after the occupation of Paris in June, ceded it to the German occupation forces. In the second month of German occupation the first list of proscribed books was issued (the 'Liste Bernhard') and at the end of August an estimated 700,000 books were confiscated from French libraries.⁹¹ It had always been planned that the library would be transported back to Germany once Hitler was defeated, but now the German army caught up with it. Although no record remains of the final moments of the Library of the Burned Books, its destruction was assured. After the war Rudolf Leonhard found just one book from the former library in the Bibliothèque Nationale.⁹² And yet, as the German occupation began, and as writers struggled to hope that something meaningful would survive the new Dark Age, Koestler still had the ability to parody the classic utopian gesture. Holed up in the southern French village of Castelnau with nothing in his pockets save an old bus ticket, a fountain pen and a small notebook, he wrote that his companion Père Darrault tried to comfort him with the pious announcement that there must be 'a symbolic meaning in this complete annihilation of a man's past'. Koestler recalled asking sarcastically whether he should throw his pen and tickets away too, only to have his friend warn against it, with the helpful advice that 'God dislikes his intentions being dramatised.'⁹³ Perhaps this was good advice; Koestler simply notes that on the back of his *carnet* of bus tickets was printed an enigmatic advertisement for the Paris lottery, 'Améliorez votre sort. Ne laissez pas passer cette chance' (Improve your lot. Don't let this opportunity pass you by).

4

To Hell with Culture

A burning of the books becomes at times a necessity.
Cyril Connolly

As the last chapter described, a group of exiles founded the Library of the Burned Books in Paris in time for the first anniversary of the Nazi book burnings. Their early efforts would later have a decisive impact on the wartime memorialization of the fires, when the indelible connection between fascism and book burning was drawn. But while their efforts were relevant to the political history of book burning, many contemporary writers, even those vehemently opposed to fascism, continued to express a distinct longing for a conflagration. Most agreed on the vulgarity of the National Socialist pageants, but for every international report which dwelt on their childish barbarity, there were several others that understood how such an act could signify a refreshed commitment to art or politics. This diversity has been elided in more recent history, replaced with a sanitized version which imagines that book burning was instantly recognized as the emblem of fascism, when in fact, the hackneyed eloquence and official dogma of the Nazi critics and writers had faint international echoes. By exploring the fiction and political rhetoric of the 1930s, this chapter shows that the distaste for book burning did not banish the nostalgia for a good bonfire.

AUTO-DA-FÉ

In 1934, William Saroyan published a short story called ‘A Cold Day’, in which the anonymous protagonist writes to a friend complaining about the numbing cold in his apartment. It is so cold, he writes, that he is unable to finish a story he is working on and in desperation he has even contemplated burning some of the books from his library in the bathtub, fondly imagining that their momentary warmth might thaw out the story in his head. Yet even though he is tormented by his inability to write, he can’t bring himself to burn the books,

not even a ponderous German-language anatomy nor, he announces with a note of incredulity, T.S. Arthur's nineteenth-century temperance melodrama *Ten Nights in a Bar Room, and What I Saw There*, because 'even this book was too good to burn'.¹

It is not surprising that this tale of renunciation was singled out in Guy Stern's deservedly influential essay on the American response to the Nazi book burning as an emblem of the 'remarkable and surprising appropriateness' of the reaction in the United States.² Stern's reading of the story is simple: 'if you have any respect for the mere idea of books, what they stand for in life, if you believe in paper and print, you cannot burn any page of any book. Even if you are freezing. Even if you are trying to do a bit of writing yourself.'³ This is a cheering result, but it fails to account for the deep ambiguity in Saroyan's story, which is essentially the tale of the narrator's inability to write another, better story: 'All day I have been in this room freezing, wanting to say something solid and clean about all of us who are alive. But it was so cold I couldn't do it. All I could do was swing my arms and smoke cigarettes and feel rotten.'⁴ This sense of frozen inertia is reinforced by Saroyan's use of almost identical opening ('I want you to know that it is very cold in San Francisco today, and that I am freezing') and closing lines ('The most I can say now is that it is very cold in San Francisco today, and I am freezing'). The narrator cannot burn his books, but nor can he write the lost story. It is an impasse before it is a triumph, and it suggests that there is still an uneasy longing for the bonfire, especially in the freezing garrets of writers.

The interdependence between books, writing, and fire is even clearer in the most important contemporary novel to use the theme of book burning, Elias Canetti's *Auto-da-fé* (1936). Canetti's novel traces the downfall of the eminent Sinologist Peter Kien, whose orderly life and pristine library is fatally disrupted by his precipitate marriage to his housekeeper, a vulgarian in the epic style. Kien's travail, and the novel itself, are structured to create a stifling sense of torpor, punctuated by acts of casual and unexpected violence such as the butchering of Fischerle, or Kien apparently amputating his own finger. Kien had been born, Canetti never tired of reiterating, when he witnessed the Viennese Palace of Justice burned to the ground in July 1927 after police opened fire on a protest march. Watching the building burn, Canetti became fascinated by a neatly dressed worker who moaned inconsolably. 'The files are burning! All the files!'⁵ This obsessive figure became the catalyst for a character initially called 'Brand' (German for 'conflagration'), and then changed again for a novel tentatively titled *Kant Catches Fire*. In 1931 Canetti sent out copies to influential writers, but Thomas Mann returned the draft claiming he lacked the strength to read it; Hermann Broch read the draft, but was dazed by its savagery, and wrote urgently to his friend 'You're terrifying. Do you want to

terrify people? ... Is it the writer's function to bring more fear into the world? Is that a worthy intention?"⁶

Due to such responses, the novel would not be published for another five years, and in the intervening years there were more changes. 'Brand' was too literal and 'Kant' too obvious, so once more the main character underwent a name change, becoming 'Kien' (a type of resinous, and thus highly flammable, pine). The title, too, became more enigmatic, becoming *Die Blendung* (the 'blinding' or 'dazzling'), an allusion to the inability of any of the characters to see from any perspective but their own and for their capacity to animate and believe their delusional inventions. Kien's wife, for example, simply invents details as she wishes them to appear, at one stage magically increasing Kien's wealth by scribbling extra zeros at the end of his accounts.⁷

In turn, Kien's immersion in his research is another type of dislocation from the outside world. His apartment is really a live-in library, with most of the windows bricked-up to allow for more shelving. Buried in his books, his only excursion is his punctual walk (a trace of his original namesake Kant), a brief respite which nonetheless usually includes a reverie in front of the window of a bookstore. If Canetti is at some pains to set up this picture of an utterly distracted scholar, Kien's blindness becomes more literal as the novel progresses, particularly after he is forced from his library. Late in the novel, as Kien is led away from the police station by his former caretaker Benedikt Pfaff, Kien literally refuses to open his eyes or utter any more 'useless words', signifying his decision by blindfolding himself with his own handkerchief.⁸

Ultimately, the novel closes without revelation, as Kien and his collection are consumed in a great pyre. The crescendo of his final madness takes over, the text itself breaking down to identify with his immolation:

death by FIRE – loss loss by FIRE – burnt burnt by FIRE – FIRE FIRE FIRE. ... The books cascade off the shelves on to the floor... He builds them up high against the iron door... When the flames reached him at last, he laughed out loud, louder than he had ever laughed in all his life.⁹

In the end Kien's library serves only as his funeral pyre and *Auto-da-fé* takes its place alongside other novels, from *Don Quixote* to William Gass' *The Tunnel*, which dramatize the madness of being immured within, and consumed by, text. And although the mood of the novel can be seen to be borrowed from events in Germany, the novel ends without making any direct allusion to Hitler's state-sanctioned burnings (unless the fact that Kien's library contains 25,000 volumes is meant as an oblique reference to the number of books usually quoted as being destroyed by the students in the Berlin fires).

Die Blendung, of course, was not published in Germany, and scarcely rippled the surface of the German-speaking exile communities, the only people likely to even attempt to read such an ambitious work. Even in its reworked version, the responses to the novel were baffled, alarmed and almost uniformly hostile. Even Canetti claimed to be discomfited by his novel, and although the great climactic fire is the only imaginable resolution, he was tormented by it, partly because he ‘could not forgive myself for burning the books’.¹⁰ His publishers, as is their wont, weren’t keen on getting too carried away with such nuance, commissioning a cover which shows a man clutching a book to his chest as he is engulfed in flames. Nonetheless, the novel would not really find its audience until it appeared in English translation under the title *Auto-da-fé* in 1946, a time when Kien’s immolation now seemed like a parable of the interwar years, and the novel itself an unheralded prophecy.¹¹

As Saroyan’s story and Canetti’s novel suggest, the theme of book burning was tempting to authors, but most preferred to approach it obliquely. One novel which went against this trend was Katherine Burdekin’s *Swastika Night* (1937), a dystopian vision of life in the Year of the Lord Hitler 720 (2653 AD), when a coterie of German knights rule over a Europe reduced to feudalism, and in which women are literally corralled on the fringes of society for reproduction alone. The novel’s premise is that about a century after Nazi dominion in Europe was complete, a bookish scholar called von Wied published a work denouncing everything which predated Hitler’s rise to power as the rank error of savages, and fit only to be destroyed. It is the classic fundamentalist gesture, but applied with a demonic bureaucratic rigour which sought to close every loophole. The book of von Wied was willingly offered to the pyre so long as all other books met the same fate, and even *Mein Kampf* was bowdlerized to remove anything which fostered ‘Memory’ or disagreed with the official version of history.¹²

In Nazi Europe, the only books to survive years of patient destruction were basic technical and medical textbooks, reforms which left culture to die at the root. Even music was stripped to the carcass – Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerke*, beloved by the Nazi hierarchy, become bare symphonies because their librettos were too heretical to be staged, not least because of the central female characters. A knight called Friedrich von Hess protested the reforms at the time, but realizing his protests were merely nurturing suspicion, he chose dishonourable exile in England, insisting before he left that his own modest library be one of the first to be burned. Alone on a farm in the wilderness of England, like some monastic outpost of the Dark Ages, von Hess learnt the technique of making vellum, and slowly pieced together his own personal history of the world, relying entirely on his poor and fragmentary knowledge. If the systematic degradation of women is the novel’s moral and social nightmare,

this manuscript is its ambivalent hope, secretly preserved by his descendants as a pale window onto the dismantled past. Although almost none of his chronicle is reproduced in Burdekin's novel it is clear that the aging knight despaired of the gaps in his own memory, describing his book as nothing more than a 'glow-worm light' against encroaching darkness.¹³ In a bitter aside he even laments that the real scholars, who might have been better equipped for the project, had been some of the first to flee into sanctuary or silence.

In the novel's present, the descendant of von Hess despairs of passing the manuscript on to a worthy successor after the death of his sons, finally deciding to pass it on to a lowly British technician called Alfred Alfredson, visiting the fatherland on pilgrimage. Alfredson is barely literate, and partly because of this is completely enraptured by the book, reading it by torchlight like a child until the 'torch began to dim, and he came to himself with a terrible headache ... He stumbled back ... with his knees failing and his head full of confusion and glory, and the wonder of the vistas, like jewelled fairy caverns, faintly revealed by the little light von Hess had been able to leave still burning.'¹⁴ As this rapturous scene shows, and as so often in dystopian visions, the fever for the book is a key theme.¹⁵ In *Auto-da-fé*, Kien's collapse is due to his excessively literate desire for his library. In contradistinction to this, having imagined the complete erasure of European culture, Burdekin's grim concession is that a simple hunger for books cannot be completely extinguished. The explicit moral of *Swastika Night* is that the long-term result of fascist censorship is the decay of society itself, but the book still functions as an inherently hopeful symbol, even if this relies on a type of rapture or thrall, a literal sickness of books. In the end, *Swastika Night* has a bet each way: Alfred's fever means he is dead at the close of the novel, but the book survives, stashed with an outcast Christian community. The 'glow-worm' neither swells into a beacon nor is extinguished; the book outlives its owners, and remains as a dormant hope or threat.

CONFESSIONS OF A BOOK REVIEWER

As these stories suggest, fiction is a notoriously unstable medium from which to derive lessons. The fate of book burning in the 1930s is more clearly seen by reviewing the work of the critics, where a distinct relish for burning was evident, and where fever for the book often drifted towards simpler dislike. This dislike is classically the preserve of the reviewer, who is duty-bound to lament the torrents of books issuing from the press, as in a 1933 essay by the novelist Naomi Mitchison, with the revealing title 'Anger Against Books'. With the jaundiced eye of a reviewer, she described how the endless piles of books sent to her often left her feeling dirty and exhausted, at one point lamenting the sacrifice of great tracts of sweet-smelling pine forest in order to produce

books 'which do not smell nice at all'. Her conclusion is succinct: 'We have read too much. Book stuff comes between us and life.'¹⁶ Mitchison is no incendiary, but her nausea is a faint echo of the emotions that the Nazis, who had no taste for irony, reduced to brute reality. And her reverie on a world less cluttered with books was, if nothing else, a curious entrée for someone who would be a member of the Society of the Friends of the Library of the Burned Books by year's end.

Given such ambivalence about books, some critics were able to salvage an argument from the German ashes. Such was one of the surprise publishing hits of 1934, the drama critic Ivor Brown's *I Commit to the Flames*.¹⁷ Although in his later career Brown gave little evidence that he wanted to be reminded of his success, this study is worth considering for its attempt to condemn book burning as barbaric while rhetorically indulging it as a meaningful critical exercise. Brown starts off with a suitable disclaimer:

It need hardly be said that I do not believe in bonfires as the best means of dispatch for intellectual nuisances. I am old-fashioned enough to believe in freedom; I do not want to put on a coloured shirt and dance upon 'the stinking corpse of liberty.' If arson there must be, let us burn such natural fuel as the fasces and the shafts of axes and leave the books upon the shelf.¹⁸

Yet, having distanced his book from the most famous exponents of book burnings, Brown proceeded to indulge in several hundred pages of witty and intemperate attacks against what he derided as a 'general flight from reason'.¹⁹ He savages D.H. Lawrence, deplors T.S. Eliot (and the new poetry generally), is pleased to report that the notorious flammability of celluloid should make the destruction of the products of Hollywood almost inevitable, and even goes so far as to applaud the Nazi purging of all of those dirty-minded sex professors 'whose works will undoubtedly go first and foremost into any bonfire of mine'.²⁰ If some of these attacks are made palatable through his wit, his unhinged assault on African music and jazz as evidence of the collapse of civilization is less amusing.²¹

The temptation to regard the whole book as a bravura display of satire cannot really contain his unhappy conclusion that for 'some kinds of rubbish the incinerator is the only remedy'.²² Nor is this an idle theme in a work that argues book burning is testament to the 'German belief that knowledge and literature may actually bear some influence on human society ... To burn books is, in a sense, to believe in them'.²³ There is little whimsy or equivocation here: it may be an 'unusual compliment', but throwing a book into the flames is a moment of promise for society. Brown's book is scarcely the most important of the decade, but its strangely literate revulsion is an iconic moment in the

imagining of the fires, balancing the often ambivalent contemporary responses. The essayist Osbert Sitwell hit a similar note by refusing to luxuriate in contempt for an act he likened to burning one's boats. Instead, in a brief essay in his *Penny Foolish* (1935), he fondly remembered some notable bonfires from his own past, including the teachers at his sister's school warming their hands on Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads*. He even drew the droll conclusion that 'up to the close of King Edward's lifetime books were still being burned as part of the normal upbringing of any intelligent child'.²⁴

Others took all these mere words to the next level. The popular philosopher C.E.M. Joad was certainly no friend of totalitarian government, and in a 1933 *Manifesto* for the Federation of Progressive Societies and Individuals (FPSI), had consciously echoed H.G. Wells' depiction of book burners as 'clumsy louts'.²⁵ Nonetheless, in his *Testament* (1937), he detailed how he had mounted his own private defence of culture with an old-fashioned book burning. As Joad tells it, his fire was the result of the tedium of an extended stay in hospital where he was horrified by the lurid 'bloods' (crime pulps) offered to him during his long recuperation, a 'stream of hog-wash ... adorned for the most part with blooming jackets upon which girls struggled in the grip of clutching fingers, trembled before Chinamen, or writhed in the coil of snakes'.²⁶ Goaded into action by 'such an insult to the literary and philosophical inmates', Joad insisted that the entire distasteful collection be dumped in the garden and burned, but not before he had first salvaged the thrillingly austere stories of his personal favourite Freeman Wills Croft (indiscriminate burning might appear vulgar). He directed proceedings, of course, from the hospital library's window. Everything is right in the world: the 'library having been purified, I proceeded contentedly to read George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, Dickens and Trollope'. This is refreshingly blunt. Joad even trotted out the standard joke about how the collection of pulps was 'so flamboyant ... that it nearly set fire to itself'.²⁷

Even the outbreak of the war didn't dent the enthusiasm of many critics, who still commended the bonfire as a useful sign of human and artistic renewal. Cyril Connolly, the fabulously literate editor of *Horizon*, worried that the first years of the war had produced no interesting literary developments, placing the blame for this failure squarely on the writers themselves – 'artists are easy to suppress', he announced at one point. They 'recant more merrily than they burn'.²⁸ The only positive lesson he could derive was their refreshing refusal of the deadening past:

Although there is very little new being written, there is a vast amount of old that is being forgotten. Blake told us to 'drive our harrow over the bones of the dead,' and such a silent revolution is happening. The vast top-heavy accumulation of learning, criticism, scholarship, *expertise*, the Alexandrian library of nineteenth-

century Liberal capitalism, is falling to decay. Human beings have a tendency to over-civilisation, they cannot tear up old letters, they collect and catalogue up to the edge of insanity. A burning of the books becomes at times a necessity; it was necessary to think Milton, or Pope, or Tennyson, or Proust, or James, bad writers, if writing was to go on.²⁹

Herbert Read took the same route in his fiery ‘To Hell with Culture’ (1941), insisting that the alienation of capitalism be taken through to its logical conclusion: ‘To hell with such a culture! To the rubbish-heap and furnace with it all!’³⁰ This is a rather standard rhetorical trick, and as disingenuous as most such announcements, and really means to hell with all of the bits that Read is bored or offended by: we have become cluttered with superfluities; we must change our lives. It is not even as tasteless as one might hope. Burn off the chaff, both Connolly and Read imply, and the wheat will remain.

BOOKS FOR THE BURNING

If the critics were ambiguous on the question of book burning, so too were the scholars, as they contextualized one of modernity’s fads within a much longer debate about censorship, education and reform. The classicist Clarence A. Forbes published his ‘Books for the Burning’ (1936), a discussion of some 30 burnings of literature in antiquity, ranging from the apocryphal story of Plato burning his youthful poems, through to the development of formal attacks on dissent and heresy by both state and church. Resisting the tendency to dismiss modern censorship as anachronistic, his essay included this memorable passage:

The sentiments that motivate the burning of books are not difficult to fathom ... Would not many members of our own guild participate with unholy joy in a grand conflagration of those obnoxious books called ‘ponies’? Or why not burn some of the virulent attacks on the classics that are currently being disseminated? The surprising thing is not that some books got burned in the conflict between moribund paganism and nascent Christianity, but that the burned books were so few.³¹

Nonetheless, his refined conclusion is that the modern era has been the period in which the ‘true art of unjust censorship’ has developed.³² This conclusion seems more polite than rigorous, particularly when some of his own examples (the fifth-century extirpation of the Nestorian heresy; Diocletian’s destruction of Egyptian scientific works to hinder resistance to Rome; Augustus’ burning of 2,000 books of soothsaying) were more completely lost than most of the authors being burned by contemporary censors. Like so many authors who write about book burning, the use of modifiers is key: here, it lies in his adroit

use of 'unjust'. He implies that there is something just, or at least irrelevant, about these earlier attacks. The same tendency exists in Anne Lyon Haight's *Banned Books* (1935), an exhibition catalogue of censorship, that naturally concentrated on the unsuccessful attempts to suppress authors that had since been rehabilitated. Having set up the argument in this way she could conclude that the censor waged a 'losing battle'.³³

The debate about censorship was also specifically relevant to the studies of the new German education. Initially these tended towards vehement denunciations, but as Hitler's reforms began to be more widely accepted and even admired, the opinions of the experts sometimes shifted to keep up. The prominent educationalist I.L. Kandel, for example, had initially commented that those who hailed the Nazi renaissance usually did not mention that 'Germany from one end to the other is a military camp'.³⁴ Two years later he was markedly less judgemental, describing the new German elite as nothing more sinister than the 'modern equivalent of Plato's guardians of the Republic'.³⁵ Indeed, few would miss one of the implications of this comparison with the *Republic*, which had been founded on Plato's reluctant but express suppression of the poets. The pivotal contribution to this debate was the American sociologist Edward Hartshorne's *German Universities and National Socialism* (1937), the product of the author's study trip to Germany in 1935 and 1936. Hartshorne's provisional conclusion is a simple equation: 'science as a whole has lost by the change. A second conclusion stands out scarcely less clearly: Germany has gained something.'³⁶ In fact, Hartshorne saw the contemporary debate as a simple re-enactment of the much older debate about the academy versus the state – Plato versus Aristotle, or, at least, crude metonyms of their philosophies.³⁷ Nor, he is careful to point out, is this purely speculative, citing a small but influential list of pro-Nazi German works that press Platonic ideas into the service of a sort of educational eugenics.

For Hartshorne, the debate about Nazi education rested in the balance. He was positive about the 'distinct quieting of the superficial university scene', as well as the limitations on student numbers, the emphasis on quasi-military *Wehrsport*, and the scholarly study of eugenics. Conversely, his list of dislikes is concerned with more abstract questions like provincialism and apathy.³⁸ Most importantly, Hartshorne distanced himself from any assumption that the new Germany was nothing more than the province of vulgar book burners. When he did refer to the fires on the Opernplatz he called them a 'scandal', but also surmised that they had been an aberration, fuelled by the raffish enthusiasm of the students. Indeed, he argued that their only tangible effect had been to prompt protests and resignations from influential academics, and that this backlash had tended to 'stabilise the situation somewhat'.³⁹ This hopeful conclusion is all the more difficult to understand because it contradicts

his own evidence, such as the resignations of Eduard Sprenger (Berlin) or the psychologist Wolfgang Köhler. Rather than a disavowal of the act, Sprenger was more concerned that the students acted without due consultation with their faculties. Otherwise, he was far from unsympathetic, and in an open letter cited his own long-standing resistance to the Left, and his hope that he 'would once again see students on the benches before me who were unified in national consciousness and in love for their State and People'.⁴⁰ Similarly, although Köhler would remain a lifelong critic of the regime, Hartshorne quotes him as saying that the purge had been too careless and precipitate, rather than inherently flawed, and that it might strip Germany of much that was 'genuinely German' – even if some of it was 'partly Jewish'.⁴¹ Hartshorne's conclusion that this was symptomatic of the very first anti-Nazi 'reaction of opinion' is an optimistic misreading.⁴²

If anything, most of these studies on Nazi education have aspects in common with the roseate image pushed in the controlled German press. In official publications like the English-language souvenir *Germany: The Olympic Year 1936* there was a confident display of the new order, applauding its theatres and rejuvenated commitment to art. The Nazi delight in literature is even represented by an image of a 'worker's quiet hour of recreation in a public library', in which, improbably, a middle-aged worker in a grubby overcoat sits down to read what appears to be an old black-letter codex.⁴³ Similarly, in the showcase edition *Hitler Germany as Seen by a Foreigner*, Nazi apologist Cesare Santoro spoke proudly of the 'political disinfecting of our public life' and the 'complete moral cleansing of our social organism'.⁴⁴ Santoro's book is a wonderful example of the filtering of Germany's domestic politics for foreign consumption, a method that relied on select use of examples and statistics, a placatory tone, and specious conclusions. This official publication (although the distinction 'official' is effectively meaningless in the context of the German press) is, above all, brazen in its approval of the reforms in art, literature and culture. The German theatre has been renewed, art criticism has – at last – been outlawed, and thousands of blundering amateurs have been 'eliminated' from the world of music. Quite apart from these triumphs, the work continues, they have extirpated the 'Jewish influence' on German culture, and the 'Reich Chamber of Literature' was to be applauded for its prohibitions on 'trash' and 'filth', especially when, boasted Santoro, by 1937 over 1,000 German and Austrian libraries have been 'founded or re-organised'.⁴⁵

Internationally there was a marked reluctance to be too hasty in judging the Nazi reforms, and many critics called for patience in understanding the new 'German literature'. In 1933 one British reviewer decided that it was too early to tell whether the reforms were viable, but encouraged readers not to assume that the trashy 'brochures' displayed in railway station stalls were 'an

adequate representation of National Socialist thought'.⁴⁶ A few years later, another essayist insisted that despite the approved literature appearing to be one dimensional and repetitive, especially regarding race, it was not necessarily formulaic.⁴⁷ Other interested parties counselled patience, even muted sympathy. In an article on the infamous 'Degenerate Art' show in Munich, for instance, J.B.C. Grundy wrote that on the whole 'Dr. Goebbels must be congratulated on a timely exposure of many art tendencies which are pure nonsense', even if parts of the Nazi-sponsored attack were a 'little too glib and easy'. Grundy concluded that Goebbels had 'justly unmasked much that was spurious or childish, but he has not told us what is to follow – except that it is to be "German"'.⁴⁸ Nazi motives might be baffling to these critics, but they were evidently impressed with their vigour.

When the attacks came, their Left-inspired genealogy was evident. One of the most rigorous was Alexander Henderson's 'What the Nazis have done for Culture', published in the *Left Review* for July 1937, which took a quote from the pro-Nazi newspaper the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* as the signature statement on the cultural revolution: 'the National-Socialist state has avoided the danger of an intellectual proletariat'.⁴⁹ As this suggests, the *Left Review* took a dim view of the new German art, but Henderson's review leant towards sophisticated critique rather than simple propaganda, and his overview of the curious position of the Third Reich is particularly germane:

Nazi Germany is desperately, almost pathetically, anxious to earn a good mark in culture from the rest of the world. In hardly any other field is the inferiority complex of the Nazis so marked as in this. An uneasy awareness that the burning of books outside Berlin University in the Spring of 1933, and the exiling of hundreds of intellectuals, have caused other countries to regard *Nazi* as a synonym for barbarian, has gradually leaked into the minds of the Nazi leaders, and they are making a frantic effort to win admiration for their cultural achievement.⁵⁰

Nor was this idle speculation. As early as October 1934 Goebbels had created a Nazi book-of-the-month club, urging Germans to read good Germans like Darré, Frank and Rosenberg with the startling claim 'books are good companions'.⁵¹ It should be noted in this context that one of the last major exhibits staged at the Library of the Burned Books, 'The Free German Book' of January 1937, was in response to a Goebbels-sponsored exhibition of German literature in Paris the previous year.⁵²

Similarly, German librarians defended the fires with the neat argument that they were both necessary and wildly exaggerated. In Chicago a fractious crowd listened to Dr Frederick Schonemann of the University of Berlin insist that the fires had been lit to combat a 'tremendous flood of books on nudism and

of a generally pornographic nature unfit for either juvenile or adult reading' which had inundated Germany. 'I am sorry to say', continued Schonemann, 'that the authors of many – of a majority – were Jewish.'⁵³ In New York, the director of the Prussian State Library (Berlin) told reporters that his library had been untouched in the 'burning of the Jewish books'.⁵⁴ Nor did the fires automatically disqualify the German institutions from the International Federation of Library Associations. In 1935 in Madrid the Federation announced they would hold their next meeting in Germany in 1940. Carl H. Milam, Executive Secretary of the American Library Association, was horrified, and with some of his Scandinavian colleagues drew up a dissenting motion, arguing that it was utterly inappropriate to even consider holding such a prestigious event in a country that had officially condoned the burning of books. His motion, however, was not well received, and librarians on both sides of the Atlantic preferred to criticize the American delegates for involving themselves in European problems.⁵⁵

WRITERS FOR THE DEFENCE OF CULTURE

The 1930s was the decade of the society and the manifesto, and saw an array of anti-fascist groups promote everything from Hollywood fund-raisers to well-meaning questionnaires published in equally well-meaning journals. In Britain and the Commonwealth socialist enthusiasm had its apotheosis in the famous Left Book Club, derided by its critics as Communism by stealth, but founded, it should be remembered, at a time when the French Left was mounting an effective defence against the so-called Fascist Leagues, culminating in Léon Blum's 'Popular Front' election victories in France in April–May 1936.⁵⁶ The club really flourished after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936, when debates about the defence of culture and the meaning of fascism became urgent and acrimonious. In this context, the metaphor of book burning did not recede, but it went through another stage of development more suited to the exigencies of propaganda.

Undoubtedly the most important attempt to galvanize writers into an anti-fascist coalition was the June 1935 International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture in Paris. The congress was popular and the mood triumphant, and despite sweltering heat, vast crowds pushed into packed halls to listen to Left-aligned speakers such as Barbusse, Gide, Malraux and Pasternak. Spearheaded by the Münzenberg group, the Library of the Burned Books was the engine-room for the entire event: Kantorowicz, the head of the library, was seriously involved, displaying a taste for orthodoxy that contributed to his reputation as a bureaucrat. He spoke on Germany's 'Literary Preparations for War', counselling the delegates not to dismiss the

new German literature as disposable trash when writers like Ernst Jünger and Ernst von Salomon were being used as part of the philosophical groundwork for the physical rearmament of Germany.⁵⁷

However, as the congress unwittingly made clear, polemics on the defence of culture don't always make for particularly convincing reading, and the arguments often seem more fraught than compelling. Despite this, almost nothing was allowed to undermine the congratulatory orthodoxy of the occasion, even if it was only the occasional detours from the parade which had any lasting resonance. Pasternak, tired and troubled by the conditions prevailing in the Soviet Union, did little more than mutter a warning: 'I have only one thing to say to you: do not organise.'⁵⁸ At another point the Italian exile Gaetano Salvemini loudly protested the Soviet government's detention of the old Bolshevik Victor Serge, who had got on the wrong side of Stalin after the break with Trotsky.⁵⁹ There was considerable criticism of the timing of Salvemini's interjection as corrupting the appearance of a unified front, even from those who sympathized with his intentions. The author Anna Seghers, for one, showed the skill of a dialectician when she encouraged delegates to focus on the fate of their comrades held in German concentration camps. She memorably admonished them that in a burning house one could not help someone who had cut his finger.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, at the close of the congress Gide and Rolland wrote to Soviet authorities – the latter to Stalin himself – and Serge was released into the limbo of exile soon after. Refused visas by France, Britain, Denmark and the Netherlands, he was temporarily accepted by Belgium, and eventually France. Six years later, in March 1941, he and Seghers would escape occupied France on the same freighter.

Although predominantly a continental affair, a small British contingent was invited. Virginia Woolf sent her apologies, but E.M. Forster and Aldous Huxley headlined an official expedition that also included more obviously Left representatives like the novelist and Marxist Christina Stead and the Left MP John Strachey. The two headliners, at least, were conspicuously unimpressed by the whole show: Forster wrote desultorily to Woolf that he didn't expect the conference would be of any use.⁶¹ On stage he managed to tell the delegates that he might have become a Communist if he was a younger man, but his title 'Liberty in England' was meant ironically. He detailed and ridiculed cases of suppression in Britain, including the suppression of Hanley's *Boy*, Lawrence's *Rainbow*, and Joyce's *Ulysses*, and also noted the less fashionable debate about the reinvigorated Sedition Act, which was being broadly used against anything that smacked of pacifism.⁶² Yet his speech could hardly be called stirring, not least because he concluded that perhaps his ideas were all rather old-fashioned, and wondered whether he should expect to have them swept away in the next war.

Huxley was probably the least keen of them all, and it is evident from his letters that if he left for Paris with almost no enthusiasm, he came back with none at all. It would prove to be an ‘intolerable bore’, he told Julian Huxley a few days before he left; and it had been a ‘great disappointment’ and little more than ‘endless Communist demagoguery’, he wrote to Victoria Ocampo just after he arrived back in London.⁶³ As his letters indicate, the gulf between Huxley and his hosts was enormous, and only became wider when he got up to speak. It was scarcely the hoped for polemic against fascism beginning, as it did, with a ruffled discussion of the English government’s ‘Empire Marketing Board’. Similarly, while he criticized the coercive power of the new German education, he saw it as merely part of an international slide into atavism and raw political manipulation, announcing incisively that self-promotion – propaganda – had become a logical, if vulgar, armature of standard government.⁶⁴ Propaganda only differed from advertising, he went on to say, because it was marked by brute intransigence rather than absolute indifference. Well into his stride by now, Huxley proceeded to lecture the assembly on the failings of bad or insipid propaganda, announcing to the faithful that the acrobatics of the Comintern had made the term ‘Communist’ synonymous with ‘liar’.⁶⁵ If this wasn’t bad enough, Huxley cheerfully proceeded to derive a few lessons from National Socialism, noting a shift from political diatribes to subtler coercion, where the audience are ‘bribed by decent music to swallow their daily dose of propaganda without repugnance’.⁶⁶ Little wonder that Christina Stead’s article for the *Left Review* gloried in the ardent spirit of their continental friends, but lamented that the ‘same fire did not appear in the genial, gentle speeches of the Englishmen’.⁶⁷

The congress did directly lead to the founding of the International Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture (IAWDC), a sort of international bureau formed in its wake to maintain links between writers committed to the fight ‘against everything that menaces civilisation’.⁶⁸ It was closely linked to groups such as the French Comité de Vigilance des Intellectuels Antifascistes and, in turn, the very British For Intellectual Liberty (FIL), with Leonard Woolf at the helm and, curiously enough given they had barely survived the Paris congress, Huxley and Forster on the committee.⁶⁹ FIL took as its task the founding of a third path that would distance itself from the monoliths of the dictators. Their model was the Italian group *Giustizia e Libertà*, founded in 1930 ‘as a third alternative, neither Fascism nor Communism’ (and with members including Carlo Levi, Carlo and Nello Rosselli and, later, Primo Levi).⁷⁰ It was a message much admired: Orwell, to cite the touchstone of anti-fascism in the period, openly criticized organized Communism for not having ‘made it sufficiently clear that the essential aims of Socialism are justice and liberty’.⁷¹

As this suggests, much of the agitation regarding the defence of culture remained unabashedly the preserve of intellectuals and writers. In this sense,

FIL is very much a product of the environment of 1937, a year memorialized in the World Expo in Paris, where the German and Soviet pavilions competed to see which could be higher, whilst in the Spanish pavilion Picasso rushed to finish 'Guernica'. But 1937 was also the year that the apparent unity of the Popular Front began to fray, and the dangers of Communist orthodoxy started to appear. Gide travelled to the Soviet Union, was duly feted, and came home to publish his deeply equivocal *Return from the U.S.S.R.* Orwell spent the latter half of the year trying to stop the attacks against the alleged Trotskyite influence in the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (better known by the acronym POUM), while Gollancz meekly refused his *Homage to Catalonia*: when it was published at Secker & Warburg, Orwell was duly hissed from the stage for his refusal to denounce the anarchists as traitors.⁷² In December Arthur Koestler, one of the first people to work at the Library of the Burned Books, published his *Spanish Testament*, an account of his weeks in a Spanish prison under threat of execution.⁷³ Although a genuine event for the Left Book Club and hailed as an 'index to the character of fascism' by Harold Laski, his own tour of England in January 1938 was no happier than Orwell's and for similar reasons.⁷⁴ He resigned from the party in the following weeks.

It was in this period that the lines of the propaganda war which would dominate the rest of the decade were firmly drawn, a debate which relied heavily on the emotive symbolism of fire. The National Socialists had adopted fire as their fundamental motif, depicting their pure fire as the last bastion against the arsonists of Communism. Likening the Communists to arsonists and incendiaries was not a particularly new idea, but nor was it strictly inaccurate. To a great extent the analogy had been cemented in connection with the Bolsheviks' iconoclastic attacks on the Russian Orthodox Church. The Belgian consul to Russia, Joseph Douillet, for example, included a photograph of a grinning soldier laden with Church vestments from Rostov-on-Don Cathedral in his *Moscow Unmasked*, describing how 'in full view of the faithful, they made a bonfire of ikons and began to burn effigies of the holy Saints'.⁷⁵ Similarly, a spate of fires in the Bremen docks in the early years of the 1930s were associated with unionist agitation, and in 1932 the steamer *Georges Phillippar* was alleged to have been deliberately set on fire by Communists in the gulf of Aden.⁷⁶

Adherents from both sides began to tread increasingly predictable paths. Most conservatives sadly decried the Republicans as little more than trigger-happy arsonists, devoted to burning the churches of Spain. Some, like the Catholic priest John A. Toomey and the Jesuit sociologist Joseph F. Thorning, hinted darkly at Jewish manipulation of the press.⁷⁷ Arnold Lunn lamented that Communist vandalism had destroyed the 'world famous Camara Santo and the 40,000 volumes of the Oviedo University Library'.⁷⁸ In turn, pro-

Republicans like Anna Louise Strong documented an attack on the Prado by ‘fascist bombers with illuminating flares’ and the dropping of 18 bombs on the National Library.⁷⁹ It began to look like simple arithmetic: the Communists will burn your churches and the fascists your books (*Figures 12 and 13*).



Figure 12 The burning of church goods in Barcelona in August 1936, at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War.

Ullstein Bild.

If this was not difficult enough, some Marxist critics dismissed the whole fascist enterprise as the last gasp of the capitalist machine, meaning that if capitalism had to go, so did its lackeys in the press. It was Christopher Caudwell, already dead in Spain by the time his *Studies in a Dying Culture* was published in 1938, who really took the scalpel to the whole business. In Caudwell’s reading, bourgeois culture was a dangerous sham, and those modern theorists who try and administer to it fail to understand that what is needed is an absolute rejection: ‘we are not the doctors, we are the disease’.⁸⁰ In Caudwell’s argument, both Freud and the Nazis who attacked him are dismissed as interlocking parts of the same decadent system:

By a strange irony, Freud becomes the apologist of the Fascist philosophy which rejects him, which burns his books, and seems repugnant to him. Yet this is the



Figure 13 The burning of lay books in Tolosa (Guipuzcoa) during the Spanish Civil War.

EFE News Service/Ceferino.

irony of all bourgeois culture, that because it is based on a contradiction, it gives rise to the opposite of what it desires ... Freudism, attempting to cure civilisation of its instinctive distortions, points the way to Nazism.⁸¹

His complacency about the book burnings rests on his confidence in the justness and completeness of the Communist revolution, meaning they are imagined as being nothing more than an internecine squabble, just another vignette from a dying culture.

Caudwell's stance was doctrinaire, but reasonably common, especially in the pages of the *Left Review*. When Amabel Williams-Ellis (another member of the Society of Friends of the Library of the Burned Books) reported on the 1934 Soviet Writers' Conference, she approvingly quoted the Russian intellectual Karl Radek to the effect that 'not even the burning of the books by the Nazis in Germany may serve to turn bourgeois writers against Fascism'.⁸² And yet, there was to be no more literature of distraction, Williams-Ellis announced, taking a swipe at the *Decameron* on her way past: 'the art of the writer who accepts capitalism will now be that of the bard who amuses his masters while they hide from the plague'.⁸³ Similarly, in the final issue of the *Left Review* the editors quoted approvingly from the Writers' International, which had

dismissed the relentless triviality of modern literature and its failure to ‘deal with events and issues that matter – the death of an old world and the birth of a new’.⁸⁴ Orwell knew what he was about in *Animal Farm* when, in the first days of their liberation, he showed the animals capering with joy as they burn everything from the hated whips to Boxer’s old straw hat on the rubbish fire.⁸⁵

THREE GUINEAS

Like many of her contemporaries, Virginia Woolf was aware of the rustling of all of the new movements and coalitions, and appears to have been aware of the Society of the Friends of the Burned Books, even if it left her cold. It is difficult to confirm whether or not she actually attended their initial meeting at Margot Asquith’s house in March 1934, but a postcard she sent to a friend almost certainly referring to the event is telling enough: ‘I’ll try to come on Monday if I’m not too horribly dirty. I’d like to. But what nonsense – I’ve met Lady Oxford scores of times – and we always have the same conversation you’ll see.’⁸⁶ Broadly speaking, over the following years Leonard was becoming increasingly active in groups from which Virginia was frantically trying to extricate herself. Some of her letters certainly point to a mood of ironic contempt: in December 1935 she wrote to Julian Bell with the comment that Leonard ‘is doomed to another Committee; much may it profit the world’.⁸⁷ However, to argue that she went into ignoble retreat or was politically apathetic would ignore the unsettling position of *Three Guineas*, not least, as studies by both David Bradshaw and Brenda Silver have shown, because it was prompted by what Bradshaw called ‘her vexatious involvement with both the IAWDC and, in particular, FIL’.⁸⁸

The premise of *Three Guineas* is deceptively simple. Three worthy causes have written asking for financial support. The first is a society being formed to defend intellectual liberty in order to help prevent war, the second to rebuild a neglected women’s college, and the third for a fund designed to help women break into the closed ranks of the professions. The central conceit of the work is that it is an open letter to each of these societies, but its form is much more adventurous and oblique, and as a witty introduction to the bewildering proliferation of Popular Front, pro-Spain, pacifist, anti-fascist, pro-feminist or anti-war societies in the 1930s it is unparalleled.⁸⁹ In this sense, it has a peculiar, second-hand relevance to the activities of the exiles in their library on the Boulevard Arago in the restless years before the long-expected outbreak of the Second World War. It is also an important contemporary statement regarding the political use of culture, not least because she did not argue that culture was somehow above such worldly concerns (money can scarcely be

thought ancillary to culture when its defenders write hopefully for a guinea). Most of all, it is particularly relevant because it is structured around the metaphor of the cleansing or celebratory bonfire as a possible escape route from the impending end of the world. Motivated, in her own telling, by her horror regarding the ongoing war in Spain, the text continually parodies the relationship between literature and fire, ironically testing the notion that book burning could have a positive effect on a moribund society. This is all the more extraordinary because Woolf made it all the way through without once explicitly mentioning the National Socialist benchmark.

The visceral attraction of book burning is intrinsic to *Three Guineas*, as each of her three letters recommends, at least initially, some act of celebratory arson: her reflexive response is to suggest burning things to the ground and starting again. As she vacillated about sending her money to the fund for rebuilding the women's college, she pondered whether she should simply 'ask them to buy rags and petrol and Bryant & May's matches and burn the college to the ground?'⁹⁰ Developing her conceit, Woolf even wondered whether she should only contribute her money if she could be assured that the rebuilt college be made from 'cheap, easily combustible material which does not hoard dust and perpetuate traditions'.⁹¹ Even when she breaks off this reverie with a reminder that she should face the reality of the situation, she returns to her flames with a theatrical flourish:

Take this guinea and with it burn the college to the ground. Set fire to the old hypocrisies. Let the light of the burning building scare the nightingales and incarnadine the willows. And let the daughters of educated men dance round the fire and heap armful upon armful of dead leaves upon the flames. And let their mothers lean from the upper windows and cry 'Let it blaze! Let it blaze! For we have done with this 'education'!⁹²

Woolf was adept at using her footnotes contrapuntally, and one of the most endearing aspects of this hypothetical blaze is that she gave it an apparently reliable paternal pedigree, quoting a former Eton headmaster's hope that education might 'be attacked by some original genius on quite different lines'.⁹³ It's a sly joke, but having warmed to the saturnalia, she just as suddenly dismisses it as hollow carnival, and likely to merely promote the status quo.

Her second letter reaches a similar, yet quite distinct conclusion. This time Woolf is writing to the appeal being prepared to help women in the professions, agreeing to send her money in the hope that it might modify the traditions of the private house. This time the fire is explicitly a beacon rather than a conflagration:

Take this guinea then and use it, not to burn the house down, but to make its windows blaze. And let the daughters of uneducated men dance round the new house, the poor house, the house that stands in a narrow street where omnibuses pass and the street hawkers cry their wares, and let them sing, 'We have done with war! We have done with tyranny!'⁹⁴

Rather than simple destruction, here the blazing windows are the signal for social revolution. Moreover, the letter singles out Joad and Wells as the self-appointed defenders of a culture which was not, perhaps, worth perpetuating, and it's tempting to believe that she must have been familiar with Wells' honorary position in the Society of Friends of the Library of the Burned Books and Joad's private book burning in his *Testament*. If she ultimately resists both book and college burning it is because they only confirm fascist or conservative authority – even a flawed public education is more likely to overthrow what she calls the tyranny of the private house.

The dominant metaphor of fire continues in the third letter, to a group that hoped to defend intellectual liberty as a bulwark against fascism. As Bradshaw has shown, her description of a group formed 'to protect culture and intellectual liberty' proves that Woolf had FIL in mind, as the phrasing is effectively identical to the wording of an appeal they issued in May 1936, and which was drafted at a meeting that Woolf attended.⁹⁵ Her ambivalence to Leonard's 'eternal meetings' full of unkempt philanthropists at whom she longed to 'throw the coal scuttle' is well known, but it is here that she was forced to document the bedrock of fact in *Three Guineas*: the 'very clear connection between culture and intellectual liberty and those photographs of dead bodies and ruined houses'.⁹⁶ The work, in this light, is an important investigation of the immediacy of the totalitarian attacks on culture, especially because it does not retreat into an unsophisticated embrace of what needed to be defended.

At the last gasp, Woolf returns to the language of health, and to cleansing rubbish-fires, imagining that it might be possible to clean away the 'rotten cabbage leaves of our prostituted fact-purveyors'.⁹⁷ This general clean-up might prove, she hypothesized, the signal for some more ceremonial fires, and she imagined a scene in which obsolete words would be burned precisely because they had absolutely no relevance. Burning the word 'Feminist', she concluded, could represent a moment of hope. What this shows is that in *Three Guineas* fire is a desired scourge, but only when it is not imposed from above – less a dictatorial fiat than a spontaneous combustion: 'What could be more fitting than to write more dead words, more corrupt words, upon more sheets of paper and burn them – the words, Tyrant, Dictator, for example? But, alas,

those words are not yet obsolete.’ Where the first two letters had included scenes of extravagant celebration, Woolf’s pyromania shrinks significantly, and she encourages the promotion of intellectual liberty by lighting a ‘penny candle in the window of your new society, and may we live to see the day when in the blaze of our common freedom the words tyrant and dictator shall be burned to ashes’.⁹⁸

For all of its pyromania, *Three Guineas* is a plea for reading rather than the bonfire. A retreat from mass spectacle pervades the whole book. Woolf contributes her three guineas, but without formally joining any of the groups, nor signing any of their manifestos, preferring to remain in her cheerfully paradoxical ‘Society of Outsiders’; the work is more committed to lampooning orthodoxy than trying to replace it, and well suited to Woolf’s unwillingness to think of books as sacred. Rather, *Three Guineas* is animated by a refusal to swallow books whole, but to cut them up like the scrapbooks which underwrite the project. Books, writing, the universities, ‘culture’ itself, are applauded only as things to be involved with, rather than monoliths or mausoleums. Even FIL’s ‘third path’ is not enough when Woolf was betting that the solution lay in obscurity: ‘if we wish to help the human mind to create, and to prevent it from scoring the same rut repeatedly, we must do what we can to shroud it in darkness’.⁹⁹

Nor was Woolf the only writer who hoped for safety in the margins. Amid the contorted orthodoxy of Stephen Spender’s essay on the ‘frozen era’ of Communist culture, the poet retold the story of Lenin’s marginalia to an essay in *Pravda*. Lenin, Spender writes, was so outraged by the author’s reflections on the ‘Proletcult’ that he scribbled all over his copy comments like ‘what a mess’, and, in two places, ‘Bunk!’¹⁰⁰ Nor would Woolf have been unaware of Cecil Day Lewis’ Hogarth Press essay *Revolution in Writing*, an homage to orthodox literature which lurched to the conclusion that poetry might well be the vanguard of the revolution because nobody ever paid it any attention.¹⁰¹ What these examples share is a belief in the need to salvage something from the murky flood of cultural dogma. What they also display, nonetheless, is that while there may be something strangely comforting – something tangible – about the sheer number of published accounts, diaries, and opinion pieces on Germany, the USSR or the Spanish Civil War, that this wealth of information could divert attention from the growing silence at its hub. It was with ferocious irony that Malcolm Muggeridge commented that in the 1930s it was rare to find anyone who wasn’t writing a book, and concluded impiously that it was as though there was a collective impulse to ‘make good what Nazi bonfires had consumed’.¹⁰²

GLAVLIT

The end of the decade was also a period during which the Soviet Union's self-presentation as a paradise for the writer started to look even shabbier. Pasternak was staying underneath the radar by working on uncontroversial translations. Bulgakov's position at the Moscow Art Theatre was no sinecure, and the first parts of his magnum opus *The Master and Margarita* would not be published in Russia until 1966. As early as 1926 his flat was searched by agents of OGPU (the secret police and one of the previous incarnations of the infamous KGB), who confiscated several manuscripts and his diary, both of which were eventually returned after his persistent requests. Once they were back in his possession he immediately shoved them into his stove where, almost smothered by a cloud of ash and cinders, he watched until the pages were completely blackened and then 'furiously finished them off with the poker'.¹⁰³ However, it was too late for such acts of misguided individualism, for the new relationship between totalitarianism and literature confirmed the futility of the gesture: the officials at the Lubyanka had photographed and copied all the documents before they even contemplated returning them.¹⁰⁴

In the West, staunch supporters of Soviet Communism had to undergo their first ideological struggle when the show trials began in December 1936. Lion Feuchtwanger, who witnessed much of the 'Trial of the Seventeen' from the public gallery as part of his own tour of the USSR (*Moscow 1937* – a 'Topical Book' for the Left Book Club) watched as the former Soviet darling and editor of *Izvestia* Karl Radek turned to those about to be executed, waved, and smiled. His behaviour was, Feuchtwanger commented wanly, 'difficult to explain'.¹⁰⁵ One of the few commentators on the trials to make any incisive remarks about them was Victor Serge, who was last seen being defended by a handful of outspoken representatives at the Paris congress. Now living in Belgium, he was deputed to follow the Moscow trials, and in his bitter *From Lenin to Stalin* (1937) he made the irony of the trials recognizable to an English audience. The Soviet rethink meant that its adherents were now being asked to believe that a long list of Communist initiatives and action groups – including the 1935 Writers' Congress – were

the work for many years past, not of dull Stalinists, but of saboteurs, enemy agents, camouflaged Trotskyists. We have been clearly floundering in error. To bring the position home more clearly: all the Ivor Montagus and John Stracheys of Russia are in prison – and the joke is that the English ones find it quite natural!¹⁰⁶

Even the Comintern leader Willi Münzenberg was wrestling with a philosophical rejection which would not be openly confirmed until March

1939, after the fall of Madrid, when he rejected totalitarian conformity by announcing that the 'revolutionary war will not be won with regimented and bullied dead souls'.¹⁰⁷

The final ironic corollary of the efforts of the Library of the Burned Books has been provided by recent research on the vastness of the subterranean literary purge in the Soviet Union. Largely ignored at the time (the few who did comment on it were dismissed as fervid anti-Communists), work by M.Z. Zelenov has shown that as early as 1929 the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party decreed a review of libraries, including the introduction of regularly reviewed blacklists, to be administered by Glavlit, the state censors.¹⁰⁸ Although the process went through periodic reversals and internal critiques, it continued largely unabated for the next decade until Glavlit, showing the inevitable logic of destruction, ordered its own lists destroyed in July 1938. Zelenov, who is cautious about drawing too many conclusions from the scrappy paperwork that is extant, estimates that in the years 1938/39 alone, approximately 24 million books were confiscated for destruction from libraries and booksellers.

This chapter began with Saroyan's story of a writer in his cold apartment who is unable to burn his books for warmth. There is a curious Russian short story by Yevgeny Zamyatin which can serve as its coda. Zamyatin is best known, of course, for his prescient and massively influential dystopia *We*, which had been attacked when the first Russian-language edition appeared in a Prague exile journal; after a few years of mounting persecution, he took the unprecedented step of writing to Stalin to request permission to emigrate.¹⁰⁹ It is clear that Zamyatin had little talent for orthodoxy, and as early as 1922 he had published a story called 'The Cave', set in the Petersburg apartment of Martin Martynych and Masha during a bleak winter. Huddled in their tiny apartment, they are so cold and so poor that they are reduced to burning all of their possessions, Martin stoking the fire with Masha's enthusiastic encouragement: 'Use the chairs, Martin Martynych, and the chests ... The books too: books make an excellent fire, excellent, excellent.'¹¹⁰ Their final downfall comes when they are reduced to stealing firewood from their downstairs neighbour, the Soviet apparatchik Obertyshev. When he confronts them and demands the return of firewood that has already been burned, Martin and Masha's collapse is absolute – amid the final conflagration of all of their belongings 'Martin Martynych swept out some papers from the desk and threw them into the stove.'¹¹¹ When the world is ending, books and papers may be the last things burned, but they are finished off with some gusto.

In 1938, the long-expected Austrian Anschluss took place. By now the Nazis were adept at stage-managing the first period of transition in their newly acquired territories and there were, of course, new book burnings.

In Salzburg, an official with a theatrical bent flicked off the street lights just as the match was applied to 2,000 books.¹¹² Although enacted in front of the usual stupefied crowds, the new round of burnings received only scant attention internationally. There was a formal protest in the United States, when Williams College in Massachusetts made a firm offer to the Vienna Library to buy their condemned books, and protested vociferously when it was ignored by the German government. The dilemma of what to burn and the attraction of protest fires is clearly shown in the protests on the American campus: to demonstrate their support for the offer, it was reported, some of the students built a huge pyre in the Sophomore Quadrangle where they planned to burn Hitler in effigy. Even this was thwarted, however, when it was rescued by a 'group of pro-fascist conservatives'.¹¹³ Another fight broke out over the attempt to burn a swastika which had been brought forward as replacement for the straw Hitler. The swastika, too, was rescued, while on a crowded balcony a moustached undergraduate did an impression of Hitler to the cheers and taunts of the crowd.

5

‘Swing, They’re Burning Books’

... though the burning of books remains
the most perverse gesture.

H.D.

In July 1940, *Life* magazine published a series of paintings and drawings made by American and British children who had been asked to respond creatively to the war news.¹ The first paintings reproduced in the article are by American children, produced under the guidance of the New York University Clinic for Gifted Children. One 15-year-old boy’s painting of a soldier disembowelled on barbed wire hints at over-exposure to Salvador Dali, while 13-year-old David Simonson is photographed proudly displaying his sketch of a soldier protecting a woman from an advancing tank. ‘The woman at the soldier’s feet’, he announced, ‘is Civilization.’ After this cavalcade of American Art, the *Life* editors seemed a little nonplussed by the efforts of the British children, and evidently felt the need to caution their readers that the designs were a little more prosaic, sounding a warning note about their ‘childish zest in wartime gadgets ... fantastic bombing planes and anti-aircraft guns’. And, sure enough, most of the British images are more interested in the Blitz than in the great movements of art, with several drawing long lines of stylized bombers being fired on by anti-aircraft guns.

It is tempting to draw some rather banal conclusions about the width of the Atlantic, but there is one picture that is not so easily categorized. Strangely out of place after all of the rather obvious allegories and pictures of fantastic weaponry, comes the ‘Burning of the Books ... by Gert Keller, 15, son of British parents who lived in Germany from Hitler’s rise until three years ago. Gert’s painting has elements of satire with the three brown-shirt troopers saluting the bonfire, and soldier at right strutting in his too-big uniform. Sign over door at left means Jews not admitted.’ On the left, three almost indistinguishable troopers in brown shirts turn towards the central bonfire, forming a barrier that visually confirms the exclusion of the Jews from the building behind them. To

the right, an armed SS soldier smiles as he holds back a crowd whose simplistic facial expressions depict a range of emotions from dismay to curiosity. Towards the back one spectator is clearly smiling (*Figure 14*).



Figure 14 Schoolboy Gert Keller's dramatic rendering of the Berlin fires, as it was reproduced in *Life* magazine of 15 July 1940.

Keller, who would have been an eight-year-old at the time of the 1933 fires, has painted a faultless visual synthesis of book burning qua fascism. Perhaps that is why a man in a dark fedora is silhouetted against the pyre, almost indistinguishable amongst the flames. In the flattened perspective of Keller's painting it is easy to miss him on a first viewing, but once noticed he seems to become the natural, if enigmatic, focus (not least because his featureless silhouette contrasts so sharply with the simplistic facial expressions of the others). In placing this intermediary between the viewer and the fire, Keller's naïve painting might be interpreted as a call for a new way of looking at the spectacle of book burning.

BARBARIANS AT THE GATE

From our standpoint, Keller's naïve picture seems perfectly appropriate, not least because it is a simplistic but accurate record of the infamous burning of the books on the Opernplatz. It is a neat match with the well-known images

of grinning students hurling books onto bonfires that are accorded such a central place in the historiography of the Third Reich; it neatly replicates, most powerfully of all, the contours of an event which is still familiar from the newsreel footage commonly used in the introductions of documentaries and museum exhibits alike.² Such familiarity, however, is misleading, because it accords the bonfires a greater significance than most contemporaries would have allowed. It has created, in effect, the commonplace version of what book burning means – complete with the sense that it should be resisted as the hallmark of totalitarianism. However, it is necessary to excavate how this commonplace was derived, as well as the long history of how book burning came to be mobilized politically, tentatively at first in the British tradition, but then more stridently, as the war progressed, in the United States.

The conclusions reached, for example, by Guy Stern in his essay on the American response to the bookfires can easily be made to appear too absolute. Stern's persuasive argument about the surprising appropriateness of the American response, in particular, can give the impression of an immediate and cogent denunciation.³ More overtly, a feeling of pushing the evidence too hard is clear, for example, in the recent United States Holocaust Memorial Museum exhibit for the 70th anniversary of the first fires, where the caption to one rather blithe contemporary cartoon noted awkwardly that while editorial opinion was 'nearly unanimous in its condemnation', it was 'uneven in its rhetoric'.⁴ Comments like this efface the wide diversity of initial responses to the book burnings which, as earlier chapters have shown, included all manner of attempts to understand the attraction and the use of book burning as a political tool or a cultural symbol. It was a period in which even those writers who attacked or dismissed the event did not necessarily relinquish the possibility that it might be invigorating and new, a stance usefully summarized by the satirist Malcom Muggeridge, who asked in 1939, what 'if there was no civilisation left to destroy, only débris, rubbish, easily inflammable?'⁵

The most thorough rewriting of the book burning would have to wait, naturally enough, for the first years of the war. Countless pamphlets and articles were quickly published defining resistance to National Socialism as part of the defence of civilization, but as the war progressed, this rather vague obligation would cohere around the striking and rejuvenated image of the books burned in 1933. It was, that is, only because of the demands of wartime propaganda, especially on the American Home Front, that fascist barbarism became firmly linked to the bookfires, and a truly orthodox position on book burning was forged. Gert Keller's painting, then, can be regarded as a sign of the return to prominence of a specific version of book burning. After all, Keller's painting was published just under a year before George Orwell's famous broadcast in which he observed that book burning was the 'most characteristic activity

of the Nazis'.⁶ A tangible shift was taking place, embellishing the memory of the Nazi book burnings so that they functioned as an unheeded warning. The general trend is neatly captured in two articles by the American journalist Heywood Broun. Immediately after the first fires in 1933 he dismissed them as a schoolboy prank, waggishly announcing that 'somebody ought to tell Adolf's adolescents that it isn't funny any more'.⁷ However, when he wrote an article on the new censorship in Austria after the 1938 Anschluss, his tone had shifted dramatically: 'Books have been burned, and yet they live. Nor can fire or flame, humiliation or torture make an end of liberty. The wall of Nazi tyranny is tall; upon it floats its sinister emblem. But the voice of peoples of the world will and must be heard. That wall shall fall down flat.'⁸ Gone is the jovial tone of the first report, replaced with a stern affirmation of the power of the word.

The shift in Broun's writing is almost identical to that dramatized by the American journalist Raymond Gram Swing in his widely broadcast and often reprinted 1942 address 'Berlin Bonfire'.⁹ Timed for the ninth anniversary of the first bonfires, the address was a watershed in the wartime development of the symbolism of book burning. Swing, like Heywood Broun and many other writers and reporters, made scattered references on the subject throughout the 1930s. In a series of essays for *The Nation* on American political demagogues such as Huey Long, for example, he had made the loaded aside that Long, for all of his self-aggrandisement, would never 'burn the books of his contemporaries in a public bonfire'.¹⁰ But, in 1942, Swing showed how it had proved easy to dismiss the meaning of the bookfires, remembering how in 1933 he had been granted an audience with Dr Rudolf Breitscheid, a Social Democrat and foreign minister during the Weimar Republic, and now an exhausted refugee. Shocked by the old politician's frail health, Swing told of standing awkwardly waiting for him to speak. Expecting to hear of the fate of many of their mutual friends, he was, he admitted, startled when Breitscheid said 'weakly, but with horror: "Swing, they're burning books."' Swing described his own response: 'for a moment I thought he was being irrelevant. I was expecting news of persecution, torture, and terrible personal disasters, and he began by mentioning what I already knew, that in Berlin they were burning books.' Yet Breitscheid's horror was instrumental in him getting a new perspective on the event, which he began to see as a shorthand for the collapse into totalitarian rule: 'But he was a true messenger of tragedy,' he concluded, 'for that *was* in the furthestmost depth of tragedy, the burning of books. That was the symbol of it.' Swing's assessment, published six months after the United States entered the war, was a harrowing reminder of the relevance of book burning.

During the same period in Britain, explicit references to book burnings were more sporadic but, as with Orwell's now famous aside, several British writers

began to argue that the fires were not only critical to National Socialism's self-definition, but created a natural emblem of the need to resist. Even though many of their comments have a rather occasional tone, they began to refer concisely to book burning as the symbol of Nazi rule. The theme was pursued by the editor of the *Picture Post*, German exile Stefan Lorant, who used the same photograph of the Berlin fires three times within a year in his magazine, the first time with the explicit caption 'Why Writers, Artists, Scientists Refused to Stay in Nazi Germany'.¹¹ Similarly, E.M. Forster's anti-Nazi broadcasts of 1940 used the burning of the books in Berlin and the 'holocausts in the provinces' as the perfect illustration of his definition of Germany as an essentially 'hostile principle'.¹² His version of the event is succinct:

The Nazis wished it to symbolise their cultural outlook, and it will. It took place on May 13 [*sic*], 1933. That night twenty-five thousand volumes were destroyed outside the University of Berlin, in the presence of some forty thousand people. Most people enjoy a blaze, and we are told that the applause was tremendous.¹³

As the sardonic tone of this passage implies, Forster wanted simultaneously to acknowledge the scale and the threat represented by the German attack on literature, but still express optimism about fascism's demise. To do so he had recourse to another set of fire imagery, by describing how he hoped that the Nazi's vulgar flames would be resisted by a much older fire: 'Creation lies at the heart of civilisation like fire in the heart of the earth.'¹⁴

It is fair to say that the writers who struggled to articulate the need to defend culture often drifted into a certain vagueness, as they tried to resolve the basic paradox that while 'culture' remained an intangible concept, its annihilation was easily imaginable. As a result, the rhetoric trod well-worn paths, usually relying on images of the fragile fire of civilization being threatened by the barbarian hordes, as with popular philosopher C.E.M. Joad's description of the results of a Nazi victory:

Perhaps there would be retreats in which men would gather to keep alive something of the old values and the old culture, as the monks kept alive the remnants of the Græco-Roman civilization after the invasion of the barbarians and the sack of Rome. But such retreats cannot, I submit, establish themselves in a continent dominated by the Nazis.¹⁵

Amid such rhetoric few could miss the symbolic importance of the burning of the books. As Joad noted, the Nazis had 'exorcized culture, burned books, exiled artists, scientists, writers and philosophers, and made war upon the mind of man'.¹⁶ Although few could dispute this list, it's worth remembering

that his ideas on book burning had not always been so martial, and that in 1937 he had gleefully described his own personal burning of the pulps offered to him during a stay in hospital.

Forster and Joad's tentative comments on the dangers of remaining ambivalent to book burning had their half-expected confirmation when Hitler launched his long-expected blitzkrieg through Belgium and the Low Countries in May 1940. A generation earlier Louvain had been razed in the aftermath of the German advance of August 1914, after the retreating British forces had seemingly relinquished the town, becoming one of the biggest cultural losses of the war and a centrepiece in accusations of German brutality. The memory of this loss was often uppermost in the reports being lodged in 1940 by the American journalists who were suffered to tag along in the German army's wake. With little or no chance of keeping up with the attack itself, many of these early reports were necessarily quite general, not to say vague. When Harold Denny, for one, reported conditions on the Belgian front, he was able to give only the sketchiest impression and, with few confirmed reports to rely on, his article was fattened with a stock description of the Louvain library, accompanied by a two-column photograph and the diffident reassurance that so far the line was holding and the 'new library was untouched'.¹⁷ If this unusual reassurance implied that Denny expected the worst, he did not have long to wait. Two days later, on the night of 16 May, the library caught fire and burned to the ground. When this destruction was reported in the *New York Times*, the photograph used for Denny's article was simply recycled, and the earlier caption 'The City's Famous Library' replaced with its updated version: 'Destroyed, Rebuilt and Destroyed Again. The famous library in Louvain, which is in smoking ruins.'¹⁸ Yet, despite the library's importance, Hilda Urén Stubbings has noted that the international response to this second burning was curiously muted, especially given that the rebuilding of the library had been an international event little more than a decade earlier.¹⁹

There was, that is, no automatic nor immediate reaction to the loss of the library; if anything, the reports are often marked by a sense of fatigue. When William Shirer, already the most famous of the American correspondents in Germany, described arriving in Louvain to see the gutted library three days after the fire, he made no judgement on whether the retreating British or advancing Germans were ultimately responsible, and dismissed attempts to pin the responsibility on barbaric German incendiaries. Shirer's response is captured in his recollection of a conversation with the German officer in charge: "And the books?" I ask my commandant, who strikes me more and more like a decent fellow. "Burnt," he says, "all of them, probably."²⁰ Shirer's world-weary 'war is hell' pose could scarcely be more effectively conveyed had he remembered lighting a cigarette from the embers. In large part, no

doubt, this was due to the palpable reluctance to be caught playing with hackneyed atrocity propaganda.²¹ Especially in the United States there was an unwillingness to adopt the style of First World War propaganda, and even so, one influential contemporary study mocked the press for abandoning 'even the pretence to objectivity', and openly criticized journalists for describing 'the fighting in Northern France as civilization's last stand'.²² This attempt to retain a sense of proportion (or irony) was a common response of writers who were trying to filter an accurate report from the official blandishments.

This does not mean that the news from Louvain was simply ignored. There was, for instance, an interesting *New York Times* editorial, which asked with a rhetorical flourish whether 'books matter when civilization itself is at stake?' If not a ringing confirmation, their response was telling enough: 'At Louvain they do.'²³ Indeed, readers were encouraged to ponder a new pattern of resistance: 'The enemies of books – of all free and tolerant thought – had their day when the library at Alexandria was burned ages ago. They have had their days since. But we must have faith that they do not finally conquer.' As this editorial shows, the loss of the new Louvain University library did have some impact, contributing to the sense that civilization would be defined by its apparent attitude towards books. Over the following year the destroyed library made occasional appearances in the press, especially when the rumour circulated that the British had deliberately set the fire to coax the United States into the war.²⁴

These reports culminated in a *New York Times* editorial of April 1941, which was one of the strongest editorial pronouncements on cultural losses published during the war. The catalyst for the editorial had been an interview with one of Louvain's most important benefactors, President of Columbia University Nicholas Murray Butler, in which he stated that a colleague in Louvain had cautioned that they would have to 'start again at the bottom'.²⁵ In response, the editorial compared Butler's comments with official German reports claiming that the latest Luftwaffe raids on London were in strict retaliation for damage inflicted by the RAF in the 'cultural centre' of Berlin.²⁶ Fully one year before the start of the infamous Baedeker Blitz, the editorial groped towards the definition of a similarly cultural conflict.²⁷ After cataloguing the damage wrought in cities like Amiens, Warsaw, Rotterdam, and Belgrade, the paper made this assessment, worth quoting at length:

And yet, despite the fine record of the German war machine in destroying other people's libraries, it cannot hope to compete, for permanent results, with earlier achievements in the same field. When the Arabs destroyed the Alexandrian Library or, before that, when the Goths and the Vandals sacked the cultural centers of the

Roman Empire, the lost treasures were permanently lost. To replace the burned books at Louvain or Warsaw is merely a question of money to buy new copies.

The art of printing stands in the way of Hitler's plans for the human spirit. The books thrown on Nazi bonfires soon after Hitler's arrival in power were only a symbolic gesture. There were plenty of copies outside of Germany, or for that matter hidden away in the Third Reich. Hitler's only hope for uprooting anti-Nazi culture must be by conditioning the minds of the subjugated peoples so as to immunize them against the printed word. His serfs must be completely sterilized against the impact of dangerous thoughts, as his Axis friends in Tokyo call them.

The mocking tone is unmistakable, but the conclusions drawn are less convincing, because they appear to reduce culture to little more than buying a few more books. For all their faith in the virtues of mechanical reproduction, they are still registering the destruction of Louvain or Warsaw – and the burnings of 1933 – as if they were simply symbolic, and they are still confident that the 'art of printing' will survive any censorship less than absolute conditioning. Having said this, the tone of the last sentence over-confidently implies that the possibility of such a complete sterilization from 'dangerous thoughts' is highly unlikely.

THE MORTAL STORM

The editorial on Louvain was published during a period when the needs of wartime propaganda were making firm the Nazis' apotheosis as book burners. An important vehicle in this process was the MGM film *The Mortal Storm* (1940), based on Phyllis Bottome's popular 1937 novel of the same name. Bottome's novel was set in a German university town in Bavaria, and centres on the family of the eminent Professor Johann Toller as they endure racial and political vilification during the first years of Nazi power. In the book, Professor Toller's classes are boycotted and he is coerced into resigning his position because of his refusal to teach Nazi racial science. He is imprisoned, and ultimately dies, in a concentration camp. The main character is the Professor's daughter Freya, herself a gifted medical scientist, and the novel depicts her gradual exclusion from university and society, not only because her father is both Jewish and a recalcitrant intellectual, but more explicitly because of her relationship with a sturdy young peasant and Communist called Hans. When Hans is shot and killed by Freya's pro-Nazi brother whilst attempting to cross into Austria, Freya must protect her unborn child, and the novel closes with her own successful escape over the Alps.

The novel showed a distinct interest in the dismantling of the universities, dramatized through the personal attacks on the sympathetic characters of both

the old Professor and Freya. It even includes an important scene depicting the censorship of books, when a pair of eminently reasonable stormtroopers review Professor Toller's private library with threatening civility. Pleased with his willingness to submit to the search, and 'just to be on the safe side', the soldiers take away 'some foreign scientific journals, and a book or two that they said might have to be burned later on'.²⁸ Rather than a great book burning spectacle, *Bottome* features the quotidian policing of the home, the invasion of the domestic scene rather than the pageant.²⁹ As a result, tracking the development of *The Mortal Storm* from novel to film – the 'novel six nations banned', announced the film's preview breathlessly – gives an insight into the way that the imagery of book burning was being transformed. The film was one of the earliest Hollywood anti-Nazi productions and, as *Life* noted laconically in its 'Film of the Week' review, the effect 'on U.S. movie fans as they watch swastika storm troopers beat, bully, grill and shoot such favorites as James Stewart [and] Margaret Sullavan ... requires no prophet'.³⁰ Its release also provoked a distinct hardening in the relationship between Hollywood and the German government; Goebbels was so incensed that he promptly banned all MGM films from the German territories.³¹

The final cut of the film was released in June 1940 with some fairly routine collapsing of the novel's convoluted plot, but also with the controversial decision to have Freya shot and killed trying to escape over the Alps.³² The film also featured a renewed emphasis on the old Professor's dismissal from his university and, where the novel had involved the reader in the nuances of the purging of the academy and the private home, the film replaced this with a vast set-piece of students burning books, borrowing heavily from the widely known and visually iconic German newsreel footage of the Berlin fires in 1933.³³ Director Frank Borzage was able to convey a sense of horror in one carefully framed sequence in which the Professor's class is disrupted by uniformed students led by his former protégé Fritz, before the scene cuts to the old Professor gathering his things from an empty lecture theatre. In the darkened theatre the flickering shadows of flames play on the wall, and stepping to the window he looks down on a huge crowd of uniformed students gathered around a bonfire. In a direct borrowing from the original 'fire incantations' used at most of the burnings in Nazi Germany, he hears them chanting 'we burn you' and throwing books onto the pyre: Heinrich Heine and Albert Einstein are specifically named. In 1933 every denunciation had been paired with its positive opposite, but Borzage chose to show only the destructive chant and so elided this complexity, reinforcing the depiction of the event as barren pageantry and mob spectacle.

The scene further highlights the irony that for such a deliberately spectacular event, book burning only rarely makes it onto film. When it does – and François

Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* is perhaps the exception here – it is usually introduced by a coaching of the audience so as to make sure that the feeling is one of horror or disdain. Like the painting by the schoolboy Gert Keller, in which a silhouetted figure stands in the foreground between the viewer and the fire, an enforced distancing is the standard cinematic device. In *The Mortal Storm*, Borzage provides the paradigmatic example of how a director can simultaneously allow a full-blooded portrayal of the event but also try and frame the audience response by introducing it from the perspective of the gentle professor watching sadly from his window above the courtyard. The film, released at a time when news of the destruction in Louvain was first filtering through, was an important moment in the recycling of the book burnings into an increasingly formal version: they were, in short, being mobilized.

THEY BURNED THE BOOKS

Faced with the relentless conformity of the German press, those who criticized it increasingly relied on bathos and slogans of their own. In the United States this meant that the symbol of the book burning began to gather momentum, and one of the key figures in this process was the poet and Librarian of Congress Archibald MacLeish. Paul Fussell may have recently characterized MacLeish as having all of the subtlety of a 'commissar', but his effect on both American library culture and on what he thought of as *arming* the American people was immense.³⁴ As early as 1940, in his essay *The Irresponsibles*, he demanded that people see the burning of the books not as a decoration to the age, but its 'essential nature'.³⁵ It was also in this essay that he accused his fellow writers and scholars of being worse than irrelevant when faced with the threat of fascism, because they were too mired in their own self-importance, and could not write like Milton or Voltaire (for MacLeish, a moral rather than an artistic failing). Instead, he thundered, the authors had been 'fearful, watchful ... inactive' and 'impotent', and he offered this summary of the writer as effete recluse: 'He is the pure, the perfect type of irresponsibility – the man who acts as though the fire could not burn him because he has no business with the fire.'³⁶ Although MacLeish generally avoided naming names, his tirade did not win him too many friends. Ernest Hemingway, for one, was not amused, and many others dismissed the poet as self-indulgently 'wrapping himself in the flag'.³⁷

Given such public pronouncements by the Librarian of Congress, it is hardly surprising that some of the fiercest exponents of MacLeish's position were periodicals such as the *Library Journal*. Indeed, from October 1940 through June 1942, it had at the head of every editorial (and sometimes on the front

cover as well) a quote by the Commissioner of Education John W. Studebaker: 'When people are burning books in other parts of the world, we ought to be distributing them with greater vigor; for books are among our best allies in the fight to make democracy work.'³⁸ In this light, when a Pennsylvania high school interpreted the Book Week slogan of 1941 'Forward with Books' to be synonymous with 'Forward with Democracy', the editors of the *Library Journal* derived a motto: 'in America we do not burn books; we build libraries'.³⁹

If this motto was going to stand, there were a few housekeeping issues to be cleared away, as Princeton University librarian Verna E. Bayles noted pragmatically in her essay on 'Books Under Fire'. After discussing Louvain and quoting MacLeish, she made one memorable admonition regarding a contemporary newsreel which showed:

a postal or customs official in San Francisco burning tons of 'subversive' literature. The actual destruction is relatively unimportant so far as the significance of the material is concerned. What is very important is that if we have not learned that the burning of the printed page does not destroy the idea, there is little use in opposing those who believe that ideas may be so destroyed. Moreover, regardless of the threat of such an act to the principles on which our social and political institutions are based, the burning of books and pamphlets is a great waste of pulp which might be used to save some of the irreplaceable archives in England.⁴⁰

Bayles reminded her fellow-librarians that if the United States wanted to promote itself as a country which builds libraries rather than burns books, a logical first step would be to stop filming their officials burning tons of subversive literature – especially since if books had to be destroyed, then pulping was such an economically viable alternative. Books would still have to be destroyed, but it was important not to give any impression of enjoying the event. As a rejection of fascist pageantry, Bayle's reminder had an unlikely postscript in a short note to patriots in *Life* for September 1940, which reminded readers that, although it was appropriate to burn any American flag too tattered to be repaired, usually 'burning is done very inconspicuously'.⁴¹

Throughout the war, the interdiction against book burning developed alongside vigorous encouragement for what one author unsentimentally called 'patriotic pulping' – particularly in Britain, waste-paper drives were commonplace.⁴² An evaluation of just one such 'Book Salvage Drive' at Bristol in late 1942 reported that of the 750,000 books submitted, almost 88 per cent were chosen for pulping after review by the organizing committee.⁴³ In one twelve-month period it was estimated that 50 million books were scrutinized in Britain alone.⁴⁴ A volunteer at a drive in Oxford described separating 'Pulps' and 'Keeps' under the surveillance of librarians and bibliophiles to try and keep

rarities from the shredder and to ensure that no private ‘moral censorship’ of, for instance, Rabelais or Gollancz’s Left Book Club was exercised. The only serious censorship she reported was in the choice of books destined to be sent to POW camps, which had to be scanned to make sure nothing banned by the Germans was included: even anthologies which included poets such as Siegfried Sassoon or James Elroy Flecker were withdrawn.⁴⁵ Yet even with this safeguard against censorship, there was often tacit awareness of the fascination with destroying books, a taste that was satisfied at the Bristol drive, where a working shredder was installed in public showrooms in the middle of the city. A similar sense of satisfaction was captured in a photograph published in the *New York Times* which showed two cheerful sorters from a 1941 paper drive lounging on top of an enormous pile of copies of *Mein Kampf* destined to be pulped.⁴⁶ As the caption explains, the company to which the paper was given was donating £10 for every ton of waste paper salvaged in St Pancras during one week that month.

Information on much of the paper salvage is scarce, but its outlines can be traced in vignettes such as a brief rustling in the letters pages of the British *Picture Post* after one correspondent gleefully reported that his grandmother had given her second Bible to the salvage. ‘Do you really think it was a fine thing to send a Bible to be a means of destruction?’ wrote L.V. Evans of the Union Society in Cambridge.⁴⁷ Another reader was upbraided for sending in notice that he had burned an issue that he had disliked: ‘to see its impure pages flare up must have given his outraged feelings a holy glow, but to read of it will bring cold comfort to the heroes who braved torpedoes and mines to bring the pulp it was made from across the Atlantic’.⁴⁸ Predictably, Orwell, for one, was not shy of the issue, and many of his reviews commented on how the much older questions as to whether any given book was actually worth printing took on new significance. Books from the period, especially those printed in England, are uniformly horrid, with scarcely any margins and printed on thin, yellowing wood-pulp paper that is coarse to the touch. Perhaps the best way to hint at the scale of the pulping is to note that a guide to archival management published after the war included a chapter on ‘paper-salvage hazard’ among more traditional threats such as fire or water.⁴⁹

While pulping continued to become an important aspect of the Home Front in Britain and the United States, book burning continued to be proscribed and, once again, it was MacLeish who was defining the importance of the latter. When he addressed the American Booksellers’ Association in 1942 he pointed out that it lacked only ‘four days of being the ninth anniversary of the Nazi bonfire’.⁵⁰ Like Swing, his speech was a strong example of the wartime rewriting of the bonfires, not least because it struggled to resolve the act as

simultaneously the action of 'coarse and brutal high-school boys', and also a perverse tribute 'to the power of the book'.⁵¹ He asked his audience:

do we recognize the power of books as truly as the Nazi mob which dumped them on a fire – do we truly and actually, in our lives as well as in our words, ascribe as great an influence to the books we write and publish and sell and catalogue and teach, as those who fear the free men's books enough to burn them?⁵²

MacLeish was in a bit of a muddle. Quite apart from the admission that burning a book was still a way of believing in its power, he drew the hasty conclusion that books were 'the strongest and the most enduring weapons in our fight to make the world a world in which the free can live in freedom'.⁵³ If this means anything at all, it has little to do with aspiring to a free press. However, if MacLeish needed any support, he would receive it from President Roosevelt, who sent to the conference his famous and often reprinted letter on the importance of books: 'We all know that books burn – yet we have the greater knowledge that books can not be killed by fire. People die, but books never die. No man and no force can abolish memory ... In this war, we know, books are weapons.' There is something evasive here, a reliance on the indefinable spectral quality famously used by Milton in his *Areopagitica* ('books are not absolutely dead things'), but it was still a clear statement of intent and support, and it provided one of the most important slogans of the war. Within a month a publisher's advertising campaign would feature the whole letter, but reprinted under the simpler martial slogan 'Books are Weapons'.⁵⁴

Around the same time, in the autumn of 1942, a group of important German exiles organized a great symposium at Hunter College in New York in commemoration of the 110th anniversary of the death of Goethe. Amid all of the festivities, one speech in particular was singled out in the international press, a reflection on book burning by the refugee theologian Paul Tillich. It was rather an elegant fit for the event, as Tillich began by quoting at length from Goethe's famous description of the burning of a French romance in Frankfurt, an event which had horrified the poet so greatly that he had tracked down a copy of the book for his own library. Neatly, Tillich went on to describe the book burning he had personally witnessed in the same city, describing a vast inquisitorial scene in which books were dragged to the flames in the square outside the famous Römer by a pastor driving oxen and cart. 'Time had run backwards 200 years', he concluded. And yet, his speech was a different kind of polemic. He was relatively sanguine about the fires, believing that the attempt to destroy 'thought' was destined to failure, as it had always risen from the ashes stronger than before. And yet, he also made the comment that any book which could not outlive the attempt to destroy it, did not deserve to: 'much is

rightly reduced to ashes' ('Vieles ist mit Recht zu Asche geworden'). Rather than describing the need to proscribe such fires, he cautioned the leaders of the German exile who had gathered in the auditorium, to take the fire as a symbol of spiritual transformation and rebirth.⁵⁵

Rather than Tillich's speech, it was the less complicated position of MacLeish and Swing that was readily adopted, pointing the way for the resurgence of interest in the book burnings. All three, however, were ancillary to a radio play prepared by Stephen Vincent Benét in 1942. Benét was a well-known poet and he had, moreover, cemented his position as a popular voice for patriotism with radio plays including *Nightmare at Noon* and *Listen to the People*.⁵⁶ Following their success, he was approached in March 1942 by Chester Kerr, Chief of the Book Division of the Office of Facts and Figures, who was canvassing the idea of hosting a radio programme to commemorate the anniversary and educate the public by stimulating 'the free world's memory of the Hitlerian orgy of destruction'.⁵⁷ Kerr was working under the aegis of a new body called the Council on Books in Wartime, a voluntary coalition of some of the biggest American publishers, which aimed to foster American morale and is best remembered as the driving force behind the immensely popular 'Armed Service Editions' – the mass-produced paperbacks designed specifically for the military.⁵⁸ Even the council, however, was unprepared for the impact of *They Burned the Books*, which its official history later called 'the best radio program which ever issued from the Council on Books in Wartime'.⁵⁹

It is a simple play. In the first half, Benét used Schiller and Heinrich Heine to represent the stifled voice of Germany's literary tradition, erased from the new textbooks and histories by a regime of violent stormtroopers led by the 'limping doctor' (Goebbels) and the 'swollen ex-Army pilot' (Goering).⁶⁰ Having described the German collapse, Benét moved the Berlin fires to the American homeland, and implicated the listener in a tangible threat to American identity dramatized in the re-education of 'Joe Barnes' ('Looks different in his brown shirt, doesn't he?'). Young Joe is forced to negotiate a complete inversion of the fundamental tenets of American identity. The Gettysburg Address has been scrapped, Columbus has become 'an honorary Aryan of the second class' and the Declaration of Independence is 'all wrong'. Thomas Jefferson is completely unknown and Washington considered weak and inept, while the perennial traitor Benedict Arnold is favoured as 'a man much ahead of his time'.⁶¹ What the play provided was an identifiable version of the effects of Nazi education, likened to the cauterization of a child's mind by an 'electric wire'.⁶² The Nazi penchant for book burning depicted by Benét was also symbolically important because he openly called for another type of fire to combat this totalitarian nightmare:

We, too, shall build a fire, though not in fear,
Revenge or barren hate, but such a great
And cleansing fire it shall leap through the world
Like leaping flame!⁶³

Similarly, freedom is called a 'bright candle that shall not be quenched'.⁶⁴ This inextinguishable candle represented Benét's optimistic conclusion that all of Joe's indoctrination will not be able to completely erase the fundamental tenets of American identity: Joe pretends to have forgotten, but it is obvious that he is still able to remember the words of Abraham Lincoln. He still has, that is, a core belief that has not been extinguished by his training.

The play's denouement asks the audience to decide on the fate of civilization, which becomes a question of Enlightenment faith filtered through the myth of the cave:

Decide whether man goes forward towards the light,
Stumbling and striving, clumsy – but a man –
Or back to the dark ages, the dark gods,
The old barbaric forest that is fear.⁶⁵

In the final scene, the need for spiritual resistance is further dramatized when Schiller and Heine are joined by an odd coalition of John Milton and Jonathan Swift, Walt Whitman and Victor Hugo, Alfred Tennyson and Mark Twain, who chorus that the exiles 'walking in our streets' ('exiled for truth and faith') shall 'light our fire'.⁶⁶ In the final lines of the play it is this revitalized fire which is set to consume all of those who have tried to extinguish it including, of course, Hitler himself. When *They Burned the Books* was first published in the anthology *We Stand United* (1945) it was accompanied by an engraved image showing a building in flames. Although there is neither a caption nor a description to explain the image, it is hardly surprising to realize that it is an unambiguous representation of Louvain library as it was rebuilt after the First World War.

BOOKS ARE WEAPONS

This groundswell of interest delighted one German exile in particular, the erstwhile chief of the Library of the Burned Books in Paris, Alfred Kantorowicz. He had been lucky to escape from France after being interned in the notorious French camp at Les Milles, but reached New York, via Marseilles and Martinique, with the help of Varian Fry in late 1941. In the United States, whilst working as a reporter for CBS, he returned to his fixation with book

burning, writing several similar articles for successive anniversaries. In fact the symbolic weight of the anniversary can be seen in his progression from small German-language exile publication (*Aufbau*, 1942), through broader English-language intellectual journal (*Free World*, 1943), to, finally, mass circulation newspaper (*New York Times Magazine*, 1944).

It was because of his involvement in the Paris library that he was asked to speak at the late 1942 opening of an exhibition at the New York Public Library, *Books the Nazis Banned*, the catalogue for which is prefaced by a quote from Roosevelt about how if ‘the fires of freedom and civil liberties burn low in other lands, they must be made to burn brighter in our own’.⁶⁷ The exhibition was launched with a ceremony on the steps of the library, and several European writers including Oskar Maria Graf and Genevieve Tabouis made short speeches, with the ceremony culminating in the unveiling of a five-foot-tall book which ‘burned’ in flames made of strips of coloured cloth: Kantorowicz later remembered that anyone who bought a war bond was allowed to extinguish the flame, so to speak.⁶⁸ This seems like a well-conceived display; however, it’s hard to know what to make of the original plan which, as reported in the *New York Times*, was to have actually burned a representative sample of books. It was vetoed, incredibly enough, not because of the wonky symbolism, but after representations by the Park Department and the Treasury; the former because of fears an open fire might damage the stonework, the latter for reasons unspecified (although one assumes in order to stop government officials publicly destroying government property).⁶⁹ In the annual report the Library Director characterized the installation as designed to show ‘the absurd lengths to which such intellectual tyranny can go, and to emphasize its ultimate futility’ – hence, the cover art for the catalogue showed three uniformed Nazis running from an enormous book about to crush them.⁷⁰

By May 1943, occasional comments against the book burning had evolved into nationwide interest, bolstered by well-known slogans such as ‘books cannot be killed with fire’ and ‘books are weapons in the war of ideas’. Kantorowicz, who had been writing on the subject for almost a decade, submitted an article to the journal *Free World*, describing the pyres as the ‘initial step in the ideological rearmament of German youth’ because they negated any possible reflections on the new regime by liberal or progressive criticism.⁷¹ He wrote that National Socialism ‘cannot stand the sight of its Gorgonian head ... what is being written and read in the Nazi Reich must never portray reality either directly or indirectly.’⁷² Despite this reign of the Gorgon, Kantorowicz remained optimistic about the inner resistance of the German people, and was enthralled by the desire to commemorate the anniversary as it gained momentum in the United States.

Although the *Free World* article showed Kantorowicz being relatively restrained, in another article he published the same year for the cognoscenti who read the German-language journal *Aufbau*, he was positively ecstatic about the realization of his dream.⁷³ He was able to point to the involvement of influential figures like Eleanor Roosevelt, Albert Einstein and William Shirer, and was proudly mixed up in an immense programme of events which had expanded from the impromptu celebrations of the previous year into a national celebration of American freedom of speech.⁷⁴ Nor was he exaggerating: it was in 1943 that the commanding and abiding history of the event was created, and the particularly American response codified by Guy Stern finally took place (*Plate 4*). Once again, Benét's play was the focus of the anniversary, but now it was embedded in an extraordinary array of events, speeches, columns, and talks.⁷⁵ The New York Public Library flew its flag at half-mast and had a public meeting on the front steps. Kantorowicz himself was one of the speakers, delivering a speech which was relayed on radio stations across the United States.⁷⁶ In the ultimate act of wartime recognition, Eleanor Roosevelt devoted her nationally syndicated 'My Day' column to the fires, even if she optimistically concluded that the burnings were evidence of unsuccessful coercion rather than conformity.⁷⁷

The anniversary's general theme was that book burning is intrinsically barbaric, but that it also represented the self-betrayal of fascism's unstable arrogance. Thus, Wendell L. Willkie, writing for the *Books Never Die* programme broadcast from New York (another Council on Books in Wartime initiative), gave the whole event a hollow interpretative twist: 'These very flames lit horizons of the spirit everywhere and today liberty-loving men are united to wipe out the forces of barbarism and brutality – forces which cannot live where men read books.'⁷⁸ Such sentiments had their most memorable expression in several government posters distributed nationally. In one, small Nazi figures hurl books onto fires in the shadow of an enormous book with Roosevelt's 'Books are Weapons' aphorism printed on the front cover (*Plate 5*). The sense of disproportion is enhanced because the lower half of the book binding is patterned to look like stone, so that the book itself is also the wall which keeps them outside. It became a debate, therefore, about the political ownership of the fire of the Enlightenment, what Swing described as 'the war to put out the fire which Hitler lighted in Berlin nine years ago today'.⁷⁹ Not only did the symbolism clarify the identity of the Nazis with a perverse fire, but it simultaneously emptied their rhetoric of its festiveness, and turned it into a lesson, a pattern also seen in a postcard printed by the Office of War Information, a Jerry Doyle cartoon called 'Unconditional Surrender', in which the smoke and flames from a pyre of burning books consumes and smothers Hitler.⁸⁰

This notion of a progression from book burning to the destruction of civilization is summarized in a 1943 editorial in the *New York Times*. In a few short paragraphs it discusses the ‘characteristic Nazi ceremony’ in which torchlight processions were meant to represent ‘harbingers of the coming victory of flame’, even if it had, the editor noted bathetically, ‘aspects of a college blow-out’. The conclusion is a direct statement of fire for fire:

On May 10, 1933, Dr. Goebbels burned even more ardently than the paper: ‘The old goes up in flames, the new shall be fashioned from our hearts.’ Time grins now at the words. In Russia the abhorred Slav is beating the sacred German. In Germany itself the flames of industrial centers set ablaze by the Allied Air Forces rise to the sky every day and night. That bonfire of 1933 was a burlesque. The old endures, the new, the Nazi, goes up in flames.⁸¹

The exaggerated disbelief, the anger, and the comedy of 1933 – the ‘burlesque’ – have been transformed. Simply put, having started the fire, the Nazi philosophy consumes itself, goes up in flames. Another poster unequivocally confirms this – again headed ‘Books are Weapons’ this one showed the results of a poll to find the ten books credited by the general public as ‘having done the most for the war effort’. Each of the ten books, among them Shirer’s *Berlin Diary* and Davies’ *Mission to Moscow*, are part of a ‘Book Mobilization’, and depicted as falling bombs against the background of the ubiquitous ‘V’ signal (*Plate 6*). This is a complicated layering of imagery which appropriates the iconic reality of air crew chalking messages on their bombs: a superstitious and uncanny form of writing which is theoretically unreadable by the addressee.

Only occasionally was this new orthodoxy publicly questioned, as in a thoughtful article by John Chamberlain, a regular book reviewer for the *New York Times*.⁸² Chamberlain tried to resist the urge to make books into weapons, and made the telling point that the phrase’s specious rattle made him uneasy, and was ‘essentially a Nazi slogan, for it tends to pervert the honesty of words, which are supposed to carry as exact a meaning as we can give to them. Writers should be concerned primarily with the truth behind words. Otherwise they sink to the level of circus barkers.’ He tried to resist completely any reliance on false propaganda, a sentiment which could be summarized as wanting to be, not simply appear, morally better than the National Socialists. Chamberlain’s rejection was followed by an article published in the *ALA Bulletin* for May 1943 which showed the dilemma of regarding books as weapons. The issue began with a framed excerpt from Swing’s ‘Berlin Bonfire’, but also included a disapproving essay by Flora B. Ludington on ‘Books and the Sword – Symbols of our Time’, a title which referred not to Roosevelt’s maxim but to ‘an exhibition staged in a German library in 1940’.⁸³ Chamberlain’s identifica-

tion of the slogan 'Books are Weapons' as being politically open was more accurate than he might have imagined. It was not enough, Ludington went on to say, to denounce the Germans as book burners when their blacklists were often complemented by approved goldlists, and when they had instituted a formidable number of community libraries.⁸⁴

Despite such comments, the importance of book burning to wartime propaganda was scarcely dented, as can be seen in a Disney educational short of 1943, *Education for Death*. It was based on Gregor Ziemer's 1941 bestseller of the same name, which catalogued the effect of Nazi schooling on German youth. Ziemer's book finished with a haunting story of a Hitler Youth group hiking in the woods, under the guidance of a surprisingly literate stormtrooper called Franzen. At sunset, after a long march, Franzen lectures the troop on their duty to preserve the purity of the human race, and proposes they symbolize this task with a solemn ritual to 'impress on us all that fire and destruction will be the end of those who do not think as we do'. From his rucksack he pulls six books: a copy of the Talmud ('despicable book of a despicable race'), the Koran, the works of Shakespeare, the Treaty of Versailles, a life of Stalin, and the Bible. As each book is passed around the campfire, each trooper eagerly spits on it, and then Franzen collects the books into a small pile, douses it with kerosene, and flicks it alight with his cigarette lighter. As the books go up in flames they sing the 'Deutschland Lied' and the 'Horst Wessel' anthem.⁸⁵ It is a striking anecdote, not least because it is such a personal scene, but also because the books that Ziemer lists have shifted from the narrow range of works actually incinerated in 1933 to a xenophobe's catalogue.

The popularity of Ziemer's work can be seen in the rather unusual fact that a non-fiction work was the basis for two different films in 1943. The first was the Disney short, a fairly conventional adaptation, which kept Ziemer's title and took his conclusions very seriously, depicting the training of the protagonist Hans from a kind-hearted and sickly child into a blinkered and muzzled soldier. In the last scene, the idea of an 'education for death' was dramatized in a scene in which great ranks of marching soldiers transform into as many tombstones. Importantly, the pivotal scene depicts the fiery denouement of the Nazi message when a group of uniformed torch-bearers set alight a pile of books – the names Milton, Spinoza, Einstein, Voltaire and Mann are clearly visible.⁸⁶ In the following shot a slightly more explicit reference to the Nazi race laws is made when the score of Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March' is burned, although in the succeeding image the pile of art to be destroyed is indistinct, but seems to consist entirely of Old Masters.

If this Disney film was a strong example of the rehabilitation of the symbol of book burning in 1943, the second adaptation, a red-blooded pulp from RKO with the new title *Hitler's Children*, showed that not everyone regarded

book burning in the same light. This film forced a plot by adding a love story between German-born American girl Anna and her boyfriend Karl, who are ultimately executed for their rejection of the regime.⁸⁷ Books are burned in the opening sequence, which reinforces the sinister reliance of the Nazis on fire rituals by showing uniformed men gathered around a huge bonfire. Yet book burning was by no means intended to be the most visually powerful scene. The film may have been based, as *Life* cooed, on ‘eyewitness fact’ and ‘almost documentary in form’, but director Edward Dmytryk had *Hitler’s Children* culminate in a lavish set-piece in which Anna is bound and whipped. It was this final scene which featured most prominently on lobby cards and advertising for the film, and which became, as Robert Fyne has noted, ‘perhaps the most famous image Hollywood created in its war films’.⁸⁸

The hope that was generated by wartime propaganda made the line between civilization and barbarism absolute, backed up with the constantly reiterated belief that the symbolic fires of the Nazis would be consumed by a much older torch and a much purer flame. In this regard, the symbol of the burning book became one of the most important motifs of American propaganda, which struggled to depict it as simultaneously the most real threat to civilization, and inherently futile. In particular, book burning was the perfect foil to the ideals of free speech, which may help explain why the reports which adopted its imagery in the first hard years of the war were dominated by a tone of rough optimism. Especially with the 1943 anniversary, vague symbolism was the dominant note, meaning that even Kantorowicz saw no contradiction in his premise that ‘neither the books themselves nor their living authors were destroyed’, despite concluding his article with a roll-call of the deaths of just some of the better-known writers: Erich Mühsam, Theodor Lessing and Carl von Ossietzky had been killed; and Kurt Tucholsky, Ernst Toller, Walter Hasenclever, Ernst Weiss, Walter Benjamin, Carl Einstein and Stefan Zweig had all committed suicide in exile.⁸⁹

By the time of the next anniversary in May 1944, popular interest was waning in the shadow of the impending Second Front, and although the anniversary was celebrated, it had all of the fanfare but not quite the élan of the previous year. Kantorowicz certainly did not forget, and managed to get ‘The Burned Books Still Live’, structurally similar to all of his previous essays, published in the *New York Times Magazine*.⁹⁰ Otherwise, the *New York Times* marked the event with another editorial, which reused the same quote from Goebbels about the new being fashioned from the ashes of the old, and described the event as ‘almost as obsolete as witch-burning’. The editors remained grimly lucid about how childish incendiarism continued to be met with the firestorm of aerial bombardment, gesturing to the biblical scale of the destruction, by warning that the ‘day cometh that shall burn

them up'.⁹¹ Despite the scaling back of the commemorations, the rejection of book burning was widespread: even the old tradition of the graduating class burning its books had apparently been proscribed, and Seniors at New York's City College celebrated 'by donating an estimated 4,000 pounds of scrap paper to the salvage drive instead of following tradition and burning their old textbooks'.⁹² Book burning, at least in the abstractions of propaganda, had come of age.

6

Beauty for Ashes

... no blaze of aesthetic beauty.
Janet Flanner

Recent years have seen a staggering resurgence in research and publishing on Nazi looting, with countless works appearing on the destruction, theft, and the especially convoluted history of the salvaging and restitution of fine art. It is a list that includes everything from studies of individual art works, to institutional catalogues and full histories, including the signature work Lynn H. Nicholas' *The Rape of Europa*.¹ At the same time, however, except for some very important essays and monographs, significantly less has been published on the concomitant pillaging of the libraries of occupied Europe.² Nor is this distinction a recent development: almost all of the contemporary newspaper reports and, particularly, the illustrated magazines, were transfixed by the Old Masters being hauled out of salt mines across Germany in the last months of the Second World War, while articles on the fate of the enormous number of stolen books were unusual, except in specialist serials such as the *American Library Journal* or the *ALA Bulletin*. There is no absolute reason for this contrast, although one rather convincing explanation is offered in John Frankenheimer's movie *The Train* (1964), which takes its plot from the failed German attempt to transport major works of modern art from the museum of the Jeu de Paume in Paris. This gallery had been used by the German occupation forces throughout the war as a central collection point, and had already been the site of a fire which consumed many modern works.³ In the opening sequence of the film, Nazi art aficionado Colonel von Waldheim (Paul Scofield) stalks about the salons of the Jeu de Paume discoursing on modern art to the bemused French curator Mlle Villard (Suzanne Flon).⁴ Enthusing about the need to preserve works by Gauguin and Picasso he dismisses any sense of a lingering cultural paradox with the disdainful reminder that a 'book is worth a few francs – we Germans can afford to burn them'. Books, evidently, don't rate much cinematic capital unless they are on fire.

Nor were libraries initially given much priority in the evolving plans for cultural restitution, which is especially curious given the importance of books in Allied propaganda and public debate. Perhaps, as the last chapter showed, it was more common to discuss books in terms of broad symbolism, rather than as physical objects. Certainly concrete information was more difficult to come by, with the first major report on conditions in European libraries, Grayson N. Kefauver and Carl M. White's 'Library Situation in Europe', published in the American *Library Journal* in successive issues that straddled the end of the European conflict. A bleak catalogue of looting, combat losses, censorship, pulping and burning, it was a total picture which led the authors to exhort readers, who may have been forgiven for some lingering complacency, that the 'devastation of the libraries of Europe is of concern to civilised people everywhere'.⁵ Indeed, this article represented a significant moment in the philosophical negotiation required by the end of the war, not least because the *Library Journal* had staunchly promoted Archibald MacLeish's aphorism that 'the principal weapons and the principal defenses of a free nation are the books, and the organizations of books, which serve it'.⁶ This notion of books as 'weapons' was designed to signify the need to resist fascist censorship, but it became increasingly apparent that if carried through to its logical conclusion, it could also be taken to mean that attacking libraries became ethically viable. Hence an uneasy comment in Kefauver and White's article to the effect that one of the marks of Nazi rule had been making 'the library ... a weapon in the service of German science, formal education and popular enlightenment'.⁷ Nonetheless, as the war drew to a close many librarians took the lead offered by a few exiled European scholars and sought to record and prevent losses to major collections, but also to plan for the return of looted books to their original homes.

NAZI KULTUR

During the early years of the Second World War, information about the actual methods of Nazi occupation was scant, even if their reputation for brutal repression preceded them, especially in the crude melodramas of the cinema. Book burning, in particular, became a readily used cliché. For example, when Paris was occupied in June 1940, Janet Flanner, a regular correspondent for the *New Yorker* during the war, made this assessment of conditions in the city:

In the application of only one of their better-known Nazi psychological devices have the Germans been remiss in Paris. Though addicted, when at home, to book-burning and the destruction of criticism in print, not until the last of July, five weeks after they marched into the capital of highly literate France, did the Germans get around to suppressing anti-Nazi books.⁸

Flanner's despairingly ironic note that it had taken the Nazis as long as five weeks to suppress undesirable literature by issuing the first list of proscribed authors and texts, hints at how deep their association with book burning had become.⁹ But this should not necessarily be taken to mean that the implications of the National Socialist strangling of thought and resistance was well understood, and its basic parameters are still worth rehearsing here.

In short, the attempt to erase the unwanted cultural heritage of the conquered nations of Europe was one of the foundations of the Third Reich, especially in the East, where cultural subjugation was basic to the strategy of *Lebensraum*. This was more than simply looting, and even in Western Europe, where the reforms were neither as savage nor as purposeful, cultural censorship was still a high priority for occupation government, mostly through pre-publication censorship of the press.¹⁰ State-owned French libraries, to cite a useful example, endured relatively small losses, with an official report by André Masson estimating that around 2 million books had been lost, a large percentage through combat or aerial bombardment. Although chastened by such destruction, Masson's report is phlegmatic about losses due to the actual fighting. His forlorn remark about one archive in Barr being reduced to 'cinders and blackened paper' in an artillery barrage by American forces, noted in mitigation that the building had been occupied by German snipers.¹¹ His acceptance of the conditions of modern warfare meant that he could even criticize the imprudence of the *French* commander who had stationed some of his forces in the library at Tours, resulting in damage during a German counter-bombardment.¹² Like most curators, then, Masson's bitterness is reserved for acts of deliberate destruction, as an example of which he singled out the coldly executed destruction of the manuscripts and precious books at Mont Sant Quentin (Metz) by the retreating German army on 31 August 1944.

Such gentlemanly findings regarding France could have been broadly applied throughout Western Europe. Even in Italy, where there were heavy losses to the architectural heritage, when British officers catalogued the cultural losses they exhibited similar restraint and fair-mindedness, seen in their general conclusion that deliberate 'destruction by the enemy, such as that of the Angevin Archives at Naples, burned senselessly and without excuse in September 1943, has been (it is only fair to say) comparatively small up to date'.¹³ In Western Europe, the general rule was that tampering with library holdings was, at least by Nazi standards, fairly subdued. The one major proviso is that radically different standards were applied to the holdings of groups forbidden by the new ruling powers: Jewish institutions, for instance, or Masonic collections.¹⁴ Otherwise, the great majority of the losses were due to the effects of combat, and damage to libraries and archives was chiefly as a result of damage to the physical building. Nor were the losses always as great as might initially have been

expected: when the famous Colombaria, home of the Accademia Toscana di Scienze e Lettre in Florence, was bombed into the Arno during the German retreat from Northern Italy, it was reduced to rubble. Expedience prevailed in the first days of the American advance, as a bulldozer was used to clear the area. Books, however, are singularly resilient, and although the archives were mostly lost, many of the books were salvaged from the wreckage in a condition that made restoration possible, including an amazing 34 of their 36 incunabulae and 30 of 38 codices.¹⁵

No such restraint was shown in Eastern Europe, a difference that is symbolized by two vignettes of library culture in Paris. As befits a capital of its stature, the city housed many international collections, including both an 'American Library' and a 'Polish Library'. Although the former was regularly inspected throughout the war, and had certain books proscribed, it was neither closed nor suffered any losses. But even in Paris, the politics of *Lebensraum* resulted in the Polish Library being destroyed in September 1940, its 130,000 volumes ransacked and looted, and many unwanted books burned on the spot.¹⁶ It was the western half of Poland that endured the longest and the most 'stable' period of German occupation, because the region west of the River Bug had been in Nazi hands for almost two years by the time of the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. During this period the occupation government of Hans Frank (the so-called Generalgouvernement) set plans in place for the complete erasure of Polish national culture. Poland would be made, as many extreme German nationalists insisted it always had been, Germanic. The elimination of Polish libraries was essential to this platform, meaning that as early as December 1939, Reichsführer-SS Himmler issued procedural guidelines for the confiscation of 'Works of Art, Archives and Documents' in the interests of 'Germanism', with the confiscated material to become the foundation for entirely new institutions on the German model.¹⁷ Nor were the invaders daunted by a task that relied on a complete dismantling of the cultural edifice: universities, archives, museums, the press, right down to privately owned bookstores, were all victims of the operational imperatives of the new German space.

Initially, the Nazi occupation had planned simply to remove all valuable cultural goods from Poland to Germany, but this was quashed by the newly appointed governing body because it would, self-evidently, materially lessen the value of the new protectorate.¹⁸ Nonetheless, while this material remained within the boundaries of prewar Poland there was still a violent disruption to the existing libraries. All of their holdings became subject to confiscation, with the valuable material to be collected into a few major libraries reorganized on National Socialist principles and the rest to be burned or pulped. The 'Popular Reading Rooms' were systematically destroyed, and the new libraries that

replaced them were designated off-limits to most Polish citizens.¹⁹ The losses were immense: after the war Poland reported to the United Nations that of 22.5 million books lodged in prewar libraries, some 15 million were estimated to have been lost or destroyed.²⁰ However, while Poland was often used as an example of what could be expected under Nazi rule, there is a sense that despite the efforts of the Polish government in exile, including their famous *Black Book*, the sheer scale of destruction was almost impossible to comprehend, and not always widely accepted in the West.

For one, much of the reporting was necessarily vague and a little remote. Such is the effect of one contemporary report on the *Nazi New Order in Poland*, published under the faded colours of the Left Book Club. The study is loaded with general comments about the disintegration of Polish cultural institutions, the removal of the intelligentsia, the prohibition of private radios and the hobbling of the press: it was all part, the report concluded, of a new education designed to give local Poles nothing more than the bare rudiments necessary for the new underclass to function: and after all, the Nazis, it did note, would not be 'happy without a burning of the books'.²¹ As this and other such reports suggest, the breathtaking scope of the destruction was difficult to understand, even after the publication of the flawed but heartbreaking *Cultural Losses of Poland* (1944) by the Polish exile Karol (Charles) Estreicher. A member of the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education, Estreicher had been a prominent figure in the debates about salvage and restitution since at least the autumn of 1942, but *Cultural Losses* is his greatest achievement and a token of his unflagging commitment to salvaging the cultural goods of his homeland. An insight into the conditions under which it was written (as well as its intended use) is demonstrated in the decision to publish it as a 'manuscript' edition, with every second page left blank to allow for corrections and updated information. Despite these limitations it was, as Lynn Nicholas has succinctly stated, 'impressive in its revelation of the massive dislocation of his nation's patrimony'.²² In 1945 it was joined by another work *The Nazi Kultur in Poland by Several Authors of Necessity Temporarily Anonymous*, another publication of the Polish Ministry of Information in London. This second work presents much of the technical information in a more accessible and less specialist context, although its immediate impact was dulled by the long three-year wait to publish the manuscript.²³

The detailed and factual style of Estreicher's catalogue makes it a stunning précis of Nazi government in the East. Over several hundred pages he recorded the looting and desecrating of churches and synagogues, the stripping of museums, archives and libraries, right through to the removal of statues to national heroes such as Chopin and Kosciuszko. Although most of these losses were conducted within the relentless machinery of the military-bureaucratic

state, he also showed that there was still room for grim spectacle and theatre. Thus, in Lodz on 9 November 1939, resident Jews were forced to dismantle a statue honouring Kosciuszko in Wolnosci Square with pickaxes and hammers. On the following day the plinth was dynamited, and on the next a festival was held on the ruins. Estreicher sums up the carnival atmosphere by noting that many ‘German men and women had themselves photographed on the shattered blocks, giving expression to their joy at the “victory” which had been won.’²⁴ Such festivals, for all of their *Schadenfreude*, were the exception in Estreicher’s catalogue, which is devoted to recording the effects of the ongoing policy of what was called, with the Nazi fondness for euphemism, ‘preservation’, ‘salvaging’, or the ‘reorganisation and modernising of cultural institutions’. Such politesse, Estreicher concluded, was nothing more than ‘a thousand subterfuges and explanations for what was simply plundering’.²⁵

Estreicher showed that this plunder, far from being the ad hoc depredations of amateurs, was being conducted under the guidance of specialist librarians from Germany, who treated the original libraries as a series of warehouses from which desired items could be removed. Again, euphemism prevailed, especially with their particular favourite ruse of proudly referring to their actions as a method of avoiding the clutter of scores of Polish institutions by housing the material in a few centralized national collections. The new Staatsbibliotheken (State Libraries on the German model), the apologists continued, could easily be accommodated in confiscated library buildings.²⁶ During the occupation of Poland six main collections were founded on these new principles, beginning with two major Staatsbibliotheken in Cracow and Warsaw in 1940; two more were opened in Lublin and Lvov the following year, as well as a ‘German Central Library’ in Radom; and in 1942 the last Staatsbibliothek was established in Krzemieniec.

In Cracow the new state library, housed in the buildings of the ransacked Jagiellonian Library, was opened by Governor Frank little more than six months after the invasion of Poland on 20 April 1940, Hitler’s birthday. In his speech, Frank proclaimed the new institution would act as a bulwark for their spiritual drive to the East, becoming the new home for a central research institute for the ‘German work in the East’ (Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit).²⁷ The institute would elaborate the principle, Frank asserted, that ‘whatever is not German in this space is alien to it’.²⁸ With these reforms came expansion, and the librarians even boasted that where there had formerly been 600,000 volumes, now there were 1 million.²⁹ A similar set of principles were used in Warsaw, where a giant Staatsbibliothek was created under the guidance of another German specialist, Dr Witte. His new collection was housed in the buildings, and largely based on the ransacked collections, of the amalgamated University, National and Krasinski Libraries. Conditions at this new library

were unusually chaotic, and the process of amalgamation so disruptive, that at one point they even contemplated the destruction of the provenance of all of their books, except those taken from the world-famous Krasinski Library. Reflecting on this August 1941 order, the authors of *Nazi Kultur* note incredulously that each book being catalogued would have its provenance erased ‘by means of a special rubber stamp’.³⁰ Estreicher established that this procedure was only enforced for a few months, but this did not vitiate the basic conclusion that what was being created was meant to be ‘something new, inherently different, not only serving German needs but bearing a distinctive German stamp’.³¹

Such radical restructuring was not a simple task, and relied on the creation of special book collection sites (*Buchsammelstelle*) in regional centres, often in requisitioned churches. In Poznan a depot installed in the plundered fourteenth-century Church of St Michael was estimated to have been the temporary home of 2 million books.³² Another major collection site was in Lodz, where the Church of St Anne was used to sort the material collected from the forced amalgamation of the local libraries, and where many of the books chosen for destruction were ‘burnt in factory furnaces or became material for salvage’.³³ Generally, when the books were selected, the cull appears to have been made immediately. Given the sort of logistical difficulty involved, it is hardly surprising that some basic guidelines were derived in February 1943: all books published in Hebrew after 1800, assorted prayer books, *Memorbücher*, or religious works in German were to be pulped immediately, while books on the history and culture of Judaism, and those written in European languages, were to be shipped to Frankfurt.³⁴

If the actions in the larger Polish institutions can at least be followed in some detail, the destruction of smaller local collections and libraries was conducted with unabashed, and less well recorded, severity. Although all Polish institutions suffered arbitrary confiscations and destructive dismantling, it reached its apogee in the eradication of Jewish communities, where special German *Brennkommandos* (arson squads) were formed to burn villages and community libraries alike.³⁵ In practice, this often meant destroying the town synagogue, the natural repository for most of the materials relevant to the community – its destruction was tantamount to burning down a library and an archive. These attacks on synagogues as the spiritual centre of any Jewish community borrowed from the lessons of Kristallnacht, the synchronized 1938 attack on German-Jewish communities, in which synagogues had been targeted not merely as the centre of each persecuted Jewish community, but also as the repository of their history.³⁶ The most obvious effect of Kristallnacht was the destruction of Jewish buildings and the deportation of thousands of citizens

to waiting concentration camps, but the destruction was also geared towards the razing of the library.

This is not the place to reiterate or catalogue the destruction in Poland recorded by Estreicher and, more recently, Barbara Bienkowska.³⁷ Suffice to say that such destruction was the hallmark of Nazi rule throughout Eastern Europe. The former Czechoslovakia lost over 100 private and public libraries and an estimated 2 million volumes.³⁸ The libraries of Romania were stripped of some 300,000 volumes, while in Hungary, Hitler's ally until early 1944, nearly all small libraries were decimated and there were heavy losses to the main collections in Budapest.³⁹ Conditions were similarly destructive in the Baltic States, which had been given a blacklist of nearly 4,000 titles when they were initially occupied by the Soviet Union; conditions deteriorated still further under Nazi occupation. As Sem C. Sutter has chronicled, the libraries in Vilna, Lithuania, were among the first casualties of the German occupation, and would be the site of some of the most systematic looting and vicious destruction, despite the efforts of the so-called Paper Brigade, expert sorters brought in from the ghetto, who tried to hide titles in an attempt to save them from being sold for waste paper (one of their number, the poet Abraham Sutzkever, even managed to salvage some especially precious manuscripts after receiving permission to take home waste paper to burn for heating).⁴⁰ In just his first cull of Vilna collections, the Hebraist Dr Johannes Pohl, a specialist who had researched several of his anti-Semitic books in Palestine, had 20,000 books shipped and 80,000 sold for pulp at RM19 the ton (*Figure 15*).⁴¹ The scale of losses within the Soviet Union itself was colossal, with recent scholarship estimating between 100 million and 200 million books destroyed through combined military and ideological attacks.⁴² Such figures are difficult to comprehend, but at Nuremberg the Russian prosecution tried to give it a human scale in a lengthy brief to the court depicting the attack in the East as the deliberate 'destruction of the national culture of the peoples in the occupied territories' and as fundamental to the 'general plan for world domination established by Hitler's conspirators'.⁴³ They included, to cite just one example, testimony from the curators of Tolstoy's estate at Yasnaja Polyana, where German soldiers quartered there in 1942 were said to have announced: 'We do not need firewood; we shall burn everything connected with the name of your Tolstoy.' This was clearly regarded as a serious and credible accusation because the German defence was at some pains to deny it, questioning the witness about the possible existence of any photographs or documents showing cordial relations between Tolstoy's descendants and the German army.⁴⁴

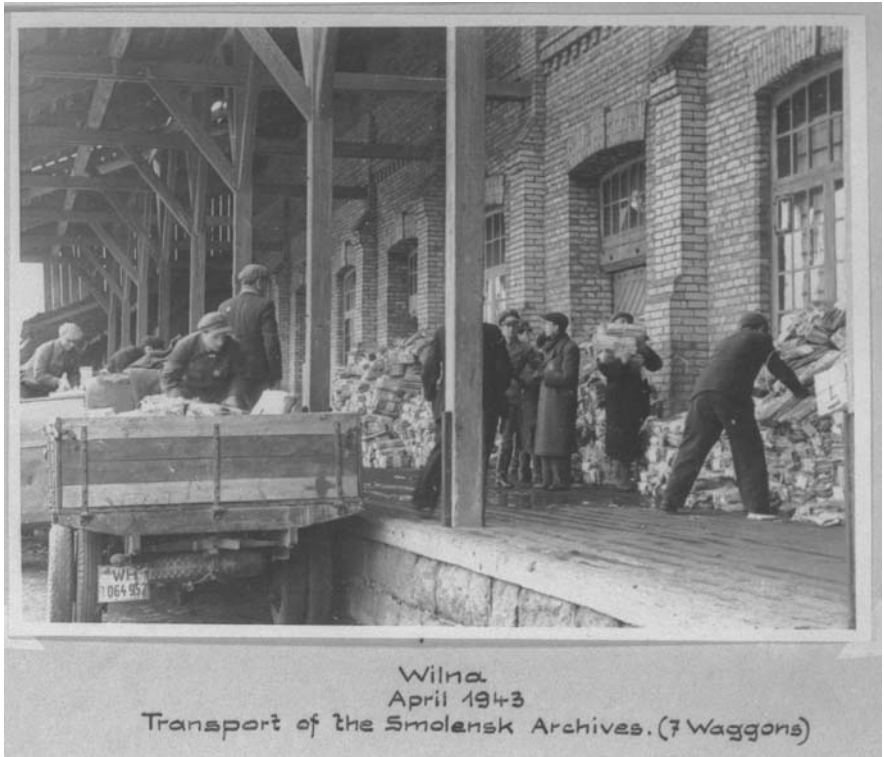


Figure 15 The looting of books in Vilna, Lithuania. From a contemporary album on the Offenbach Archival Depot.

Yad Vashem Photo Archive.

EINSATZSTAB REICHSLEITER ROSENBERG

The most sustained cultural looting of the war was carried out by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (Special Staff of Reich Leader Rosenberg, or ERR), which established offices in 24 European cities, including Paris, Amsterdam, Minsk, Vilna and Smolensk.⁴⁵ It was under the direction of Alfred Rosenberg, best known before the war as the author of the *Myth of the Twentieth Century* (1930), a ponderous pseudo-scientific study that claimed Western civilization (including Greek sculpture and the masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance) was the product of the Aryan race. Such fervent nonsense was the perfect pedigree for his induction as the leading philosopher of the Third Reich. The ERR is well-known for its involvement in the quasi-legal process of acquiring paintings for Hitler and Goering, but collections of books were also one of their central concerns. The unit was to play a significant role in the 'Hohe Schule', a prewar initiative for a tertiary institution designed to promote National

Socialist ideological research on subjects like Communism, freemasonry, racial hygiene and the 'Jewish Question'. Temporarily shelved with the outbreak of war, the Hohe Schule was revived by a January 1940 decree from Hitler which commanded that although it was not to be formally opened until the war was won, in the interim Rosenberg would have sweeping authority, 'especially in the way of research and the setting up of the library'.⁴⁶ Despite this endorsement it was not until the summer of 1940, following the fall of Western Europe, that Rosenberg really began the project in earnest, with actions in France and the Low Countries directed largely against Jewish collections whose owners had been rendered stateless by the race laws of the Reich.

As the war continued, the ERR began to deposit material relevant to the 'Jewish Question' in the central research branch of the Hohe Schule in Frankfurt am Main, which had been selected as the city already hosted the Judaica and Hebraica collection at the Municipal Library.⁴⁷ The Frankfurt branch was described by Rosenberg in 1941 as providing a complete picture of the effect of Jewish influence internationally, and specifically designed to make recent history comprehensible through unmediated access to Jewish documents.⁴⁸ Material from all over Europe began to accumulate, and the scope of their task can be seen in a report prepared by Johannes Pohl in April 1943. After referring to four orders from Hitler outlining the role of the Hohe Schule, Pohl then detailed the steady development of a collection which already numbered some 550,000 books. He even listed the stellar provenance of some of their more valuable loot, removed from collections such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle (40,000), the Rothschilds (over 28,000) and the Rosenthaliana in Amsterdam (20,000), as well as smaller collections from Italy, Greece and the Rhineland. Collections from the book assembly centres in the East totalled over 280,000. Frankfurt would be, Pohl concluded with pride, the centre for research into the Jewish question not only for Europe, but for the world.⁴⁹

As this document made explicit, a powerful scholarly appendix to the Third Reich looked forward to quarantining Jewish heritage and culture within the history books, and to making Jewish languages exclusively the terrain of the philologist. This is symbolized in an article in the Nazi photo-journal the *Illustrierter Beobachter*, unearthed by Joshua Starr, which showed scholars studying Jewish works under the boastful headline 'For the First Time in History: Jewish Studies without Jews'.⁵⁰ Rosenberg and his staff, that is, looked forward to being the final custodians but also the historians of the European Jews. Without this context it is difficult to understand the motivation behind the Hohe Schule, which implicitly recorded acts of destruction which others were keen to camouflage behind euphemism and the rhetoric of complete annihilation. The plans, that is, belie the conclusion reached by Janet Flanner,

when she says that the removal of the Warsaw Synagogue Library to Germany was part of Rosenberg's 'future proof that Jewish culture had never been'.⁵¹ Rather, the collection suggests the very opposite of Flanner's statement: it would not be proof that something had never been, but proof that its destruction was necessary and fitting.

The Hohe Schule, that is, was designed to be part of the Third Reich's post hoc justification for their annihilation of subjugated people and cultures, a genuine victor's museum. It was to have been the scholarly equivalent to propaganda shows like the touring 'Soviet Paradise' exhibition of 1941 and 1942, which compared the immense natural wealth of the USSR with its sinister role as the 'arsenal of Jewish world revolution'.⁵² Similarly, some light might be reflected by another instructive institution that they had created in the 1930s, when the government in Berlin set up a 'Marxist Museum' to teach about the horrors of Communism. It was reviewed at the time for the *Left Review* by John Fisher, who described its unsettlingly surreal effect, commenting that if not for the vicious captions, it might easily have been imagined as homage rather than desecration.⁵³ In many ways, this is a lazy analogy because it compares the exigencies of Germany in 1936 with its seemingly unstoppable impetus in the early war years, but there is at least one constant, namely the role of the museum as a self-fulfilling and triumphant confirmation of the validity of their actions.

In part because of his part in the looting of Europe, Rosenberg was one of the Nazi high command arraigned at Nuremberg. Under cross-examination Rosenberg argued that far from condoning any wholesale plan for destruction, his systematic approach had ensured that at least some of the most important material had survived. The Soviet case might conclude that 'mankind has lost for all time the irreplaceable art treasures which the Hitlerites so ruthlessly destroyed, as it has lost forever the millions of human beings sent to their death in Auschwitz, Treblinka, Bab i Yar or Kertch'; but without Rosenberg, the defence countered, even more would have been lost.⁵⁴ He acknowledged, for instance, that he had been involved in acts of documented destruction, but countered that 'the taking of inventories was done in a conscientious manner'.⁵⁵ The destruction was vast but it was not, Rosenberg argued, wanton – specious to the end, he claimed a role as a guardian of culture.

At the same time, he also defended some of their actions as a pragmatic attempt to protect material rather conveniently abandoned by its legal guardians, an apparently fortuitous circumstance which vouchsafed them a unique opportunity to better understand the ideology of their enemies from within:

we were interested in going into historical research as to the extent to which the various [Jewish] organizations had taken part, in the course of recent years or decades, in activities which are here, too, under discussion as destructive of peace; secondly, how many prominent persons individually took part in them; and thirdly, I remembered that many works of art, which had been taken from Germany in the past had not been returned to Germany for many decades, despite the agreement of 1815.⁵⁶

Despite this attempt to define the looting in terms of historical practice and the necessity to redress the lines of modern Europe, Rosenberg's involvement in the systematic plunder played a significant part in him being found guilty on all four main charges at Nuremberg, and hanged. He took his place in one of the most fondly held paradoxes of the National Socialist regime, which saw itself as dedicated to the reconstruction and promotion of culture.

MONUMENTS, FINE ARTS AND ARCHIVES

Especially in the United States, the first years of the war had seen book burning become recognized as one of the hallmarks of fascism and, in turn, the protection of cultural institutions as one of the solemn duties of the Allies. As early as 1941 Roosevelt made his famous 'Four Freedoms' address, which enshrined freedom of speech and expression. In this light, the rhetoric that opposed book burning also encouraged interest in groups such as the American Council of Learned Societies and the American Defense Harvard Group, both of which promoted the need for a cogent approach to salvaging the cultural goods of Europe. Their efforts were recognized with the creation of the American Commission for the Salvage and Protection of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas (the Roberts Commission) in August 1943. Headed by its namesake, Justice Owen J. Roberts, the commission was packed with influential figures from the cultural world.⁵⁷ In Britain, a related advisory branch was headed by the archaeologist Sir Charles Leonard Woolley. It consisted of himself, his wife and a clerk (their motto: 'We protect the arts at the lowest possible cost').⁵⁸ 1944 also saw the development of the Macmillan Committee, constituted by Churchill to investigate the question of postwar restitution and compensation, as well as the more informal Vaucher Committee, designed as a central source of information, and which had a membership which overlapped with both the Macmillan and Roberts groups.

The Roberts Commission was the most important group, in no small part because of the efforts of one of their more high-profile members, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Francis Henry Taylor. His position had drawn him into contact with political intellectuals like Archibald MacLeish and

especially Karol Estreicher, who represented the vanguard of a growing interest in protecting the cultural heritage of Europe. It was Taylor who published the signature essay on the cultural devastation in Europe, 'Beauty for Ashes', in *Atlantic* for May 1944. An important marker of the fears and ambitions of the Roberts Commission, the essay has a mood of biblical catastrophe reflected in the title itself which, as Taylor explained, is from a passage in Isaiah which prophesied Zion's deliverance and the rebuilding of Jerusalem: 'they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations'.⁵⁹ These are 'hopeful words,' he concluded, 'but not easy ones to swallow with complacency when each day we hear that some new European monument which we have loved has been bombed out of existence'. Nor did Taylor shrink from recognizing the effects of the Allied bombing of Europe, discussing the loss of an estimated 11 million books through air raids, and writing that 'despite the most elaborate efforts to spare cultural centers' the bombing has led to inevitable losses, ruining 'a certain portion of the world which the Nazis so despise and obviously have never deserved'.⁶⁰ As such rhetoric implied, and as the next chapter explores, this was not always simply a matter of protecting, but also of restoring culture. Indeed, Taylor imagined Europe as so utterly cauterized of its culture by the Nazi invasion that the Allied occupation was akin to a colonial mission, even likening this task to the 'white man's burden'.⁶¹

The most significant outcome of the renewed interest in preserving the relics of culture was the development of the joint Anglo-American Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives office (MFAA), which has justifiably been called 'probably the smallest outfit, and ... certainly the most recherché one, in the Allied armies'.⁶² The units had three main goals. Firstly, so far as combat conditions allowed, to protect cultural property from acts of war, which chiefly meant providing air and ground forces with detailed maps of their prospective theatres of operation. Secondly, they were to conserve such monuments once they were under Allied control, recording any damage and making attempts at conservation where possible. Lastly, they were to report on evidence of 'looting and wanton destruction of works of art with a view to ultimate restitution of or reparations for the same'.⁶³ An official imprimatur was given by Eisenhower in his capacity as the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, who released a memorandum prior to the invasion of Italy in 1943 which stated:

If we have to choose between destroying a famous building and sacrificing our own men, then our men's lives count infinitely more and the buildings must go. But the choice is not always so clear-cut as that. In many cases the monuments can be spared without any detriment to operational needs.⁶⁴

This was clearly open to interpretation, and designedly so. It did mean that the complex and often thankless work of the MFAA officers could be compounded by field officers, many of whom found them at best an officious distraction and sometimes, less charitably, a positive burden. The main British officer, Leonard Woolley, commented that one of his most difficult duties was finding staff of the right calibre, because it was a delicate balancing act finding officers who were extensively qualified but who must not appear 'soft' to frontline troops.⁶⁵ One MFAA officer, Robert K. Posey, alluded to these difficulties with the laconic comment that many commanders seemed more 'interested in killing the enemy and in the welfare of their own men'.⁶⁶

The role of the MFAA was endlessly variable. Officers not only prepared lists of what they expected (or hoped) to find, but were then loosely attached to combat units to protect monuments from deliberate or indiscriminate destruction. On one day they might have to politely discourage headquarters staff from swanking up Eisenhower's office with borrowed Old Masters; on another, to stop cold and tired soldiers from setting fire to library fittings, drinking the cellars in their billets, or using the Tuileries Gardens in Paris as a military parking lot.⁶⁷ They made records of any damage they could document and improvised temporary shelters where necessary. In Pisa, they built a temporary roof over the damaged frescoes in the ruins of Campo Santo, while in Dampierre they supervised the repair and return of manuscripts of the seventeenth-century Catholic theologian Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, that had been used as 'field expedients' by German infantrymen.⁶⁸ At the same time they interviewed curatorial staff and former German officials to compile information on a staggering list of cultural artefacts, many of which had been looted, removed for safe-keeping by official or unofficial curators, stolen, damaged, or bombed in the Allied advance. Such investigations led to their most famous victories, when they liberated great caches of art and cultural goods stashed in German and Austrian mines such as Merkers, Chiem See and Alt Aussee, as well as in great estates and castles like Ludwig's Neuschwanstein. The scale of the operation meant that there were approximately 1,400 captured repositories in the US Zone of Occupation alone.⁶⁹

Most soldiers in the advancing armies were fond of describing themselves as tourists, but the strange status of the MFAA was underlined by their literal dependence on their *Lists of Protected Monuments*, Baedekers, and Touring guides. They even brought their own cameras as the promised photographic gear never arrived.⁷⁰ Thus curiously equipped, the officers confronted a battered and alien landscape. In Italy, one officer reported seeing written on a blackboard in what appeared to him the angular hand of German script: 'Chi entra dopo di noi non troverà nulla' ('Whoever enters after us will find nothing').⁷¹ This was no idle threat when, with cheerful desperation, the 'Art

Commission for Destroyed Florence' was christened the 'Rubble Commission' by the occupying Americans.⁷² Most of all, it was feared that all of Europe would be consumed in fire. Professional archivists cautioned that the German authorities in Belgium at the end of the First World War had destroyed their own records, and would do so again.⁷³ Margaret Bourke-White wrote that before relinquishing Frankfurt the Nazis had found the time to torch the archives of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in their 'sadistic lust for destruction'.⁷⁴ Even Hitler, apparently shaken by images of the corpse of Mussolini being paraded through the streets and defiled, insisted that his body be thoroughly cremated. Little wonder that the MFAA officers hardly expected to salvage anything meaningful. One of its staff described their task as trying 'to save something of man's past achievements from the tide of ruin that was engulfing the world'.⁷⁵

Despite such fears, the MFAA was able to salvage enormous caches of looted art and books, and it quickly became apparent that one of the major difficulties it faced was coping with the amount of material that had been displaced, rather than destroyed. Thus, while only eight months has passed since Francis Henry Taylor published his sombre 'Beauty for Ashes', his second article on 'The Rape of Europa' is infused with a tone of relief that many of his fears had proved baseless. For example, while both articles featured the story of how the retreating German army had wilfully fired the University Library at Naples by dousing the shelves in kerosene and igniting it with hand grenades, in the second Taylor could report that although the damage was extensive, the rare holdings of the museum had been removed to Monte Cassino and, when the monastery town was threatened with its ultimate destruction, to safety in the Vatican.⁷⁶ As this suggests, in the postwar period, the focus of the MFAA shifted to the returning of as many looted cultural goods as possible, beginning with good-will restitutions of large pieces of art. The altarpiece of Veit Stoss was returned to St Mary's in Cracow, while the statue of Cosimo de' Medici was brought back to Florence on flatbed trucks, sensational public relations events which make wonderful reading in the memoirs of the MFAA officers who were working with sculpture and paintings.⁷⁷

OFFENBACH ARCHIVAL DEPOT

Among the many sensational finds of the MFAA, one of the largest was made in the small town of Hungen in the first week of April 1945, when Robert K. Posey and Lincoln Kirstein found six repositories with hundreds of thousands of volumes destined for the Hohe Schule in Frankfurt branch.⁷⁸ Janet Flanner wrote about the find for the *New Yorker*:

In a brick kiln in the town of Hungen was the most insultingly housed cache of all. Here were hidden the most precious Jewish archives, tomes and synagogue vessels from all over Europe, including the Rosenthalian collection from Amsterdam and that of the Frankfurt Rothschilds. In the Kiln, the repository for the Jewish material Rosenberg planned to use in his projected post-war academy, where anti-Semitism was to be taught as an exact science, priceless illuminated parchment torahs were found cut into covers for Nazi stenographers' typewriters or made up into shoes. Here, too, were thousands of Jewish identity cards, marked with a yellow 'J,' all that remained of Jews who had perished in Nazi crematories. There was no blaze of aesthetic beauty here, no emblems of dynastic Teutonic history. There was nothing in the ugly rooms except the rubbish and mean utilities to which these remnants of Jewish lives, identities and God-loving faith had been finally reduced.⁷⁹

Flanner's lasting impression of the repository is of ugliness and rubbish, of desecrated books, kitsch and bureaucratic scrap. But, just as significantly, her tone of brooding horror also gives an insight into the unease the great book depots produced.

This unease may be one of the reasons why comparatively little research has been done on the enormous task of restoring looted books compared to the fine arts, as is hinted in the dashing monograph *Salt Mines and Castles* (1946) by Thomas Carr Howe, an MFAA officer and art conservator. Howe was evidently relieved that his field of expertise kept him from the book depots, commenting that of all the problems they faced, 'none was more baffling than that of the books at Offenbach'.⁸⁰ This was the Offenbach Archival Depot, the greatest warehouse of looted books and religious items in occupied Germany, and a temporary home for several million volumes, housed in the completely undamaged former IG Farben building in Frankfurt am Main. The building had been taken over by Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), relocating thousands of displaced persons who had been sheltering there, burning the furniture and files to keep warm in the cold spring of 1945. Given the wartime record of IG Farben, it is interesting to note that such piecemeal destruction of the Farben records was compounded when the sergeant in charge of preparing the building for its new role in the occupation government simply stacked most of the remaining material outside in great piles. He was given the Bronze Star for his efforts.⁸¹

Perhaps the destruction of these records might serve as a reminder that the importance of salvaging books and archives had not always been clearly defined within the occupation government, nor, indeed, within the MFAA, where the first trained librarian was assigned as late as September 1945. This was Leslie Irllyn Poste, a member of the American Library Association (ALA), whose scandalously overlooked 1964 study on the protection of libraries and archives during the Second World War remains the best report on Offenbach,

and effectively the only full study of the restitution of books. Given the lack of attention, then or later, Poste showed great restraint when he commented that the extent of the library and archive problem ‘had not been anticipated in planning’.⁸² During the severe winter of late 1945, Poste, the first of a series of military officers to make a contribution to the return of the books, made his arduous preliminary inspection of all of the known collection points, libraries, archives and repositories, averaging 1,000 miles a week in an open army jeep, huddled in a coarse sheepskin coat formerly worn by a Wehrmacht officer who had been killed on the Eastern Front.⁸³ As this punishing schedule made clear, Poste quickly saw the need to simplify the otherwise scattered and ad hoc attempts at book restitution, and he initiated the call for the creation of the central depot at Offenbach.

The advantages of a central depot were apparent. Using the example of the Rothschild Library in Frankfurt, Poste estimated that the laborious process of cataloguing all the salvaged books in full, which was being completed at the rate of 300 books each day, would take around 20 *years* to complete. In contrast to such rigorous methods, he argued that Offenbach should work on the principle that books should be returned to their original holding institution as quickly as possible. A shortage of coal meant that no work was done in Offenbach over the winter, and it was not formally opened until 2 March 1946. In order to deal with the millions of books, successive commanders of the depot, Seymour J. Pomrenze and Isaac Bencowitz, devised a streamlined process of sorting based on library stamps alone, a process that was ultimately made even simpler by the creation of volumes of reproductions of known bookplates. With the new system in place Offenbach sorted books for 375 archival institutions, 402 museums, 531 institutes and 957 libraries in Eastern Europe alone.⁸⁴

There was hardly an avalanche of contemporary articles on the depot, but it is notable that the handful that were published display a consistent tone, as reporters tended to dwell on the monstrous, even uncanny, scale of the discovery and painstaking sorting of the books. As with Flanner’s description of Hungen, images of death predominate. A report in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* cautioned readers that the attempt to rebuild culture must begin by making good on the losses created by the theft and ‘corpse-robbing’ (*Leichenraub*), committed by Nazi organizations in pursuit of the Aryan ideal.⁸⁵ This tone is even more obvious in the memoirs of another person who spent some time working in Offenbach, Lucy Dawidowicz, who had been seconded to SHAEF to try and select books appropriate for use in the displaced persons camps. Writing almost four decades later, she wrote anxiously about the ‘smell of death’ from these ‘orphaned and homeless mute survivors of their murdered owners’. With brittle honesty she described how ‘The sight of these massed

inert objects chilled me. I didn't yet know that I would soon be spending my time in this mortuary of books.⁸⁶

Given such feelings of horror, it is perhaps not surprising that few people discussed Offenbach in any detail, and little wonder Poste's first report on their efforts for the specialist audience of the *Library Journal*, hoped that his modest effort – his report is six pages long – would fill an important gap, since 'little has appeared on the restitution of looted books'.⁸⁷ At the same time, Poste was by no means immune to the effect of Offenbach, and his published reports not only provided an exemplary picture of their procedures, but each included a quote from his colleague Bencowitz as a disturbing coda. It is worth quoting at length for its haunting description of the tremulous, sickening effect of the depot:

I would walk into the loose document room to take a look at the things there and find it impossible to tear myself away from the fascinating piles of letters, folders, and little personal bundles ... Or, in the sorting room, I would come to a box of books which the sorters had brought together, like scattered sheep into one fold – books from a library which once had been in some distant town in Poland, or an extinct *Yeshiva*. There was something sad and mournful about these volumes ... as if they were whispering a tale of yearning and hope long since obliterated.

I would pick up a badly worn Talmud with hundreds of names of many generations of students and scholars. Where were they now? Or, rather, where were their ashes? In what incinerator were they destroyed? I would find myself straightening out these books and arranging them in the boxes with a personal sense of tenderness as if they had belonged to someone dear to me, someone recently deceased.

There were thousands of loose family photographs without any identification. How dear all these tokens of love and gentle care must have been to someone and now they were so useless, destined to be burned, buried, or thrown away. All these things made my blood boil ... How difficult it is to look at the contents of the depot with the detachment of someone evaluating property or with the impersonal viewpoint of scholarly evaluation.⁸⁸

Disgust at the scale of destruction is uppermost, but it is infused with the anguished realization that a full restitution of the books was simultaneously necessary and yet partially impossible. Of the original owners and their communities, only the piles of books remained (*Figure 16*).

Similar emotions were uppermost in the dedicated scholars who worked for the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Commission (JCR), and spent years trying to assess and protect cultural goods that were unidentified or apparently unclaimable. The JCR would ultimately make arrangements for the redistribution of 500,000 books and religious items, the bulk of the material being shared by Israel and the United States, but substantial holdings remained in

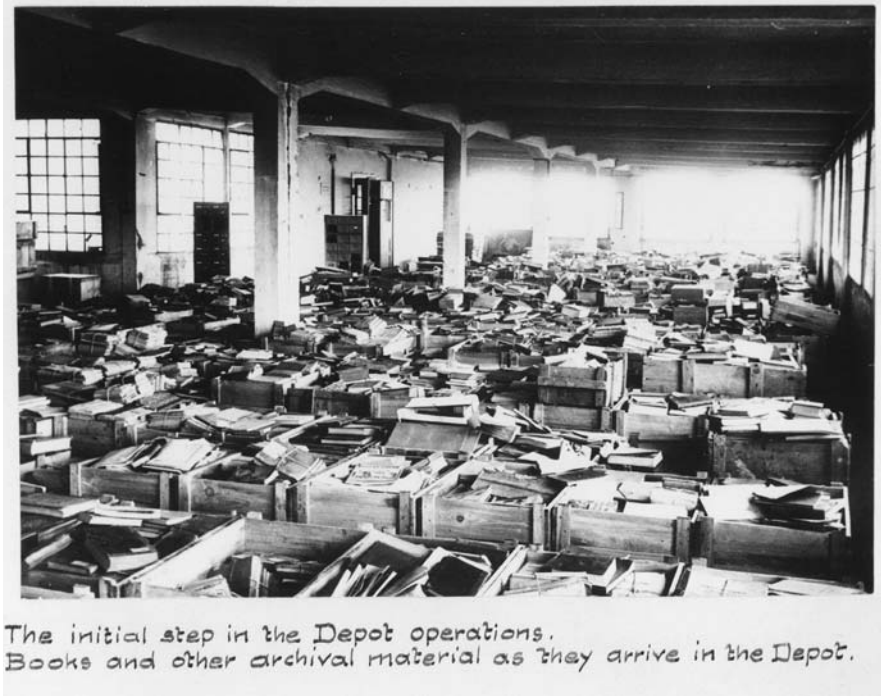


Figure 16 Crates of books in the Offenbach Archival Depot.

Yad Vashem Photo Archive.

European institutions and communities.⁸⁹ This is an impressive number, but the reminder articulated by Michael J. Kurtz in his important study of Nazi contraband is apropos: ‘only a fragment of the Jewish heritage had survived ... and reconstruction could only be partial at best’.⁹⁰ In principle, the JCR was anxious that the unclaimed material not simply be returned to its country of origin because of the danger of expropriation by successor governments or simple dispersion, leading their representative Professor Jerome Michael to write unflinchingly that the annihilation of European Jews meant that Europe should not be considered the ‘center of Jewish spiritual and cultural activity’, and ask that the material not be ‘sacrificed on the altar of legal title’.⁹¹

One of the most influential members of the JCR was Hannah Arendt, who spent much of 1949 in Europe, including making several stops at Offenbach. As her letters to her husband Heinrich Blücher attest, Arendt was delighted to be back in Europe, but her schedule was punishing: in December, after lightning visits to Wiesbaden, Frankfurt, Würzburg, Nürnberg, Erlangen, Heidelberg and Bonn, she wrote that she was not only tired, but often felt

‘totally lost’.⁹² Although Arendt did not make any substantial public comment on the effect of her searches through the remnants of the libraries of Europe, some sense of her dislocation can be glimpsed in her essay on the ‘Aftermath’ of Nazi rule, published soon after she returned to the United States. Her essay commented on how the ‘nightmare of destruction and horror’ in Germany was little talked about, and how amid the ruins of their cities ‘Germans mail each other picture postcards still showing the cathedrals and market places, the public buildings and bridges that no longer exist’.⁹³ Similarly, her colleague Joshua Starr wrote of the terrible realization of the number of books and cultural artefacts that survived *because* of the shocking completeness of the attempts to eradicate European Jewry (*Figure 17*). It was, wrote Starr, the vicious irony of the all too common bookstamp ‘Sichergestellt durch Einsatzstab RR’ (‘Salvaged by the ERR’). The books endured as a reminder of the ‘program designed to concentrate staggering facilities for the investigation of the Jewish past and present’.⁹⁴



Figure 17 Chaplain Samuel Blinder examines one of the hundreds of ‘Saphor Torahs’ (sacred scrolls), part of a cache of Hebrew and Jewish books stolen from every occupied country in Europe.

Another scholar given the task of investigating the books of occupied Europe was Gerschom Scholem, who was appointed by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to arrange trusteeship of dispossessed books. In July and August 1946 he spent several weeks at Offenbach, where his first task was to liaise with Bencowitz about loans of books for distribution in displaced persons (DPs) camps.⁹⁵ While at the depot he made the interesting aside that he was surprised at the extent of the losses due to Allied air raids ('far more than I initially thought'), but his visits also strengthened his conviction that the books should not be simply returned to their countries of origin.⁹⁶ Between 1946 and 1948 he made three separate journeys to Germany looking for books, travelling through France, Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland. They were bitter visits for the scholar. Although Scholem successfully tracked down whole libraries and transported them to Palestine, he described the task of assessing the losses and salvaging the remnants as 'among the most difficult and bitter' he had ever experienced.⁹⁷ In June 1946 he was in Prague, and wrote to his friend Siegmund Hurwitz of the horror of sitting alone in his hotel room studying the catalogue of 30,000 books taken from Theresienstadt. The day before he had walked through the old Jewish cemetery, reduced to tears at the possibility that 'nothing will remain here but the cemetery and a synagogue, which has now become a museum'.⁹⁸ The task faced by Scholem and his fellow scholars was compounded by the difficulty of admitting that salvage necessarily meant relocation; simple restitution was impossible.

For these scholars, merely working in the depot among the collections of ownerless books was a task of mourning, an emotional response that Dawidowicz described as an amalgam of melancholia, exhaustion and anguish. Trying to assess this complicated response, she wrote: 'after a day's delving into the very bowels of the Vilna YIVO's past, I was exhausted, drained of feeling. I wiped away my tears and went back to my hotel room. I had come to see that Vilna had been reduced to fragments of paper and fragments of memory.'⁹⁹ Dawidowicz's mortuary, Flanner's kiln, Bencowitz's incinerator and even Scholem's museum, all allude to the resilience of books before the most extraordinary persecution. Their tacit corollary, however, is to confirm a much older impression (and an extreme example), of the relationship of the archive with death. When Dawidowicz summed up Offenbach she used the language of mourning: '[m]y fevered feelings of guilt for having abandoned them had died away. I was ready now to move ahead.'¹⁰⁰ For Poste, his efforts in the restitution of books vouchsafed a clear understanding of both the philosophy of the ERR and of the fractured, discomfiting debt they had been bequeathed by their predecessors. Their policies were anathema, but at least they had avoided or postponed mere destruction, because 'the difficulties of handling the millions of pieces gathered within a short time unquestionably saved priceless volumes

from the bonfire'.¹⁰¹ Despite the fact that a similar conclusion formed the basis of Rosenberg's defence at Nuremberg, Poste's comment merely expressed relief that at least the books were left to salvage. It was reflected in a comment by one of his colleagues from the Library of Congress mission, who concluded: 'All in all, considering the holocaust, the picture in Germany is much better than could have been expected after a total war.'¹⁰²

Offenbach closed in April–June 1949, and the remaining materials were removed to the Wiesbaden Collecting Centre. The brief tenure of the depot can serve as a reminder of not only the staggering scale of Nazi looting, but of the equivocal, sometimes morbid, role of the book in our imagining of the past. As librarians from all countries in Europe sought to rebuild their shattered collections, the horrible paradox was that the cultural losses that had been unimaginable during the war now came into focus as the remnants of destroyed communities, the fragments of National Socialism's attempt to rewrite everything in its own image. The depository at Hungen was found a week before the first of the Western concentration camps was liberated. It was the MFAA, particularly the officers detailed to return books from the looted libraries of Europe, who were in a position to understand the intimate relationship between cultural annihilation and physical genocide. The symbolism of book burning took shape as an integral part of the concentration camp universe.

7

Funeral Pyres

There is nothing for it but to pulp them all.

Thomas Mann

For the men and women of the Western Allies, soldiers and civilians alike, the devastation wrought in the cities of Germany was stupefying. Even for those who were to some extent inured to destruction by the battlefields of North Africa and Europe, the shattered ruins of Germany were shocking, not least because of the realization that such conditions were due, in large part, to the aerial bombing campaign. Especially in the United States, there had been an enduring belief in the unearthly accuracy of Allied bombing, especially in the daylight raids of the USAAF in Europe. This belief had its enduring and enigmatic symbol in the famous Norden bombsight that could, its advertising fatuously reiterated, put a ‘bomb into a pickle barrel’.¹ The pervasiveness of this rhetoric meant that even an experienced reporter such as Percy Knauth from *Time* magazine was genuinely awed by the evidence that ‘in the Battle for Berlin a lot of our American bombardiers ... did not even aim’.² Berlin, in particular, quickly became home to a phalanx of international reporters, most of whom made at least passing comment on the ghostly burned-out shells of the buildings at the centre of town. A much-quoted article in the London *Times* called the city a wilderness of shattered stone. The visitor to the city, the report continued, ‘can walk for hours and see no small thing, not a stick of furniture, a rag or scrap of paper to suggest that there was even any life here. Fire has consumed all.’³

Looming over this barren landscape were the three great flak towers at Humboldthain, Friedrichshain and in the grounds of the Berlin Zoo. Thirteen storeys high and made from eight-foot-thick reinforced concrete, they were designed to resist the heaviest bombardment, and are so robust that even now they have been built around rather than demolished. They were designed, in part, as cultural repositories, as the specially commissioned towers at Friedrichshain and the Zoo included air-conditioned rooms, designed to hold art

treasures from Berlin museums, including the Gobelin tapestries, the great sacrificial altar from the Pergamon, the so-called 'Treasure of Priam' unearthed at Troy by Schliemann, and many hundreds of paintings.⁴ After the surrender, the entire contents of the Zoo repository, including Schliemann's treasure, was ceded to the Russians (beginning almost 50 years of silence about its whereabouts).⁵ At Friedrichshain, which housed material from the Kaiser Friedrich Museum and the Nationalgalerie, a similar result might have been expected but, on 6 May 1945, after the cessation of fighting, the interior of the tower was totally gutted by fire. MFAA officer Mason Hammond wrote that whilst it had proved impossible to ascertain who had started the fire – he inferred it was most likely SS troops or 'displaced persons hunting for loot' – the scene of devastation bid fair to be one of the worst cultural losses of the war: 'Nothing remains of pictures, tapestries, porcelains, and sculptures except a deep bed of ashes, in which may be found bits of china and sculpture. It has so far proved impossible to organise a proper sifting of these ashes to recover what may have survived the holocaust.'⁶ Hammond's description of this chaotic scene, of rubbish strewn across a bed of ashes, contained only by the funerary walls of a concrete air raid shelter, is an image of utter desolation. All that remained was the dreary task of sifting the ashes.

Germany was desolate, but it was not simply nullified. Rather, the possibility that the destruction was more apparent than real was one of the most urgent concerns for the occupation forces, and 'books', in this context, took on a central role: those published during the Third Reich were openly feared as infected with fascism, while the necessity to produce new books to replace them was urgently debated. Books were persuasive symbols of both the insidiousness of the past and the possibility of the future, and this chapter surveys their importance to the so-called process of 'denazification'. In this context, it is a quote from Jean-François Lyotard that provides an appropriate introduction to the political and philosophical difficulties of books in postwar Germany:

Myth is not speculatively soluble. It must be (nonspeculatively) exterminated, and so it has been. But the destruction of Nazism also leaves a silence after it: one does not dare to think out Nazism because it has been beaten down like a mad dog, by a police action, and not in conformity with the rules accepted by its adversaries' genres of discourse (argumentation for liberalism, contradiction for Marxism). It has not been refuted.⁷

The destruction of Germany was more than a funeral pyre, it was also an interdiction. Lyotard could just as well have said that the myth of Nazism was consumed in great bonfires.

STUNDE NULL

Outside Munich, in the last days of the war, the *Vogue* photographer Lee Miller hurried up into the hills to witness the final assault on Hitler's so-called 'Eagle's Nest' in Berchtesgaden, taking a series of photographs of the building as it stood in flames. Miller's long exposure has rendered the fire in the windows and roof so intensely that it has flared the negative to white. Against this violent dissolution a figure in an identifiably American uniform is silhouetted sharply, the pool of light at his feet seemingly the remnants of an obliquely placed flash. When it was reproduced as the central image in her article 'Hitleriana' for *Vogue* it acquired the evocative title the 'Funeral Pyre of the Third Reich'.⁸ In the last months of the war the whole world seemed to be on fire, a condition materially compounded by Hitler's 'Nero' order, which ordered his retreating armies to use a scorched earth policy. Reports of Hitler's suicide and instant cremation were enthusiastically received but hard to believe, and sadly difficult to verify. Correspondents stood staring dumbly into a half-dug trench in which, they hoped, Hitler's body had been cremated; but in the absence of a corpse final proof was elusive and all sorts of less reliable evidence began to stack up.⁹ When Rebecca West visited the grim ruins of the Hitler Bunker she noted that some British soldier had drawn a picture of a bald head looking over a fence with the caption 'What, no *Fuehrer*?'¹⁰

This elusiveness, in tandem with the instant packing away of Nazi paraphernalia, fostered suspicion in the occupying forces. Hadn't Hitler predicted in *Mein Kampf* that he would write in a way that could never be erased, that his followers would have a few central ideas 'burned inextinguishably' into their being?¹¹ Even the bombed ruins of German cities did not mean that they were subdued: this was Albert Speer's lesson. As a result, faced with the shocking destruction of the physical landscape, a distinction was drawn between the face and the heart, the surface and the centre. Thus, Percy Knauth, one of the first to document Buchenwald, wrote of the strange desert that was all that remained of Germany:

the swiftness and completeness with which the outward evidences of Nazism seemed to have vanished from the surface of all German life. There were no flags, no uniforms, no placards; no newspapers with their screaming headlines underlined in red; no pamphlets, books, or magazines. Nobody even talked about the Nazis any more.¹²

This sinister emptiness was compounded by rumours about menacing pro-Nazi 'werewolves' disrupting the occupation forces and punishing collaborators.

Reports such as Leslie Simon's *German Research in World War II* and Richard Sasuly's *IG Farben* (both 1947), dwelt on the technical readiness of the German military-industrial complex, and both concluded that it was unlikely that Nazi ideals could ever be expunged – Sasuly expressed the fear that Nazi ideals had not been extinguished and that these 'brush fires' could turn into tomorrow's 'raging inferno'.¹³ A lengthy article in *Life* magazine reiterated essentially the same point: 'The mark of the Nazi was there but it was not visible. That mark would remain a part of Europe's invisible burden for a generation.'¹⁴ The surface seemed clean, but the insidious Nazi pathogen must have persisted, and the possibility that this might require literal quarantining was seriously discussed. In 1947 sincere notice was given to a plan to tow all of the Nazi leaders out to the North Sea island Adelheide, never to be allowed back to mainland Europe. Effectively Elba writ large, it was scotched as impractical, not least because it could not satisfactorily account for children: would they, too, have to remain on the island or would they be allowed out to go to school in Germany proper?¹⁵

The duties of the MFAA were not, after all, simply cultural. Not only did they hope to reverse, as far as possible, the effects of Nazi looting, but they also formed a critical part of the attempt to ensure that National Socialism was extinguished, and one of their major tasks was to help prepare briefs for the prosecution at Nuremberg. They were part, that is, of the attempt to completely alter German society by removing the old hierarchy and replacing it with a completely new system. The most extreme proponent of this theory was Secretary of the United States Treasury Henry Morgenthau, who developed his eponymous plan with a view to stripping Germany of territory, splitting the country, and then painstakingly dismantling any of their industry which could feasibly be used to reassert their military dominance.¹⁶ Although Morgenthau's plan was debunked by the time of the Potsdam conference, in all of the zones factories were shut down, some dismantled as reparations, others simply destroyed on the ground. This was usually referred to as *démontage*: the taking to pieces, taking apart, of an entire society.¹⁷ Significantly, some decisions were made for reasons that were not strictly pragmatic. Despite the relatively light damage to Hitler's chancellery in Berlin, the building was razed, and the great fields of marble which had adorned it used to build the Russian war memorial in Treptow.¹⁸ In the camps the furnaces were turned off and the dead buried rather than cremated. Conversely, there would be no shrine nor funerary monument for the Nazi leaders, and even the memorial to the dead of the Munich Putsch was quietly dismantled and the bodies re-interred in less grandiose settings.

All over Germany, official archives had to be assessed or salvaged. The Nazi bureaucracy were, as Fresco comments, 'obsessional archivists', and yet as the

Third Reich collapsed it began to destroy its own traces. Not only was the extermination camp at Treblinka completely dismantled, the ground levelled, and planted with lupine, but a farmhouse was built and a settler named Straben installed, as if the whole camp had only ever been a stage set and was now packed away. Vasily Grossman, whose report on the camp was the only major article to sidestep the new Soviet censorship, described the bitter futility of this pretense when even the earth continued to eject ‘crushed bones, teeth, bits of paper and clothing’, and car tyres made a swishing noise on the ashes and crushed slag of the roads near the camp.¹⁹ Indeed, despite such efforts, the Nazi bureaucracy left a paper trail so immense that it can trap people into an illusion of completeness – as if, media theorist Friedrich Kittler noted caustically, ‘anything that ever happened ended up in libraries’.²⁰

To the contrary, there was a rush to burn incriminating evidence, as with the 16 February 1945 order which stated that ‘All files involving anti-Semitic activity are to be destroyed.’²¹ One survivor of Auschwitz, Olga Lengyel, remembered her last day in the camp as being punctuated by great bonfires of documents, and that as she marched away the camp was still bathed in the light of the burning records.²² Nor were the demands of the Allied occupation always cleanly drawn; the MFAA officer James Rorimer recounted that he discovered German POWs in the huge Party Administration buildings in Munich being allowed to burn papers without any real supervision. The American Major in charge explained that the complex had been released to his command, and so he had assumed that anything left inside was inconsequential. James Rorimer mused that the action cut at the joints: ‘It struck me that burning these valuable papers and records of Party membership was considered the most convenient way of putting them in order.’²³ Despite such actions, an immense number of archives and documents were captured: in occupied Germany alone, the MFAA described the task as ‘colossal’.²⁴

DENAZIFICATION

The bureaucratic record of the Nazi regime was one aspect of the occupation, but generally denazification was more concerned with the publication and the influence of books, as many attempts were made to curtail their power. Although the logic behind this new censorship was clear, its practical application, as ever, was difficult to legislate, and the influence of books hard to quantify. At Nuremberg, Alfred Rosenberg was asked whether he thought Auschwitz commander Rudolf Hoess had read his anti-Semitic books. Rosenberg was blasé: ‘I don’t know whether he read my books. Anti-Jewish books have existed for the last 2,000 years.’²⁵ As this suggests, the influence of books is not easily assessed (which is why public book burning is always primarily a symbolic

act, a cross between legislation and advertising). When books are proscribed, it is common for one work to be promoted to fill the vacuum that is left. In Nazi Germany, the work promoted was the master symbol of Nazi philosophy, *Mein Kampf*. Copies of Hitler's book were effectively ubiquitous in Germany, and it is scarcely surprising to learn that the second survey of German public opinion carried out by the US Office of Military Government asked 'Who in Germany has read *Mein Kampf*?'²⁶ More prosaically, an American sergeant named Saul Levit wrote to the *New York Times*, describing how he had rummaged through ruined houses to get a sense of what was being read by the German people. Levit admitted to being surprised and baffled when he turned up copies of works like *Huckleberry Finn* or *Gone with the Wind* but, he continued, books by the Nazi leaders, particularly *Mein Kampf*, were found simply 'everywhere on the push eastward last spring – at least everywhere that you found a bookshelf'.²⁷ And, as is well known, the book is still banned in Germany, in an attempt to quarantine it from the susceptible and to strangle any attempts by neo-Nazi groups to openly distribute it. Nonetheless, it is equally obvious that this ban is legislative, and largely symbolic, as it is estimated that some 8 million copies had been published by the time of Hitler's death, and abundant anecdotal evidence suggests that a significant percentage remain, hidden or forgotten in attics and cupboards.²⁸ These copies survive despite proof that as the war ended, many people worried that possession of Hitler's book was going to provide evidence of complicity or Nazi sympathy. Hoping neither to attract the attention of any rabidly pro-Nazi figures still in local government, nor to have the incriminating book on their hands when the Allied armies arrived, *Mein Kampf* was often quietly burned or buried as the Allies approached.

These furtive burnings of Nazi relics were often done in great secrecy, but they are equally well suited to becoming decisive and spectacular scenes in novels and films. Hence, when Günter Grass' novel *The Tin Drum* was filmed by Volker Schlöndorff (1979), the scene in which Oskar and his family wait tensely in the cellar for the arrival of the Soviet forces shows them solemnly burning Hitler's portrait. The scene could have been borrowed from Christa Wolf's *A Model Childhood* (1976), in which the middle-aged protagonist Nelly returns to the town she had fled in January 1945, just ahead of the Soviet army. Ceremonial fires mark important shifts in the novel, beginning with the burning of a portrait of the Führer in the family furnace, quickly followed by the offstage – and hypothetical – burning of the abandoned family snapshots when the house is occupied by its new Polish owners. These rituals, however, are undercut by the bitter finality of learning by heart: 'photos that have been looked at often do not burn easily', Nelly acknowledges.²⁹ This conceit that burning is not always erasing is particularly important in *A Model Childhood*,

where the fires destroy the legal evidence and ensure an apparent outward conformity, but without completely dismantling memory itself. Thus, her mother's destruction of her diary in the kitchen stove does not eradicate her childhood memories, it merely forces them along increasingly formulaic lines.³⁰ Like a theatrical version of the purloined letter, it is both a hiding and a making obvious: trying to burn a book or manuscript may destroy the document, but not necessarily its inertia. Quixote knew this, and Nabokov after him.³¹

Such scenes are also a reminder of conditions during the early stages of the occupation of Germany, which as historians like Edward Peterson have detailed, were generally marked by lots of philosophy and not much policy.³² However, the demand to remove the Nazi taint from the country meshed, neatly enough, with the rhetoric that referred to Germany as a blank slate to be rewritten: it was to be the *Stunde Null*, the Hour Zero of an entirely new Germany (one thinks of the resetting of the French Revolutionary calendar in 1793). This has important ramifications for 'denazification' – a suitably impressive if terribly vague term, meant to signify extinguishing Nazi ideas, not only from public life, but from the hearts of the German people. In turn, this would rely on the 're-education' of the German people, a process which depended largely on forced exposure to the recently discovered camps, either in person or through film and print media, in order to foster a sense of collective guilt.

As a policy, denazification relied on the possibility of completely eradicating both the machinery but also the influence of National Socialism, and therefore hypothesized the most radical rupture with the past. This dismantling had decided relevance to the specific question of books, which were viewed both as a poisonous legacy of the Third Reich but also – especially with regard to school textbooks – as one of the more important tools for reconstruction. 'Books', in this deliberately broad sense, had an abiding influence on how denazification and *démontage* operated, and for what might be called the cultural implications of occupation: the control of the press, the redemption of a vanquished enemy and the difficulties of occupation. After all, the Allied occupation resulted in what one contemporary unflinchingly called an 'orgy of destruction' of National Socialist literature.³³ A story circulated widely that one American soldier was witnessed tearing up books and hacking at them with a bayonet in the library of Bonn University. When he was approached by a Professor, so the story went, he merely replied 'I hate everything German.'³⁴

The demands of denazification were complicated by the actions of the occupying soldiers, who engaged in endless looting and endless graffiti (proof, Rebecca West wrote sardonically, that the charge that the Red Army was illiterate was unfounded).³⁵ Looting – although with piquant irony it was usually called 'liberating' – was ubiquitous, and cheerfully indulged. Nazi

kitsch was highly desired, as was anything from Berchtesgaden – Gertrude Stein had to be dissuaded from pilfering one of Hitler’s radiators to use as a flower pot, and a visiting US Senator was seen pulling a telephone from the wall in his rage for an authentic souvenir.³⁶ Books were considered a great prize, as when photographer David Scherman liberated a German-language translation of Shakespeare with Hitler’s bookplate from the Eagle’s Nest.³⁷ One MFAA officer made a gallant attempt to save a section of Hitler’s library he found intact in some of the Party Administration buildings in Munich, but regretfully reported that his attempts to make it secure did not extend to the labyrinthine back entrances, and when he returned it was to a sacked room.³⁸

Although largely ad hoc, the number of books being burned and stolen had serious implications for German archives and libraries, as is satirized in a contemporary cartoon by Bill Mauldin, the Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist who had made his name working for the US Army paper *Stars and Stripes*, and as a returned soldier himself, not much given to sentimentality. His postwar cartoons are infused with irony and bathos about the difficult process of reintegrating the returning soldiers into civilian life, and he was scathing about the ways in which soldiers’ experiences did not mesh with the carefully phrased propaganda version of the war, and especially caustic about the collapse of the sort of jargon that had dominated wartime media. Two cartoons in particular were juxtaposed on adjacent pages of his book *Back Home* (1947), as a means of complicating the simplistic wartime rhetoric. In one, a small boy looks seriously at his grandmother who is disdainfully throwing a racy magazine into the stove. ‘Careful, Grandma,’ he says, ‘that’s the first step toward fascism.’ In another, two men stand before almost wholly empty shelves. One says to the other: ‘Nothing left but nursery rhymes, Herr Schlinker. My library has been purified by Hitler and decontaminated by the Allies’ (*Figure 18*). It stands as a symbol of the difficulties facing the occupation government, as they tried to negotiate a purging of Nazi Germany from within.

Mauldin’s mordant punchline was further complicated by its ironic mistake: although the Nazis had shown a relentless commitment to propaganda at all levels, it was the children’s books which were often the most virulently National Socialist and, in turn, the most carefully vetted. One commentator, Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, pointed to the special difficulties in this field when he told of his experience reading the seemingly innocuous *Soon Now It Will Be Christmastide, a Christmas Carol Book for the German Family* (1944). It took, he explained, a long time before he realized that the unsettling thing about the anthology was what was missing: that the book effaced any mention of Christ or, indeed, any religion beyond the muscular nationalist festivities favoured by the Nazi hierarchy.³⁹ For children who had known nothing except Nazi rule, implementing any policy of denazification seemed to imply the



“Nothing left but nursery rhymes, Herr Schlinker. My library has been purified by Hitler and decontaminated by the Allies.”

Figure 18 Cartoonist Bill Mauldin’s view of denazification.

© Bill Mauldin 1947. Courtesy of the Mauldin Estate.

necessity for a complete rewiring, the more so because reports on books for German youth concluded that the Nazi commitment to education meant that their indoctrination was ‘highly successful’, even in neutral countries like Belgium.⁴⁰ A contemporary *Life* photo-essay by David Scherman, called ‘Two Little Dutch Girls Cross Europe Going Home’, used the familiar film-strip-style the magazine had perfected to follow each step of their registration and processing, including, the captions blithely noted, screening to ‘certify the two

young Dutch girls have clear non-Nazi record, have no contagious politics'.⁴¹ Just how this screening was imagined to work is left conveniently blank, but it does help explain why the key figures in several of the most important postwar German novels are children.

However, education did not initially have a very high profile, so much so that when American Zone Commander Lucius Clay reviewed the American achievement, he commented with disarming honesty that by the end of 1945 they had achieved their purpose: 'The children were off the street and juvenile delinquency was under control.'⁴² Education policy did quickly develop into one of the most important and debated duties in each of the occupation zones, as attention focused on the employment of non-Nazi teachers and the issuing of appropriate textbooks. Despite warnings in SHAEF handbooks to the contrary, in the American zone they hoped to simply issue older Weimarer-era textbooks which, it was assumed, would be cluttering up warehouses right across the country. Instead, of course, there were scarcely any left. Next, a large selection of books that predated Nazi rule were flown in from an American collection, but these were also found to place undue emphasis on militant German nationalism, and judged inappropriate. All sorts of temporary expedient became necessary, as when Major Hugh M. Jones in Aachen issued a stock of an otherwise suitable primer by actually cutting out the last four pages, while on other occasions, books were issued with strips of paper stuck down over the offending passages – such miserably unlikely interim measures hint at the practical difficulties they were experiencing in making occupation practice fit the occupation's template.⁴³ When a standard emergency textbook was ultimately issued it alluded to their long search with the extraordinary disclaimer that although it was the best they could do under the circumstances, it should not be considered 'entirely suitable from an educational point of view or otherwise'.⁴⁴

Generally speaking, publishing was one of the fastest of all industries to recover in Germany. A contemporary review commented that both Berlin and Leipzig, the former publishing centres of Germany, had suffered so much from air raids, and then from the dismantling of plants, that it seemed as if the losses would be almost irreparable. However, by the beginning of 1948 there were 427 firms operating, and a catalogue of new publications extended to 176 pages (although many criticized the unnecessary duplication in the four zones).⁴⁵ It was, nonetheless, a period when new books were routinely sold out before publication.⁴⁶ These figures do not adequately give a sense of the tremendous unease that the press generated, nor the difficulty of putting everyday quarantining into practice. The unease was particularly noticeable in bookstores which, as a destination, clearly made visitors uncomfortable – 'the book famine in Germany is horrible', noted Victor Gollancz, while

Rebecca West described them as some of the saddest places in Germany, where small clusters of obvious Allied propaganda were dispersed through piles of tired stock, the sorry result of 'exhuming remainders of books' that had been prewar publishing failures.⁴⁷ This was exacerbated by what some thought was a suspiciously easy transition to Allied government. Booksellers, who had long been imagined as the only possible vanguard of the hypothesized German underground, now seemed positively shifty, as their shelves rapidly emptied of Nazi bestsellers, and filled with classics or approved works. Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt visited Leipzig immediately after VE Day to assay German publishing, and later described visits to bookstores as 'fascinating adventures ... The Nazi-propaganda books had been packed up and stored away, neutral literature occupied the center of attention, and a few battered volumes of hitherto banned authors were pulled out from under the counter.'⁴⁸ No one seemed sure whether such adaptation was merely window-dressing or the revolution.

In this context, the rhetoric of denazification remained persuasive, but the change to Occupation Military Government was proving to be unsteady terrain. There were three main periods of military rule, beginning with a complete shutdown of the existing media, followed by Allied operation of selected newspapers and radio stations and, lastly, the licensed return of the media to 'carefully selected anti-Nazi, democratic-minded Germans'. This last stage, it was hoped, would help foster 'passive acquiescence' and promote food production, as well as arousing a 'sense of collective responsibility for Germany's crimes'. Indeed, Earl Ziemke argues, the return of the media to German control was partially motivated by the desire to encourage acceptance of their collective guilt, in the belief that it would be more convincing coming from fellow Germans.⁴⁹ However, quite apart from the restrictions and shortages, the few members of the press with impeccable anti-Nazi credentials were now older, and many had not been engaged in journalism for twelve years; moreover, the urgent need for technical and editorial advice was compounded by the number of journalists who were recruited as politically acceptable novices.

The famous foreign correspondent William Shirer returned to Berlin, a city he had lived in for several years before the war. Soon after arriving, he wrote to his friend and colleague Alfred Kantorowicz, who was still on the CBS treadmill in New York. Their shared hope, he wrote, of discovering a vast underground literature of resistance, of young writers coming forth with shoe-boxes full of manuscripts, had gone cold. Instead, he hoped that the former chief of the Library of the Burned Books would return immediately to Germany to help in reconstruction: 'alas their shoe boxes were empty. And their minds too! ... One has to start all over with them.'⁵⁰ This difficulty was reflected in reports by the MFAA, citing not only the physical destruction of German infrastructure,

but also the difficulty of finding the right staff when nearly all of the important posts in the field had been given to party members. They needed, they stated bluntly, to 'begin at the bottom'.⁵¹ And, despite the importance of the press and its guaranteed market, publishing was still a slow and intricate business. There was almost nothing new to publish, production was hampered by every imaginable shortage, and everything had to go through the bureaucratic filters of various zone authorities. Most of all, the few journalists who had managed to find work were keen, self-evidently, to keep their valuable licences intact, and were often tacitly uncritical of occupation policy.

LIBRARIES

Conditions were even worse in the devastated German libraries, particularly in the capital, as can be seen in a report by Leroy H. Linder on the state of libraries in all four zones of Berlin, commissioned in 1946 by the American *Library Journal*.⁵² Although Linder's information is hazy and sometimes conflicting, it is a succinct review of the devastation, strewn with telling notes: 'Completely bombed out. No trace remains'; 'Completely burned out'; 'Completely destroyed during the battle of Berlin'; 'destroyed during an air raid'. Of the two biggest libraries, the Preussische Staatsbibliothek was estimated to have lost 2 million books; and, of the original 4 million in the Ratsbibliothek, 1.5 million were listed as destroyed and 1.1 million more as having been evacuated and not yet recovered. Indeed, of the 64 libraries Linder studied, 18 had been completely destroyed by bombardment, and only a handful had survived the war effectively unscathed.

The great contemporary study of German libraries, however, was *Die deutschen wissenschaftlichen Bibliotheken nach dem Krieg* (1947), written by the director of the Tübingen University library, Georg Leyh. The study, which includes replies from the directors of the major German library directors, was not only careful to detail the difference between the destruction of library buildings and library holdings, but also made one conclusion quite clear: that the vast bulk of the losses to German libraries were due to the Allied air raids. Reading the figures, the exponential increase of these attacks, which began with the losses sustained by the Landesbibliothek in an October 1940 raid on Kiel, becomes apparent; although, amazingly, Leyh noted both the university and city library in heavily bombed Cologne had only inconsequential losses.⁵³

Nor could any of the results of Linder or Leyh be considered in any way final, because the policy of *démontage* was only really getting started, particularly in the East, where the so-called Soviet Trophy Commission was formalizing their right to exact cultural reparations by removing technical and cultural artefacts to the USSR. Six libraries on Linder's list had been effectively obliterated by

Soviet confiscation, and he confirmed that 300,000 volumes had been taken from the Ratsbibliothek alone. Although contemporary Soviet records are often lax, and there has been a long history of unwillingness to be entirely forthright about this process, estimates of the number of books removed from German institutional holdings range from around 5.5 million to 11 million books, a significant percentage being technical and scientific works.⁵⁴

The Soviet government had already shown themselves to be adept at serious and thorough purges of their own libraries, and now they vigorously prosecuted their new *Index*.⁵⁵ Based on the collection of the Deutsche Bücherei in the Soviet Zone, the *Index* was first published in April 1946, and twice updated and extended in the following two years. In total, it lists literally tens of thousands of banned books, concentrating on works deemed fascist, militarist, expansionist, racist, or contrary to the military government. Despite its size it did not claim to be a complete register, and all libraries and bookstores were cautioned to be careful about books not specifically listed, but still of harmful tendency (*schädlicher Tendenz*).⁵⁶ In the western zones, there were no punitive restitutions and no *Index*, although they did use the Soviet list as a research tool, a difference summarized in Lester K. Born's note that the basic formula was 'purification in the west ... purge in the east'.⁵⁷

While there were no restitutions in the western zones, quarantining of books was a significant concern. One of the interesting aspects of Leyh's study is that the entries for the university libraries of Halle, Hamburg and Marburg each make oblique comment on the denazification of their collections.⁵⁸ This was part of the broad outlines for German libraries and education that had been laid down at Potsdam, but formalized by the Allied Control Council in Berlin, especially their order regarding 'Confiscation of Literature and Material of a Nazi and Militarist Nature' (May 1946). Drafted, as its preamble announced, to 'eradicate as soon as possible National Socialist, Fascist, Militarist and Anti-Democratic ideas in all forms', it called on libraries, bookstores and publishers to hand over all pro-Nazi propaganda (especially mentioning 'racial' theories and 'incitements to aggression').⁵⁹ The order ceded full control to the military government, but responsibility still rested with the owners of 'such literature' and the local authorities. It concluded: 'All publications and material mentioned in this order shall be placed at the disposal of the Military Zone Commanders for destruction.' Attached was a representative list, which hollowly insisted that it was only for 'illustrative purposes' – as Margaret Steig has commented, it would be hard to imagine any 'sensible German' leaving any of the listed titles on their shelves.⁶⁰ This really only formalized occupation practice, but the announcement of the planned destruction created what Steig has called 'near hysteria'. It was front-page news across America, where it was widely reported that the order would result in great bonfires: Kathleen

McLaughlin reported from Berlin that it was ‘assumed the books will be burned’, while the *Chicago Daily Tribune* went another step, reporting dramatically that an estimated 1 billion books as well as all of the German newspaper files had been ‘condemned to the torch’.⁶¹

Responding to the furore, zone representative Vivian Cox met with horrified journalists in two separate meetings, in which she sketched in the principles of the project, which encompassed the destruction of Nazi memorials. She was conciliatory but firm: ‘Asked how the principle involved differed from the Nazi burning of books, Miss Cox said that in her opinion the principles were identical. She stoutly defended the action, however, on the ground that it was imperative to cleanse the German mentality of any militaristic taint.’ Although nobody seemed to comment on the coincidence, the Allied Military Council’s decision to announce the new measures on 13 May, only a few days after the anniversary of the 1933 bookfires, could easily have resulted in more awkwardness. Even so, the following day the editors of the *New York Times* worried that it would only foster a cult of persecution and give Nazi ideology the aura of martyrdom.⁶² Looking back on the flurry of interest and headline publicity at the time, Reuben Peiss, a member of the Library of Congress mission to Europe, reflected on the ‘storm of protest’ with a measured tone: ‘An amendment to the order was later issued, specifically setting aside collections for the use of Germans under proper controls, but none of the four powers ever proposed to burn books or to wipe their existence from the face of Germany.’⁶³

This is both strictly true and utterly disingenuous. It had always been intended to keep individual titles for research and scholarship; however, as Ziemke notes, while the American Information Control Division (ICD) wanted to ‘avoid the stigma of Nazi-style book-burning’ and ‘issued strict orders against burning’, this was a formal or aesthetic distinction alone. The point of the order was always to ensure that the German public had no access to the material and, as had been the case throughout the war, the Western powers eschewed the now politically tactless policy of burning for the politically viable option of pulping.⁶⁴ Perhaps this also helps explain a curious fragment of film in the Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive, which appears to be an outtake from a newsreel (the archive suggests it may be an additional segment from the documentary ‘Lest We Forget’). In the brief segment, a crowd of civilians are shown gathered around a pile of burning books in the street as the voice-over comments: ‘We will abolish all Nazi laws in which these ideas are fixed – all laws of discrimination by race, creed, or political opinion.’ Although edited for release, it would seem that this scene was hastily cut when it no longer meshed with the official rhetoric. Others had a more practical form of criticism: at the far left, one man can clearly be seen snatching a book from the fire and walking away (*Figures 19 and 20*).



Figure 19 A still from an outtake of an American newsreel showing the burning of Nazi-era books in Germany. The scene did not have a contemporary release.

Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.



Figure 20 Another still from the same newsreel. At far left, the man turning away has just snatched the book he is holding from the pyre.

Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

THE DAY OF THE FREE BOOKS

Conversely, the contested symbolism of book burning was once again being discussed by none other than Alfred Kantorowicz. Back in Berlin after twelve years in France, Spain and the United States, he was bent to the task of trying to bring the different zones of occupied Germany together, chiefly through the medium of a journal called, obviously enough, *Ost und West*. In the spring of 1947, the recurring symbol of his exile came full circle, when he was instrumental in staging the ‘Tag des freien Buches’ (‘Day of the Free Books’). The event took place on the ‘bomb-blasted forecourt of Berlin University’ – the old Opernplatz, now renamed the Bebelplatz, and now squarely in the Soviet zone.⁶⁵ Fourteen years had passed, during which Kantorowicz had written almost as many articles on the Nazi book burning; now he returned to the very site where Dr Goebbels had goaded the phoenix from the ashes to witness the dazzling spectacle of the new world order.

Rather than hordes of uniformed students, Kantorowicz, the publisher Peter Suhrkamp, the playwright Günther Weisenborn, and the novelist Anna Seghers, spoke in front of a crowd which included representatives and officials from all four zones. It was a warm summery day, and the square was filled with young men and women who listened curiously to four middle-aged exiles talk about the catastrophic dismantling of German literature (*Figure 21*). It garnered some attention, and the reporter for the *New York Times* picked through the speeches, noting that the organizer, one ‘Alfred Kantorowitz [sic]’, spoke about the ‘intellectual unity that fire could not destroy’. Weisenborn reiterated the connection, familiar from the war years, between the firestorm and the burning of literature, saying that the ‘fire that went around the world started on this spot, returned here and destroyed these buildings’.⁶⁶ Yet it was really Kantorowicz’s show, and in a pamphlet issued to celebrate the occasion he wrote of the unparalleled example of a country exiling or silencing 250 of its most famous writers, in the process drawing a direct link between the expulsion of dissent and the material and moral ruins on which they were now standing. His pamphlet concludes with a list of the authors who had died since 1933. Only now, he concluded, after 14 years, and the deaths of many of their comrades, did the country have an opportunity to climb back out of the catacombs.⁶⁷ In a neat piece of timing, a few days later the Americans granted the licence to print his crib for the destroyed literary culture of Germany, the anthology *Verboten und Verbrannt*.⁶⁸ The following month, the British authorities staged the ‘Festival of the New Book’ which was able to present every book published in Germany since the end of the war, even if one commentator did cruelly note that the one ‘outstanding shortage was of talent’.⁶⁹ It was probably around this time that Kantorowicz helped

annotate an old appeal for funds written on Library of the Burned Books letterhead with notes on the fate of the German members of the committee. Theodor Plivier was in Weimar and Anna Seghers was in Berlin. Six other committee members were in Paris, New York or the United States. However, Georg Bernhard, former editor of the *Pariser Tageblatt*; Bruno Frank, Rudolf Olden, Kurt Rosenfeld, Joseph Roth and Ernst Toller had all died in exile (see Figure 8, p. 57).



Figure 21 'The Day of the Free Books', 10 May 1947 in Berlin. Alfred Kantorowicz is speaking at a rostrum made from building rubble.

Ullstein Bild.

Describing the event much later, Kantorowicz said that the 'Day of the Free Books' united 'thoughtful Germans, both in East and West, in a sincere demonstration for the freedom of thought and of the printed word'.⁷⁰ It was, nonetheless, already an aberration, and despite his optimism, the celebration on the Bebelplatz would be one of the last attempts by the combined occupation governments to present a unified cultural and political agenda. The different zones began to apply what could be called their occupation philosophy with competitive zeal. The American press articulated grave concerns about the number of textbooks being produced in the other three zones, and unflattering comparisons were drawn.⁷¹ Friends of the Soviet Union insisted that the Russians had even taken a moral lead, because they did 'not consider it good democracy to waste paper on cheap sex novels when the people are without

supplies of decent literature'.⁷² By late in 1947, when the uneasy alliance of the occupying powers was disintegrating, the *New York Times* warned that American funding had dropped so low that 'Soviet Papers Flood U.S. Zone'.⁷³ Within two months the Military Government had allocated US\$4 million for paper, the bulk to be used for textbooks.⁷⁴

While in the Soviet zone the confiscations based on the *Index* were ongoing, in the American zone there was subtler coercion. Lillian Hellman's indifferent hit of 1946, *The Watch on the Rhine*, as well as *Awake and Sing* by agitprop master Clifford Odets, found themselves scratched as undesirable in 1947. While Hellman and Odets were identifiably Left, even *The Maltese Falcon* was dropped because it appeared to confirm too many negative stereotypes about American life.⁷⁵ The same year, the American State Department was already responding to criticism of its visa policy, giving details, in particular, of Kantorowicz's return to Germany. A brief report in the *New York Times* described him as 'of apparent German nationality' and 'an important Communist'.⁷⁶ When Kantorowicz tried to reprise the Day of the Free Books on the Potsdamer Platz in 1948, the various authorities heard his proposal with gentle indifference. A decade later, looking back on this failure, he was still unable to imagine any more meaningful meeting place for German literature in the postwar years than a little piece of no-man's land surrounded by great piles of ruins, where the American, Russian and British zones met.⁷⁷

It was in this period that denazification itself collapsed between philosophical necessity and pragmatic clumsiness. One of its most persistent critics was Victor Gollancz, who called it a 'moral nightmare', detested by British and German administrators of all political persuasions and little more than 'Hitlerism in reverse'.⁷⁸ He pointed specifically to evidence that it was rife with bought testimonials and other bribes, but was also scathing about a more general failure of purpose. Nor was it just semi-professional ethicists like Gollancz who perceived that there were clear problems, when even a US State Department summary of 1947 reached this conclusion: 'It is difficult to educate; it is more difficult to re-educate; it is well-nigh impossible to re-educate a foreign nation. To attempt to re-educate Germans by military government action is to attempt the impossible.'⁷⁹ A policy of amnesty began to be enforced. Millions of Germans continued to fill out the hated *Fragebogen* (questionnaires on their Nazi record), many of them several times over, while thousands paid a fine and had their record cleared.⁸⁰ By 1949, reported Delbert Clark, some 75 per cent of teachers in the American zone were ex-members of the Nazi Party who had paid a fine and returned to work: 'Whether the fact of being tried and paying a few hundred marks fine, at most, had actually purified them', wrote Clark, 'is open to the gravest question.'⁸¹ His conclusion on the evolution of the policy

was that the practical difficulties of occupation had led to the evolution of the policy that ‘Nazism was a crime rather than a mental disease.’ Marcuse has shown that even the atrocity films, the sine qua non of the whole process, were failing to instil any collective feeling of guilt in German audiences.⁸²

The rhetoric of moral contagion (Nazism as a ‘disease’) was proving difficult to legislate, not least its reliance on a series of attacks on books. This is complicated by the chaos of denazification which, for all of its legal and official rhetoric, was often vague and superstitious. This chapter began with Lyotard’s insight into the merely provisional destruction of Nazism, beaten down rather than refuted. His comments might have been explicitly tailored to refer to the destruction or quarantining of the torrents of pro-Nazi material that issued from the press during the Third Reich. No less a figure than Thomas Mann openly announced to his fellow authors that not only were the books produced during the Third Reich worthless, but that every one of them, redolent with the ‘odour of blood and infamy’, ought to be pulped.⁸³ In the end, nobody knew how to legislate eradication – *Mein Kampf* cannot be offered for sale in Germany, but it is still easily found in flea markets.

In this light, one particular military necessity has a strangely persuasive resonance: the extremely poor quality of book production means that many books from this era are susceptible to browning and decay. Some individual copies are already so brittle that they are effectively unreadable (a similar effect is noticeable in books issued in the First World War). When Timothy Ryback picked his way through the remnants of a fraction of Hitler’s personal library stored in the Library of Congress (some 3,000 books) he noted that of the ‘piles of Nazi tripe’ that remain, much is ‘printed on high-acid paper that is rapidly deteriorating’.⁸⁴ Surveying the children’s books produced by National Socialism, Christa Kamenetsky saw little reason for alarm about their continued quarantine because their ‘threadbare plots’ could hold little appeal for a modern audience. She concluded that after ‘Nazism itself became irrelevant, the “message,” too, was lost, and there was little else that might still appeal to children on a personal basis in human terms.’⁸⁵

What this glimpse of Berlin in the postwar years underlines is that the book burnings, redolent with political capital and symbolism, can seemingly only be swapped back and forth as a token of a propaganda debate finally concluded by force of arms. Denazification was a ritual which relied, after all, on one last utopian bonfire (or, rather, one last trip to the pulping machine). Certainly what the postwar period confirms is that censorship was still being exerted as a political expedient which would have its most memorable exercise in the impending theatre of McCarthyism. And, like modernity’s obsession with entropy, book burning not only signals the clumsy

rag-picking of modern identity but serves as a reminder that the messages that we receive from the past are marred by illegibility, censorship and obliqueness. In 1956 the American librarian Verner W. Clapp, President of the Council on Library Resources, continued his sporadic search for the 150 sets of racist and militaristic German books that were said to have been preserved for use by scholars in the wake of Allied Control Council Order No. 4. Despite Clapp's best efforts, no one he had reached 'had certain knowledge of what happened to the project'.⁸⁶

Postscript: The Path of Cinders

The history of book burning that has been the subject of this book deserves to be drawn to a conclusion with a glimpse of how the symbol operated in the second half of the twentieth century. As the last chapter implies, people certainly did not simply stop destroying books. To the contrary, this postscript is short of necessity, as a history of political, religious, and personal censorship in the second half of the twentieth century, especially under authoritarian regimes, would make – and indeed, already has made – a study of its own.¹ Such a study might usefully compare the cultural implications of censorship, to name a few obvious contenders, in Argentina, Cambodia, China, Iran, South Africa and the Soviet Union. Even then, such a list would tend to overlook the impact of more quotidian censorship, which is common to all countries. Such a catalogue, that is, would be immense, and better suited to the wide open expanses of the internet. This is not to suggest that a specific study of the cultural uses of book burning in recent decades would be superfluous, given recent examples such as the shelling of the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo in August 1992, where an estimated 90 per cent of the collection was lost. Similarly, two fires at the National Library and Archives in Baghdad in April 2004 resulted in significant losses and trenchant criticism of the United States occupation.² Less substantive, but equally noteworthy, is a recent report by P.J. O'Rourke, who, while visiting Iraq in the wake of the Second Gulf War, described a shadowy group, neither professional looters nor gimcrack opportunists, bent on burning libraries and book collections.³

Just as significantly, protest fires continue to be a popular form of dissent or repression, even if it is increasingly common for flags rather than books to be burned outside embassies and universities. Having said that, the work would also need to register the continuing shift from the theatre of book burning to the new orthodoxy of pulping (it is said that during the Cultural Revolution 'millions of rare books were recycled and made into paper to print Mao's *Little Red Book*').⁴ A thorough continuation into the postwar period would make, in short, an already big project exponentially larger, and would mean abandoning the detailed nature of this work. Rather, each of the following

seven vignettes represents a coda to its corresponding chapter, reprising its theme and reflecting some light on the continued importance of the complex history of book burning.

BURNING IS OUT

During the Second World War book burning became one of the taboos of the twentieth century. A rejection of burning may have become the standard mantra, but a trawl through the indexes of newspapers from the decade after the war confirms that the proscription was not to everyone's taste. In 1948 in New York, school children door-knocked for comic books to burn.⁵ Similarly, the Boy Scouts of Portsmouth Rhode Island, reported Charles G. Bolte, had eventually decided not to celebrate Lincoln's birthday by burning 'objectionable' books, choosing instead to take them to the dump.⁶ When an old lady told Bolte that she couldn't understand all of the fuss ('Why, I always dispose of my old books that way') his answer was, at best, enigmatic: 'Well, ours is an age of symbols ... Offensive books can be buried. But burning is out.'⁷ Such a conclusion is not conspicuously helpful, but 'burning is out' is as neat an appraisal of the postwar symbolism as could be hoped for.

This interdiction was prominent in the furore surrounding the speeches of Senator Joseph McCarthy and the concurrent investigation of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (better known as HUAC). Although it was blacklists rather than public burnings which were the hallmark of the investigations, books were certainly burned within the houses of the accused. More substantially, during this period the international America House Libraries were investigated and forced to endure the removal of titles by authors including Henry David Thoreau, Dashiell Hammett and Langston Hughes. No one seemed to want to be responsible for their ultimate disposition, although the American High Commissioner in Germany was reprimanded for recommending the offending books be merely sold second-hand.⁸ Generally speaking, the argument was less about whether the libraries had been censored, but rather about the method of their disposal: less the censorship than the method of enacting it. Which is why many were horrified at reports the books pulled by librarians in the Singapore, Tokyo and Sydney branches may have actually been burned, and why government officials were so anxious to deny any such suggestion. Little wonder that the historian of the American response to the book burnings in Germany, Guy Stern, has since commented gamely that it was a 'great irony that we let ourselves be drawn into this kind of censorship'.⁹

Once again it was the cartoonists who were adept at satirizing book burning. Among many, the most memorable example is a strip from Walt Kelly's 'Pogo',

in which the wise old Owl is forced into migrating by the strong-arm tactics of the Badger, who has rewritten 'Captain Wimby's Bird Atlas' for his own ends. In the penultimate frame his two henchmen memorably discredit Wimby: 'it's out of date', says the first henchman, 'and on fire', continues the second. And in the last frame, the Badger dreamily concludes that there is 'nothing quite so lovely as a brightly burning book'.¹⁰ As this suggests, a refusal of book burning represented the rhetorical turning point in the shift away from McCarthyism, especially after President Eisenhower's commencement address to Dartmouth College in June 1953, an homage to free enquiry entitled 'Don't Join the Book Burners'.¹¹ That this was rhetorical was obvious, but McCarthy was reported to have been nonplussed by the attack, and was quoted as announcing that the President 'couldn't very well have been referring to me. I have burned no books.'¹² Importantly, there was criticism of the vagueness of Eisenhower's speech, and he soon felt compelled to clarify his position to the effect that he did favour the destruction of any books that advocated the overthrow of the United States government that were still in State Department libraries overseas.¹³ Predictably, however, publishers swooped on the controversy, as when the Philosophical Library advertised Corliss Lamont's *Soviet Civilization* with a banner headline that 19 copies of the book has been burned by a mob in Chicago: 'Remember, too,' the advertisement concluded rather garishly, 'that in Hitler's Germany started by burning books in the streets ... and ended by burning people in the ovens of Buchenwald.'¹⁴

It was in this climate that Ray Bradbury published *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), with its well-known conceit that the fire department of the future burns books and arrests the heretics that own them. In the novel, the solitary pastime of reading has been replaced by a predominantly visual culture, a literal theatre of distraction enacted in the endless soap operas played on the wall-screen televisions of suburban houses. That this cleanliness is emotionally sterile is axiomatic, a condition exploited in the featureless suburban existence of François Truffaut's film version (1966). In this sense, it is a deeply conservative novel, privileging literature over everything from team sports to comic books, right through to its distaste for the emotionless abstraction – the coldness – of modern art. Montag's friend Clarisse, for example, amazes him by revealing that in the past 'sometimes pictures said things or even showed *people*'.¹⁵

Bradbury's novel is the most famous expression of the need to resist book burners, and remains enormously popular as a high school English text, even if teachers are particularly fond of sparking class discussion by actually burning a book to see how the students *feel* about it. The theme of the novel may be simple, with its message that book burning is the first sign of repression, but while the novel is fiercely pro-literature, the actual books remain almost incidental. Rather, it is language itself, imagined as a fiery brand, that is the

theme. When Montag witnesses an old woman burn to death on the pyre that her books become, it is a moment of blinding exposure: as the books cascade to the ground Montag ‘had only an instant to read a line, but it blazed in his mind for the next minute as if stamped there with fiery steel’.¹⁶ This sense of being exposed to language, and the fever of text, is even more explicit when Montag forces his wife and her friends to listen to his recital of ‘Dover Beach’, for as he speaks, ‘he was all fire, he was all coldness’, he was ‘stunned and shaken’.¹⁷

In the end, Montag escapes the doomed city, extinguishing the insidious arguments of his boss Captain Beatty by incinerating him with his flamethrower. He is even allowed a moment of action hero wit: ‘You always said, don’t face a problem, burn it.’¹⁸ It is a neat shortcut, and one which defers any sense of melancholy or irony, but it is also a reminder that the novel is structured around its own form of release from the past. On the rural fringes of the city, Montag ultimately joins a group that superficially appears to be an older type of society, right down to the hearth fire (‘It was not burning; it was *warming!*’, exclaims Montag).¹⁹ The most curious thing about this society is that it is a hybrid of literate and oral culture. They are not simply influenced by books, but written, even overwritten, by them: their leader Granger explains that ‘nothing’s ever lost. We have ways to shake down your clinkers for you ... All of us have photographic memories, but spend a lifetime learning how to block off the things that are really *in* there.’²⁰ Montag’s escape is a parody of Plato’s apocryphal ‘Seventh Letter’, for he has learnt ‘by heart instead of writing’.²¹ If the novel is a fable which suggests that nothing can ever be lost, it is also one in which books are redundant. Meaning, as Denis Hollier has pointed out, that they are burned whether one loves them or hates them.²² The faultlines of the novel are starkly exposed in Truffaut’s film, where the lingering close-ups of burning books have a depth and colour that makes them the emotional highlight. That there is something aesthetically askew with the final scenes of the novel is underlined by the publication history of the book itself. In a marketing stunt, the first edition of *Fahrenheit 451* was a limited release in which the book was protected by an asbestos binding. A copy of this fireproof edition with the sleeve in fine condition is a rarity, not least because curious readers have often scorched the protective binding with matches or cigarettes.²³

BIBLIOTHEK

The emotional resonance of calling someone a book burner has been dulled by over-exposure, but it can still be the subject of great controversy. This was made clear in the debate surrounding the publication of Jörg Friedrich’s *Der*

Brand ('The Fire', 2002), the book credited with returning the bombing to popular attention in Germany. Controversially, Friedrich used the specific term *Bücherverbrennung* (book burning) to describe the losses to German libraries from Allied air raids.²⁴ As this implies, the memory of the Nazi bookfires continues to resonate as an image of the horrors of their regime, especially as photographs of the Nazi fires are still commonly used and instantly recognizable.²⁵ Similarly, the most often reproduced quote about the book burnings is from the nineteenth-century German poet and playwright Heinrich Heine: 'Where one burns books, one will soon burn people.' Heine's quote does not claim an identity between books and people, but an inexorable progression, and alludes to the connection between the destruction of the cultural landscape and of the people who inhabit it. Appropriately, it anchors Micha Ullman's sculpture 'Bibliothek' on the former Opernplatz in Berlin, which replaced the rather simple plaque that had previously been the only memorial in former East Berlin. Ullman designed a small room of empty shelves set into the ground underneath the cobbled square, clearly visible through a sheet of thick glass at street level (*Figure 22*). Adjacent is an unadorned plaque which provides the barest details: the quote from Heine, Ullman's name, the title 'Bibliothek', and



Figure 22 Micha Ullman's 'Bibliothek' memorial, on the Bebelplatz in Berlin.

a sparse note regarding the book burning of 10 May 1933, when works by free writers, publishers, philosophers and scientists were burned in the square. From a distance, it is hard to tell why people have gathered in the middle of the empty square, and why they are staring at the ground in front of them.

THE TASK OF EXILE

At the end of 1945, while he was still living in New York, Alfred Kantorowicz wrote an unusually personal memoir of his father Rudolf. Even as a young man Alfred had been politically active on the Left, but his father was a conservative German burgher, 72 years old and just beginning to recover from the inflation crisis when Hitler took power. He was, Alfred remembered, almost completely apolitical: in April of 1933, when the SA came to question him about his Communist son, he is said to have asked in a tone of gentle reproof, 'must it always be while we are eating, gentlemen?'²⁶ In the cellar, nonetheless, they found a great stash of anti-Nazi material which Rudolf had collected from Alfred's hastily vacated apartment. He had planned to burn them, Rudolf later explained, but was waiting for the fortnightly wash-day, and the Gestapo came too early. After this brush with the police, Alfred tried to encourage his father to think politically. When they met in Switzerland in the summer of 1934, he instructed him not to write directly to his Paris address. Instead, the letters should be addressed to nephew 'Kurt' and signed 'Uncle Emil'; a ruse which seemed to escape Rudolf, as he slipped the doctored letter into an envelope neatly addressed to 'Alfred Kantorowicz, 23 Rue de Tournon, Paris VI'. And, after signing with his nom de plume, he immediately continued 'your loving father Rudolf'.²⁷ Contact between father and son was sporadic, although in 1937 Rudolf met with Alfred's partner Friedel, who explained that Alfred was with the fighting in Spain: 'anywhere there is trouble in the world,' Rudolf commented querulously, 'he must mix himself up with it'.²⁸

In 1941, Alfred finally reached refuge in New York, where he received news that his father was being forced to quit his apartment, a standard euphemism for deportation to a camp. Although Alfred made one last attempt to get him a visa for Cuba, it was already too late. Proud and still defiant, Rudolf wrote that he had provided for himself for 62 years, and had no intention of becoming a beggar at his age. For several years no further news got through. It was only after the surrender in May 1945 that he was able to find out that his father had been deported to Theresienstadt, from a list published by the World Jewish Congress. A few months later, he received a letter from one of Rudolf's acquaintances. His father, the letter explained, had stayed fit to the end, even after his deportation to the camp in July 1942, where he was joined

by his brothers, his sister Sophie, and his sister-in-law. Rudolf Kantorowicz, the letter confirmed, died of exhaustion in February or March, 1944.

Towards the end of 1945 Alfred had one last, belated, contact with his father, when he finally received a postcard that Rudolf had sent to a friend in Switzerland in December 1943. He is now 82, the card announced, and he doesn't feel as well as he used to. If anything happens to him, his friend is to make sure to get in touch with his son Alfred (and not his imaginary nephew Kurt) in New York. From Theresienstadt, the card signs off with heartfelt platitudes: 'I wish you all a happy and long life, and greet you all. Live well.' It is a story without a moral, wrote his grieving son, and he did not feel up to providing much commentary either, simply noting that his father had written his own epitaph through his respectable life. Alfred returned to the Soviet sector of Berlin in 1946. He swallowed his growing revulsion for ten years, but as the Hungarian tragedy unfolded he was pushed to the wall and, despite his prominent position in the East German intelligentsia, refused to sign a pro-Soviet 'Resolution on Hungary'. In August 1957, he fled to West Berlin, where he broadcast a speech titled 'I Have Lost Every Illusion' on radio Free Berlin.²⁹ For the third time in his life, Alfred Kantorowicz abandoned his library.

LIBERATION

The Second World War was barely over when Egyptian students at Farouk I university in Alexandria protested British rule by burning English textbooks.³⁰ As countless other examples could attest, such as the fires at American libraries in Jakarta and Cairo in 1964, book burning remained a compelling symbol of resistance to repressive cultural norms, and continued to be a recognized form of protest.³¹ More recently Muslims around the world burned Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* due to the fatwa, and fundamentalist Christian groups routinely make a point of burning J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books (although, as Robert Young has noted, the latter has received rather different attention in the press).³² Indeed, Young's recent introduction to his study of *Postcolonialism* explicitly shows that while book burning is more commonly designed to oppress minority cultures, it can also be used as 'a gesture of liberation, or of powerlessness to make a statement by any other means'.³³ In support of this he refers to the famous, non-incendiary, example of Langston Hughes who, as a young man, threw the books he was carrying on his first voyage to Africa overboard: 'Melodramatic maybe, it seems to me now', wrote Hughes. 'But then it was like throwing a million bricks out of my heart when I threw the books into the water.'³⁴

If book burning can be a gesture of liberation, in fiction it is often a muted or ironic one. Thus, it is not at all clear what lesson to derive from another of

Young's examples, Jean Rhys' short story 'The Day They Burned the Books', in which the protagonist is a child born of a white British father and black Caribbean mother, but educated to be British (satirized as reading endless books about daffodils). The story is set in the weeks after the death of the abusive father, as her mother sorts through her husband's library in a rage, making one pile to be sold and another to be burned. For Rhys, the notion of book burning as liberation is not as clear cut as it might seem, as for the child it is an act of torture rather than redemption. When the protagonist and her friend Eddie resolve to steal books from the pile slated for destruction, they are disappointed. Between them all they manage to salvage is a copy of Kipling's *Kim*, missing the first 20 pages, and another book which is 'in French and seemed dull. *Fort Comme La Mort*, it was called.'³⁵ Rhys leaves it to the reader to decide whether these partial texts – the first the story of a half-caste child in India, the second of a painter who falls in love with a woman and then her daughter – will bring any redemption.

THE LESSON OF THE CINEMA

Watching two British boys on YouTube take ten minutes (ten minutes!) to burn a paperback copy of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* with a lighter, an aerosol can and some perfume, singeing their hands in the process, is a reminder why book burning scenes, despite their seeming pageantry and spectacular appeal, make a surprisingly slim catalogue of appearance in the postwar cinema.³⁶ Unimaginative fanatics stage book burnings in *The Omega Man* (1971), *Footloose* (1984) and *Pleasantville* (1998), and an advocate of censorship is derided as a book burner in a heated town meeting in *Field of Dreams* (1989). In each of these films, resistance to book burning is a muscular, peculiarly American, act of defiance, in which the morally upright individual turns back the frightened hordes. It is a stance exemplified in *The Omega Man*, where biological Renaissance man Charlton Heston survives in a post-nuclear wasteland overrun by the medieval zombies of 'The Family'. Watching their attempts to burn down the old town library, he soberly shoots a few to discourage them. Although book burners rarely get shot in the other films, it is usually played for emotional complexity as a parable of the individual resisting the conformity of simple townfolk keen to purify their town library. The precursor to all of these films is director Daniel Taradash's *Storm Center* (1956), in which small town librarian Bette Davis refuses to remove an overtly Communist book from the shelves. It is only after the library is burned to the ground by a bright but troubled youth that the townfolk realize the error of their ways, gathering in its ashes and vowing never to become book burners again.

Apart from the now largely forgotten *Mortal Storm* (1940), few films stage the Nazi book burnings, although the characters in Truffaut's *Jules et Jim* (1962) are shown watching the original newsreel footage in a Paris cinema. The great set-piece, however, is a stylish scene in Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), in which the eponymous Jones finds himself face to face with Hitler at a mass burning in Berlin, and only escapes with the Grail diary when the Führer mistakes it for an autograph book. Its visual accuracy shows that Spielberg has borrowed heavily from the original German newsreel of the event, but it also takes considerable historical licence, especially by making Hitler host the event.³⁷ But it is left to Sean Connery, playing Jones senior, to deliver the belated punch-line. Captured trying to retrieve his Grail diary, he is asked by a sneering SS man 'What does the diary tell you that it does not tell us?' He replies sardonically: 'It tells me that goose-stepping morons like yourself should try reading books instead of burning them.'

Intriguingly, most films prefer to keep the fires in long shot, and to my knowledge, *Storm Center* and *Fahrenheit 451* are the only films to linger over the scenes of book burning to the extent of including close-ups of the covers of famous works as they are incinerated (the latter, it has to be said, to very different effect). This hints at one, banal, explanation for the lack of book burning scenes in recent cinema, as films find it difficult to be about burning books without showing it as well, meaning that production assistants are sent out to find suitable stacks of props. But ultimately film simply seems unable to convincingly depict book burning without a sense of voyeurism creeping in. An earlier chapter discussed the premise of William Saroyan's story 'A Cold Day', in which the protagonist refuses to burn books in his freezing cold apartment, even at the cost of being able to write. This sort of squeamishness has little place in the recent blockbuster *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), where survivors holed up in the New York Public Library, weathering a new ice age, keep alive because of a carefully stoked bookfire in an old hearth. Even if they start with taxation statutes, and even if one bookish chap never relinquishes the Gutenberg Bible under his arm, this is a striking example of how the willingness to burn can easily become a virtue, an embrace of life.

CULTURAL SALVAGE

In 1946, Elias Canetti's *Auto-de-fé*, which ends in the conflagration of a library and the immolation of a scholar, finally found its audience. The previous year, Hermann Broch, a German-speaking émigré in California, published his meditative and brooding novel *The Death of Virgil*. Following the last hours of Virgil's life, many of the novel's labyrinthine sentences stretch for pages, as Virgil obsesses about burning *The Aeneid* because of the 'command

to abolish everything that had been done, to burn everything that he had ever written or composed'.³⁸ Neither of the novels are simply about book burning, but are more interested in the crisis of memory. In both, text is an equivocal legacy, inescapable rather than passed on, involuntary rather than lived. And in both, books and writing are derided as things which divorce the writer from life. One is reminded of Walter Benjamin's obsession with the notion that conscious recollection was something that actually destroyed the memory traces it was designed to preserve.³⁹ Or of his thesis that Marcel Proust's use of involuntary memory was a reminder that 'our most profound moments have been furnished, like those cigarette packages, with a little image, a photograph of ourselves. And that "whole life" which, as we often hear, passes before the dying or people in danger of dying, is composed precisely of those tiny images.'⁴⁰ In Benjamin's metaphor, memory is uncannily similar to Anatole France's tale of a bibliomaniac in Paris, who kept only the individual pages of books which charmed him, so that almost all of his library was 'composed of fragments and remnants magnificently bound'.⁴¹ Or, it could be compared with the final scenes of Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, when the novice Adso returns to the destroyed monastery many years later. He begins to collect the scraps of parchment and text half-buried in the ruins, reconstructing what he describes as a kind of lesser library of fragments and 'amputated stumps'.⁴² This act of salvage, Adso concludes, may bring moments of great joy, but appears to contain no legible message (*Plate 7*).

THE WEIGHT OF HISTORY

Such *bricolage* is also relevant to the anxiety about storage and destruction that Jacques Derrida has usefully christened 'archive fever' (and, perhaps, the uncanny use of 'burning' in modern digital culture). Far from being an isolated concern, many writers are troubled by the archive: one thinks of Elizabeth Gaskell's premonitions of her letters being kept in the 'terrible warehouse', or Theodor Adorno speculating on the relationship between the 'museum' and the 'mausoleum'.⁴³ Nor has a sense of frustration, of being overwhelmed by books and artefacts, outlived itself. Luis Buñuel announced that he would rather burn down a museum than inaugurate a new one.⁴⁴ More recently, *The Economist* hoped that the sorry genre of books written by US presidential hopefuls might go the same way: 'If literary standards count for anything, these sententious tomes should all be consigned to the flames.'⁴⁵ What this attests is that while book burning rightly retains its association with totalitarian government and the fiery 'memory holes' into which Winston Smith dispatches the discards of history, many writers have reserved the idea of burning books as a possible, maybe even a necessary, act of redemption.

This work has sought to study this tension between proscription and desire, rather than resolve it. It closes with two images of book burning, from two writers who knew more than their share about fascism. Both examples show the abiding fascination of the bonfire, but just as importantly, reiterate that our relationship with books and language is never a simple one.

In the concluding pages of his autobiography *Invisible Writing* (1954), Arthur Koestler reproduces a contemporary German election poster for the Social Democratic Party of Germany. On the left, Goebbels is throwing a book onto a fire as, on the right, Wilhelm Pieck, the postwar President of the Republic of East Germany, does the same. Above each loom Hitler and Stalin, who watch on as Koestler's books are burned by fascist and Communist fires alike (*Plate 8*). The poster is, Koestler cheerfully admits, completely anachronistic – for one, he was too insignificant a writer to have even been noticed in 1933. Nonetheless, he has a framed copy outside his study in lieu of any formal credentials, representing what he calls a sort of 'diploma in the twentieth century', 'certifying that its owner has passed his examinations and is entitled to exercise his craft'.⁴⁶

In late 1993 Yehiel Dinur took a rare copy of his first published work, a volume of poetry from 1931, from the National Library in Jerusalem. A few days later, writes Omer Bartov, he returned the burned remains of the book to the library's director with the request that any other copies also be destroyed, 'just as all that was dear to me and my world was burned in the crematorium of Auschwitz'.⁴⁷ Bartov is surely correct to point out that this is the literal reverse of Adorno's dictum, making poetry written before Auschwitz impossible. Yet it is also a reminder of the flexibility and power of book burning's symbolism, and its uncanny appeal.

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27. Hawthorne, 'Earth's Holocaust', p. 453.
28. Hawthorne, 'Earth's Holocaust', p. 455.
29. William Cowper, 'On the burning of Lord Mansfield's Library, together with his MSS. by the Mob, in the Month of June, 1780', *Poems* (London: J. Johnson, 1782), p. 319.
30. Ilan Stavans, 'On Packing my Library', *Transition* 9:1/2 (2000), 56.
31. Stavans, 'On Packing my Library', p. 56.
32. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Vintage, 1989), p. 54.
33. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, p. 58.

34. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, p. 138.
35. Quoted in Thomas H. Brobjer, 'Nietzsche's Reading and Private Library, 1885–1889', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58:4 (October 1997), 663–4.
36. Brobjer, 'Nietzsche's Reading and Private Library', 664.
37. Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, in *Works* (London: Faber, 1963), vol. 1, p. 35.
38. James Anson Farrer, *Books Condemned to be Burnt* (London: Elliot Stock, 1892), p. 188.
39. William Blades, *Enemies of Books* (London: Elliot Stock, 1896), p. 3.
40. Lord Byron, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (London: Cawthorn, Sharpe, Hailes, 1811), p. 83.
41. Holbrook Jackson, *The Anatomy of Bibliomania* (London: Soncino Press, 1930), vol. 1, p. 309, and vol. 2, p. 117.
42. Jackson, *Anatomy of Bibliomania*, vol. 1, pp. 158–64.
43. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, III: ii: 94.
44. Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1902), p. 33.
45. Christopher Marlowe, *Dr Faustus, Complete Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), vol. 2, p. 43.
46. Marlowe, *Dr Faustus*, p. 46.
47. Jonathan Swift, *Works* (London: Davis, Hodges & Bowyer, 1755), vol. 4, p. 93. He is not dogmatic about the process, and does not name the work. It may even be his own, although the line 'I threw the volume in the fire' does suggest that it is from a published work and not a manuscript.
48. Quoted in John M. Perlette, 'Of Sites and Parasites: The Centrality of the Marginal Anecdote in Book 1 of More's *Utopia*', *ELH* 54:2 (Summer 1987), 231.
49. Terry Eagleton, *The Gatekeeper* (London: St Martin's Press, 2003), p. 67; Whitfield, 'Where They Burn Books ...', 222; Lord Byron, *Werner* (London: John Murray, 1823), p. viii.
50. Gaston Bachelard, *Fragments of a Poetics of Fire* (Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 1990), p. 125.
51. Stacy Schiff, *Véra (Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov)* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), pp. 166–7.
52. A.S.W. Rosenbach, *A Book Hunter's Holiday* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1936), p. 12.
53. Claire Tomalin, *Jane Austen: A Life* (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 281.
54. Dickens to W.H. Wills (4 September 1860), in Madeline House and Graham Storey (eds), *The Letters of Charles Dickens* (London: Clarendon Press, 1969), vol. 2, p. 121.
55. Henry James to Mrs. J.T. Fields (2 January 1910), in Leon Edel (ed.), *Henry James Letters* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1984), vol. 4, p. 541.
56. Henry James to Henry James III (7 April 1910), *Henry James Letters*, vol. 4, p. 806.
57. Edel (ed.), *Henry James Letters*, vol. 1, p. xv.
58. Gaskell, *Cranford* (London: J.M. Dent, 1956), pp. 63–70.
59. Letter to Marianne Gaskell (?March 1854) in J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (eds), *Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), p. 274.
60. Letter to George Smith (?December 1856), *Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, p. 426.
61. See generally Jeffrey W. Vail, *The Literary Relationship of Lord Byron & Thomas Moore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Ralph Milbanke, *Astarte* (London: Christophers, 1921); John C. Fox, *The Byron Mystery* (London: Grant Richards, 1924).
62. Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 202. My particular thanks to John Attridge for bringing this to my attention.
63. Osbert Sitwell, 'On the Burning of Books as Private Pastime and National Recreation', in Robert B. Downs (ed.), *The First Freedom* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1960), p. 270. This can be compared with a letter in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, which recalled that American libraries in many cities had large collections of German books, but that in 1917, 'the year we started to make the world safe for democracy, German books were burned and many of them were dumped into rivers and lakes'. H.D. Swenhagen (letter),

- 'Book Burning', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 June 1953, p. 20. I have not seen any published research on this apparent phenomenon.
64. See Viscount Bryce's widely available *Report of the British Committee on Alleged German Atrocities* (Sydney: Critchley Parker, 1915). Parenthetically, this is a particularly interesting example of the infamy reserved for the deliberate destruction of libraries by invading armies (a list which includes the burning of the Library of Congress by the British in 1814, the bombardment of Strasbourg by the Prussians in 1870, the incineration of Louvain in 1914, and the bombardment of the National Library in Sarajevo in 1992).
 65. Thus Pierre Nothomb's catalogue of the destruction at Louvain devoted a whole chapter to German 'Scientific Incendiarism', *Barbarians in Belgium* (London: Jarrold & Sons, 1915), pp. 229–44. See also 'The Destruction of Louvain', Charles Sarolea, *How Belgium Saved Europe* (London: Heinemann, 1915), pp. 151–62; William Roscoe Thayer, *Germany vs. Civilization* (London: Constable & Co., 1916), p. 26.
 66. 'The March of the Huns', *The Times*, 29 August 1914, p. 9.
 67. Phillip A. Metzger, 'The Cover', *Journal of Library History* 15:3 (Summer 1980), 326.
 68. A significant portion of the funding came from Herbert Hoover's 'Commission for Relief in Belgium Educational Foundation', a wartime initiative which distributed supplies to Belgium and Northern France from October 1914. At the end of the war the US\$30 million surplus of funds was reassigned by the Foundation for help towards the reconstruction of Belgium, and the University at Louvain was one of its priorities. From the website of their successor organization, <www.baef.be/content/history.html>.
 69. Theodore Wesley Koch, *The Leipzig Book Fair* (Evanston, IL: privately printed, 1923), p. 54.
 70. Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in War-Time* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1928).
 71. Pierre de Soete, *The Louvain Library Controversy* (Concord, NH: Rumford Press, 1929), pp. 7–10.
 72. 'Mob Tears Down Anti-Hate Pillars in Louvain Dispute', *New York Times*, 28 June 1928, p. 1.
 73. 'Belgian Foreman Smashes Louvain Library', *New York Times*, 17 July 1928, p. 1.
 74. 'Our Lady of Victories', *New York Times*, 12 May 1928, p. 4; 'Louvain Library Open to the Public', *New York Times*, 18 June 1928, p. 5.
 75. 'Balustrade at Louvain is Smashed Again by Belgian Workers Who Wrecked it in 1928', *New York Times*, 5 June 1933, p. 1.
 76. Evelyn Waugh, *Vile Bodies* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1974), pp. 23–4.
 77. Waugh, *Vile Bodies*, p. 25.
 78. Anne Lyon Haight, *Banned Books* (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1935), p. iii.
 79. William Seagle, *Cato* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1930), p. 73.
 80. For a fuller list see Jackson, *Fear of Books*, pp. 86–7.
 81. Alan Travis, *Bound and Gagged* (London: Profile Books, 2000), pp. 81–2.
 82. He notes that James Ockford's *The Doctrine of the Fourth Commandment, Deformed by Popery*, is 'seemingly' entirely lost. Gillett, *Burned Books*, p. 251. It is not (a copy is now known at Christ Church Library in Oxford).
 83. Gillett, *Burned Books*, p. 591.
 84. Margaret C. Anderson, *My Thirty Years War* (London: Knopf, 1930), p. 221.
 85. 'A Letter from Mr. Joyce to the Publisher', in James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Modern Library, 1992), p. ix.
 86. John J. Slocum and Herbert Cahoon, *A Bibliography of James Joyce* (London: Hart-Davis, 1953), esp. pp. 24–32.
 87. Heywood Broun and Margaret Leech, *Anthony Comstock* (London: Wishart, 1928), p. 18.
 88. See 'The Monumental Decision of the United States District Court Rendered December 6, 1933, by Hon. John M. Woolsey Lifting the Ban on *Ulysses*', in Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. xiii–xviii.

89. Irene and Allen Cleaton, *Books and Battles; American Literature, 1920–1930* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1970, but 1937), p. 55.
90. Dennis Thompson, 'The Private Wars of Chicago's Big Bill Thompson', *Journal of Library History* 15:3 (Summer 1980), 261–80; 'Four "British" books seized in Chicago', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 27 October 1927, p. 1. The titles were Albert Bushnell Hart, *The American Nation – A History* (1907); C.H. Van Tyne, *Practicer of American Ideals* (1905); Willis Mason West, *The Story of American Democracy* (1922); C.H. Van Tyne, *The Causes of the War of Independence* (1922).
91. 'Mayor Pulls Branded Books from Burning', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 26 October 1927, p. 1.
92. 'Suit to Quench Library Torch in Court Today', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 25 October 1927, p. 1.
93. "'Can Burn Books but Won't" Says Mayor to Suit,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 November 1927, p. 7; 'Library Board Lauds Britons; Rebuffs Mayor', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 15 November 1927, p. 5.
94. Paul S. Boyer, 'Boston Book Censorship in the Twenties', *American Quarterly* 15:1 (Spring 1963), 10.
95. Cleaton, *Books and Battles*, pp. 72–5.
96. Alec Craig, *The Banned Books of England and Other Countries* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962), p. 141.
97. Louise Fargo Brown, 'On the Burning of Books', in Christabel F. Fiske (ed.), *Vassar Mediaeval Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923), p. 249.
98. Brown, 'On the Burning of Books', p. 249.
99. 'Whitman in Hungary', *New York Times*, 2 January 1923, p. 12. See also the previous day's 'Prescribes Walt Whitman: Hungarian Government Bars His Works as of "Destructive Tendency"', *New York Times*, 1 January 1923, p. 10.
100. Quoted in Nicholas A. Basbanes, *Among the Gently Mad* (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), p. 124.
101. 'Punishment Well Deserved', *New York Times*, 2 January 1923, p. 12. There was no editorial and barely any comment when the newspaper noted 'La Garconne Banned' in Hungary, *New York Times*, 10 February 1924, VII, p. 13.
102. Gillett, *Burned Books*, vol. 1, p. 4.
103. Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (London: Pan, 1984), p. 286.
104. George Steiner, *Language and Silence* (London: Faber, 1967), p. 218.
105. Arnold Bennett, 'Books to Save from the Burning', *Arnold Bennett: The Evening Standard Years* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1974), p. 202 (originally published 4 October 1928).
106. Jackson, *Fear of Books*, p. 26.
107. Quoted in Jackson, *Fear of Books*, p. 181.
108. Jackson, *Fear of Books*, p. 180. The word 'holocaust' has a long history of being held in reserve to describe particularly destructive book burnings.
109. Thomas Richards, 'Archive and Utopia', *Representations* 37 (Winter 1992), 121; Sanja Zgonjanin, 'The Prosecution of War Crimes for the Destruction of Libraries and Archives during Times of Armed Conflict', *Libraries and Culture* 40:2 (Spring 2005), 132.

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1. Sauder, *Die Bücherverbrennung*, pp. 169–218.
2. Tom Ambrose, *Hitler's Loss* (London: Peter Owen, 2001), p. 20.
3. Leonidas E. Hill, 'The Nazi Attack on "Un-German" Literature, 1933–1945', in Jonathan Rose (ed.), *The Holocaust and the Book*, pp. 13–16.
4. Hans-Albert Walter, *Deutsche Exilliteratur 1933–1950: Bedrohung und Verfolgung bis 1933* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1972), vol. 1, p. 192.

5. 'Wir fordern vom deutschen Studenten den Willen und die Fähigkeit zur Reinerhaltung der deutsche Sprache.' The poster is often reproduced in online exhibits.
6. F.E. May, *Neue deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, quoted in H.G. Atkins, *German Literature through Nazi Eyes* (London: Methuen, 1941), p. 4.
7. David Pan, 'The Struggle for Myth in the Nazi Period: Alfred Baeumler, Ernst Bloch, and Carl Einstein', *South Atlantic Review* 65:1 (Winter 2000), 50.
8. Martin Heidegger, 'Self-Assertion of the German University', in Günther Neske and Emil Kettering (eds), *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), pp. 7–9.
9. Heidegger, 'Self-Assertion of the German University', p. 13.
10. In his footnote Karl Löwith corrected the translation as 'That which is great is most exposed to risk.' *My Life in Germany* (London: Athlone, 1994), p. 36.
11. Sauder, *Die Bücherverbrennung*, p. 190. Two later attempts in Freiburg orchestrated by the Hitler Youth were complicated by continual rain.
12. Sauder, who provides a detailed analysis of some 32 different events, lists 17 as occurring on the night of 10 May. The rest range in date from 8 May through to 21 June, including two organized by the Hitler Youth of Heidelberg and Karlsruhe to coincide with solstice celebrations on 17 June. *Die Bücherverbrennung*, p. 190.
13. Quoted in Sauder, *Die Bücherverbrennung*, p. 175.
14. Versions and commentaries on the *Feuersprüche* are often reprinted: I am referring to Sauder, *Die Bücherverbrennung*, pp. 77–8.
15. Sauder, *Die Bücherverbrennung*, p. 169.
16. Kästner published a reflection on the burnings in 1958 as 'Über das Verbrennen von Büchern', reprinted in Klaus Schöffling (ed.), *Dort wo man Bücher verbrennt* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp. 167–74.
17. '15,000 Watch Bonfire', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 May 1933, p. 9.
18. Frederick T. Birchall, 'Nazi Book-Burning Fails to Stir Berlin', *New York Times*, 11 May 1933, p. 12.
19. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p. 263.
20. Christa Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature in Hitler's Germany* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1984), pp. 223–4.
21. That the swastika was pre-eminently a symbol of axial movement and had been taken as a symbol of the sun, water, lightning or the earth (among others) did not stop the discoverer of Troy, Heinrich Schliemann, from taking it as the central signifier of the Aryan and a symbol of generative fire. See especially his *Ilios* (London: John Murray, 1880), pp. 337–51.
22. 'Book-Burning in Germany', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 May 1933, p. 8.
23. 'Germany's Book Bonfire', *Literary Digest*, 27 May 1933, p. 14.
24. Quoted in Denis Hollier, 'The Death of Paper: A Radio Play', *October* 78 (Autumn 1996), 4.
25. 'Germany: Bibliocaust', *Time*, 22 May 1933, p. 21.
26. 'Preliminaries to the Burning of the Books in Germany', *New York Times*, 21 May 1933, VII, p. 3; 'Nazi Book Ban', *Times*, 11 May 1933, p. 18.
27. There's little printed record of these saturnalia, but they seem to have been ritualized affairs. The Columbia sophomores of 1907 marched into the South Field (between 115 and 116, Amsterdam and Broadway, New York City) at 8.30 one May night, where kerosene-soaked piles of their books were burned with ceremony as the 'class of 1909 danced about uttering aboriginal cries that go with such celebrations'. 'Firemen Douse Students', *New York Times*, 1 June 1907, p. 1. See also George Lincoln Burr, 'Anent Bonfires', *The Cornell Era* 39:5 (February 1907), 205–9.
28. Birchall, 'Nazi Book-Burning Fails to Stir Berlin', p. 1.
29. '100 Volumes Burned in Munich', *New York Times*, 11 May 1933, p. 12.
30. Quoted in Sauder, *Die Bücherverbrennung*, p. 225.
31. 'Hitler au pouvoir', *Crapouillot*, July 1933, p. 66.

32. Reproduced in Alfred Grosser, *Hitler la presse et la naissance d'une dictature* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1959), p. 203.
33. 'Germany. Burning of Books. "Un-German" Literature', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 May 1933, p. 12.
34. Walter Lippmann in the *New York Herald Tribune*, quoted in *Literary Digest*, 27 May 1933, p. 14; Phillips, 'The Once Over – Diary of a German Bookworm', *Washington Post*, 19 May 1933, p. 6.
35. 'Books for Burning', *New York Times*, 12 May 1933, p. 16.
36. 'Nazi Fires Fail to Sour Book Sale', *New York Times*, 12 May 1933, p. 15.
37. 'To the Secretary, Der Deutscher Kulturbund', 28 April 1933, in David Clayton Smith (ed.), *The Correspondence of H.G. Wells* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), vol. 3, no. 1922.
38. 'Peter Pan Statesman', *New York Times*, 28 April 1933, p. 16.
39. 'Wants His Books Burned', *New York Times*, 13 May 1933, p. 7. Graf's protest was made famous by Brecht's poem 'Die Bücherverbrennung'.
40. 'Ludwig Voices Satisfaction Over Burning of His Books', *New York Times*, 11 May 1933, p. 1.
41. Guy Stern, 'The Burning of the Books in Nazi Germany', *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 2 (chapter 5), unpaginated; available at <<http://motlc.wiesenthal.com>>.
42. Stern, 'Burning of the Books in Nazi Germany'.
43. Stern, 'Burning of the Books in Nazi Germany'.
44. Heywood Broun, 'The Burning of the Books', *Collected Edition of Heywood Broun* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941), pp. 288–90.
45. H.G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography* (London: Gollancz, 1934), vol. 1, p. 102.
46. 'Helen Keller Warns Germany's Students; Says Burning of Books Cannot Kill Ideas', *New York Times*, 10 May 1933, p. 10.
47. 'O'Ryan's Address at Protest Rally', *New York Times*, 11 May 1933, p. 10. See also '100,000 March Here in 6-Hour Protest Over Nazi Policies', *New York Times*, 11 May 1933, p. 1.
48. 'Germany: Students Exult as "Un-German" Books Burn', *Newsweek*, 20 May 1933, p. 15.
49. '50,000 Jews Unite in Chicago Protest', *New York Times*, 11 May 1933, p. 10.
50. '50,000 Jews Unite in Chicago Protest', p. 10.
51. 'Nazi Acts Scored by College Group', *New York Times*, 21 May 1933, p. 24.
52. Eden and Cedar Paul, 'Biographical Introduction', in Magnus Hirschfeld, *Racism* (London: 1938), p. 26.
53. 'Germany: Bibliocaust', *Time*, 22 May 1933, p. 21.
54. "'Un-German" Books Destroyed – A Berlin Bonfire', *Times*, 11 May 1933, p. 13.
55. Birchall, 'Nazi Book-Burning Fails to Stir Berlin', p. 12 (my emphasis).
56. Magnus Hirschfeld, *Sex in Human Relationships* (London: Bodley Head, 1935), p. v.
57. Wyndham Lewis, *Hitler* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931), p. 21. Jean Chiappe was the Corsican Chief of Police in Paris. He turned Nazi immediately after the fall of Paris. Albert Grzesinski (1879–1947) was head of the Berlin police at the time. Lewis saw fit not to mention this prediction in his 1939 reprise *The Hitler Cult*, even though he did admit that the Berlin-based Hobbing Verlag, which had been responsible for a German translation of the first work, had contacted him about pulping the edition. Wyndham Lewis, *Hitler Cult* (London: Dent, 1938), p. 11.
58. Edgar Mowrer, *Germany Puts the Clock Back* (London: Bodley Head, 1933), pp. 192–9.
59. Sauder, *Die Bücherverbrennung*, p. 31.
60. G.E.R. Gedye, 'What a Book Famine Means' (first published in *Publisher's Weekly*, 13 May 1939), in Downs (ed.), *The First Freedom*, pp. 408–10. 'For any reader of books I

can imagine no better antidote to incipient Nazism than compulsory residence for a period in a Fascist country.'

61. Magnus Hirschfeld, 'The Book-Burners', *Medical Critic and Guide* 31:7 (July 1933), 183.
62. *New York Times*, 22 May 1933, p. 9.
63. Notes for address to the 'Relief Committee for Victims of German Fascism', Vera Brittain Papers, *The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections*, McMaster University Library, F14.
64. 'H.G. Wells Scores Nazis as "Louts"', *New York Times*, 22 September 1933, p. 13.
65. 'H.G. Wells Scores Nazis as "Louts"', p. 13. This stance against the bookfires may have appealed to his host Christina Foyle, the doyenne of the Luncheons, who actually wrote to Hitler asking to buy the books proposed to be burned, so long as he agreed to put the money to good purpose (he replied that he had no wish to see either British or German morals corrupted). See her obituary in the *Sunday Times*, 10 June 1999.
66. 'H.G. Wells Scores Nazis as "Louts"', p. 13.
67. 'Jews made the most noise, but it was not only Jews who suffered.' 'Mr. H. G. Wells on Germany – Insurgence of the Clumsy Lout', *The Times*, 22 September 1933, p. 14.
68. 'Ineffectual Fires', *Manchester Guardian*, 22 September 1933, p. 8.
69. 'Ineffectual Fires', p. 8.
70. Joseph Roth, 'The Auto-da-Fé of the Mind', *What I Saw* (London: Granta, 2003), pp. 207–17. It is reprinted from *Cahiers Juifs* for September/November 1933.
71. Roth, 'The Auto-da-Fé of the Mind', p. 207.
72. Roth, 'The Auto-da-Fé of the Mind', p. 207.
73. Roth, 'The Auto-da-Fé of the Mind', p. 212.
74. Roth, 'The Auto-da-Fé of the Mind', pp. 209–11.
75. Roth, 'The Auto-da-Fé of the Mind', p. 208.
76. Atkins, *German Literature through Nazi Eyes*, p. 6.
77. Roth, 'The Auto-da-Fé of the Mind', p. 215.
78. Roth, 'The Auto-da-Fé of the Mind', p. 217.
79. George Orwell, 'Literature and Totalitarianism', *Complete Works* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1998), vol. 12, p. 505.
80. 'The Book-Baiters', *New York Times*, 8 January 1941, p. 18

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1. See Vera Brittain, *Testament of Experience* (London: Virago, 1979), p. 97; Joseph King, *The German Revolution: Its Meaning and Menace* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1933), p. 150.
2. Alfred Kantorowicz, 'The Burned Books Still Live', *New York Times Magazine*, 7 May 1944, p. 17.
3. Hans Mommsen, 'Consequences of the Reichstag Fire', in H.W. Koch (ed.), *Aspects of the Third Reich* (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 68–75.
4. Friedrich Arnold, *Anschläge: 220 Politische Plakate als Dokumente der deutschen Geschichte 1900–1980* (Ebenhausen bei München: Langewiesch-Brandt, c1985), p. 122. A copy of the second poster is included in Willi Münzenberg, *Propaganda als Waffe* (Paris: Carrefour, 1937), plate 7.
5. Adolf Ehrh, *Bewaffneter Aufstand!* (Berlin-Leipzig: Eckart, 1933); in French, *Révolte Armée*; and in Spanish, *Rebelion Armada*. The English-language edition is called, much less flamboyantly, *Communism in Germany*.
6. John Haynes Holmes, 'The Threat to Freedom', in Pierre van Paassen and James Waterman Wise (eds), *Nazism: An Assault on Civilization* (New York: Smith & Haas, 1934), p. 129.

7. Perhaps 25,000 of the initial 60,000 refugees from Germany were estimated to have taken refuge in the city. Norman Bentwich, *The Refugees from Germany* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1936), pp. 31–3.
8. D.N. Pritt, *Autobiography of D.N. Pritt* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1965), p. 57.
9. Quoted in Fritz Tobias, *The Reichstag Fire* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1963), p. 282.
10. It was not until the publication of Tobias' study *The Reichstag Fire* that this consensus was revised; Tobias argued that van der Lubbe acted alone.
11. Arthur Koestler, *The Invisible Writing* (London: Collins, 1954), p. 199.
12. A list of these initiatives is given in Helmut Gruber, 'Willi Münzenberg: Propagandist for and Against the Comintern', *International Review of Social History* 10 (1965), 188–210.
13. Koestler, *Invisible Writing*, p. 199.
14. World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism, *Brown Book* (New York: Knopf, 1933), pp. 152–88.
15. *Brown Book*, pp. 152–5.
16. *Brown Book*, p. 166.
17. Bentwich, for one, thought that the only comparable event was the emigration of the Greek scholars after Constantinople was captured by the Turks, commenting that no other feature of the Nazi persecution had 'made such a deep impression on the world as the exile of the university scholars and the intellectuals'. *The Refugees from Germany*, pp. 175–6.
18. Alfred Kantorowicz, *Why a Library of the Burned Books?* (London: Library of the Burned Books, 1934), p. 15. See also Dieter Schiller, 'Die Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek in Paris', *Exilforschung* (München: Text + Kritik, 1990), p. 205.
19. In *The Invisible Writing* Koestler tacitly lumped Kantorowicz in with the 'small Party-bureaucrats' of the Communist Party Caucus who had rubbished his first novel for its residual bourgeois individualism, a 'humourless, fanatical and unpleasant lot' (pp. 231–2). The break seems to date from around 1949, and may have something to do with Kantorowicz's dismissive comments on *Darkness at Noon* from around this time. The same year, Koestler was still capable of being much more chipper about his old Berlin flatmate, 'an exceptionally warm-hearted comrade and a self-sacrificing friend, and he had both dignity and a rich sense of humour; his only shortcoming was lack of moral courage. We remained friends all through the Paris émigré years; when I broke with the Party, he was the only one who did not spit at me. Now he is a literary bigwig under the Soviets – may his innocence and compliance protect him from ever getting caught in the snares of counter-revolutionary formalism, bourgeois cosmopolitanism, neo-Kantian banditism, or just liberal depravity.' Richard Crossman (ed.), *The God That Failed* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), pp. 42–3.
20. Walter A. Berendsohn, *Die Humanistische Front* (Zürich: Europa Verlag, 1946), p. 64; Alfred Kantorowicz, *Deutsches Tagebuch* (München: Kindler Verlag, 1959), p. 324.
21. 'Von Heine bis Wassermann: Gründung einer "Deutschen Freiheitsbibliothek"', *Pariser Tageblatt*, 24 February 1934, p. 3.
22. Sauder, *Die Bücherverbrennung*, p. 77. On Bernhard see Kurt Köster (ed.), *Exil-Literatur 1933–1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutschen Bibliothek, 1967), p. 89.
23. Romain Rolland, 'A Lecture by Carl Radek', *I Will Not Rest* (London: Selwyn & Blount, ?1936), p. 87.
24. Rolland, 'Letter to the "Koelnischer Zeitung"', *I Will Not Rest*, pp. 296–7.
25. Kölnischer Zeitung, *Sechs Bekenntnisse zum neuen Deutschland* (Berlin: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1933), p. 9.
26. Kölnischer Zeitung, *Sechs Bekenntnisse*, p. 31.
27. Fritz Seidler, *The Bloodless Pogrom* (London: Gollancz, 1934), p. 254.
28. Maurice Thorez estimated that between February and June 1934 there had been 930 public meetings and 22 street demonstrations against the 'pro-Fascist Doumergue' in Paris alone. *France To-Day and the People's Front* (London: Gollancz, 1936), p. 165.

29. See the collection of relevant letters in Smith, *The Correspondence of H.G. Wells*, especially the correspondence with Herman Ould. See also Werner Berthold and Brita Eckert, *Der Deutsche PEN-Club im Exil* (Frankfurt am Main: Büchhändler-Vereinigung, 1980).
30. Friedel Kantorowicz to H.G. Wells, 14 March 1934, H.G. Wells Correspondence, The Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, WELLS-1, K-012.
31. 'The Establishment of a Library of Books Burned in Nazi Germany', *School and Society* 39:1009 (18 April 1934), p. 535; 'Pour une Bibliothèque Allemande des Livres Brûlés', *La Nouvelle Revue Française* 249 (June 1934), pp. 1038–9.
32. 'The Library of Burned Books Opened in Paris', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 May 1934, pp. 11–12.
33. 'Paris Library for Banned Books Opens On First Anniversary of Nazi Bonfire', *New York Times*, 11 May 1934, p. 10.
34. 'The Burning of Freedom', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 May 1934, p. 10; 'Library of the Burned Books – London Collection', *The Times*, 11 May 1934, p. 12; Alfred Kantorowicz, *Politik und Literatur im Exil* (Hamburg: Hans Christian Verlag, 1978), pp. 287–8.
35. Ursula Büttner, 'Alfred Kantorowicz und der "Tag des Freien Buches"', *Exil* 4:1 (1984), 5.
36. Diary 25 December 1933 – 5 September 1936, G.E.G. Catlin Papers, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University Library, Box 3, No. 2.
37. 'The Burning of Freedom', p. 10.
38. Kantorowicz, *Why a Library of the Burned Books?*, p. 18.
39. Kantorowicz tells the story of his waylaid manuscript in *Politik und Literatur im Exil*, pp. 285–6.
40. Kantorowicz, *Why a Library of the Burned Books?*, p. 10.
41. Kantorowicz, *Why a Library of the Burned Books?*, pp. 5–6.
42. Heinrich Böll, *What's to Become of the Boy?* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1985), pp. 11–12.
43. Stern, 'The Burning of the Books in Nazi Germany'.
44. The story is reproduced in full in Sauder's study of the bookfires, *Die Bücherverbrennung*, pp. 272–5.
45. Sauder, *Die Bücherverbrennung*, p. 275.
46. Hill, 'The Nazi Attack on "Un-German" Literature, 1933–1945', pp. 9–46.
47. 'The Library of Burned Books Opened in Paris', pp. 11–2.
48. Heinrich Mann, 'Die Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek', *Verteidigung der Kultur* (Hamburg: Claasen Verlag, 1960), p. 93.
49. Kantorowicz, *Why a Library of the Burned Books?*, pp. 13–14.
50. Kantorowicz, *Why a Library of the Burned Books?*, pp. 13–15.
51. Kantorowicz, *Why a Library of the Burned Books?*, p. 19.
52. Helmut F. Pfanner, *Exile in New York* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), pp. 20–8.
53. Schiller, 'Die Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek in Paris', p. 207.
54. See his letter to Rudolf Olden, reproduced in Berthold and Eckert, *Der Deutsche PEN-Club im Exil*, p. 190.
55. 'Relief Committee for the Victims of German Fascism', G.E.G. Catlin Papers, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University Library, Box 184.
56. Charlotte Haldane to H.G. Wells, 27 March 1934, H.G. Wells Correspondence, The Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, WELLS-1, H-024.
57. 'Library of Burned Books', *New Statesman and Nation*, 14 April 1934, pp. 540–1; 'The German Burned Books', *New Statesman and Nation*, 21 April 1934, pp. 594–5.

58. See for instance David C. Smith, *H.G. Wells: Desperately Mortal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, c1986); or Anthony West, *H.G. Wells: Aspects of a Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985); nor does it rate a specific mention in his 1934 *Experiment in Autobiography*.
59. Charlotte Haldane, *Truth Will Out* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1949), pp. 69–70.
60. Brittain, *Testament of Experience*, p. 98.
61. Karolyi to Catlin, G.E.G. Catlin Papers, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University Library, Box 163. I have not located any record of how much was actually transferred, although Büttner notes that it was these initial English donations that allowed the library to continue throughout the decade.
62. Apart from Haldane and Brittain's brief comments, I have not been able to find any reference to the library in the correspondence, memoirs or biographies of any of the other people on the letterhead (including Prinz Löwenstein, Wickham Steed, Kingsley Martin, Naomi Mitchison, Amabel Williams-Ellis and Bertrand Russell).
63. Morris L. Ernst, 'Foreword', in Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. xix.
64. 'Prof. Einstein Dedicates Nazi-banned Library', Brooklyn Jewish Center, *Jubilee Books of the Brooklyn Jewish Center* (New York: Brooklyn Jewish Center, 1946), pp. 25–7.
65. 'Library of Burned Books Inaugurated Here', *Jewish Tribune*, 28 December 1934, p. 139.
66. The manuscript of Einstein's speech is available at the Einstein Archives Online, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Einstein Papers Project, California Institute of Technology, Nr. 28–293.00. Einstein spoke about how any group defined by hate must decline, and called the library an attempt to promote the health of society.
67. 'Library of Burned Books Inaugurated Here', p. 139.
68. 'Deutschland nach dem 30. Juni', *Pariser Tageblatt*, 30 July 1934, p. 3. See Schiller, 'Die Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek in Paris', esp. 209–11. A similar arrangement existed for the Communist publishers Editions du Phénix.
69. Gustav Regler, *Im Kreuzfeuer* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1978), p. 135.
70. Gollancz published versions of many works which had originated from Münzenberg's circle, including *The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror* (1933); *The Yellow Spot* (1936); S. Erckner, *Hitler's Conspiracy Against Peace* (1936); [Otto Katz], *The Nazi Conspiracy in Spain* (1936); Andre Malraux, *Days of Contempt* (1936); and Arthur Koestler, *Spanish Testament* (1937).
71. 'Misfires Underground', *Left Review*, August 1936, pp. 597–8.
72. Neville Laski, 'Foreword', in G. Warburg, *Six Years of Hitler* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1939), p. 7.
73. There were enough scholarly studies, documentary novels and memoirs of life in the concentration camps to speak of a significant genre. Some of the better-known examples include Wolfgang Langhoff, *Rubber Truncheon* (London: Constable, 1935); Stefan Lorant, *I Was Hitler's Prisoner* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1935); Jan Petersen, *Our Street* (London: Gollancz, 1938); Anonymous, *Dachau: The Nazi Hell* (London: Francis Aldor, 1939).
74. Heinz Liepmann, *Fires Underground* (London: George G. Harrap, 1935), pp. 228, 134.
75. Ralph McGill, 'There is Time Yet', *Atlantic*, September 1944, pp. 61–2.
76. 'Der Scheiterhaufen des Geistens', *Pariser Tageblatt*, 12 May 1935, p. 5.
77. Heinrich Mann, 'Ein Jahr Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek', *Verteidigung der Kultur: Antifaschistische Streitschriften und Essays* (Hamburg: Claasen Verlag GmbH, 1960), p. 125.
78. Alfred Kantorowicz, 'Wir hüten Erbe und Zukunft', *Pariser Tageblatt*, 10 May 1935, pp. 1–2.
79. For an introduction to the development of censorship and *Gleichschaltung* see David Welch's *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993).
80. Birchall, 'Nazi Book-Burning Fails to Stir Berlin', p. 1.

81. Frederick T. Birchall, 'Where Heroes can be Made to Order', *New York Times Magazine*, 6 May 1934, pp. 6–7.
82. Kantorowicz, 'Wir hüten Erbe und Zukunft', p. 2.
83. Schiller, 'Die Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek in Paris', pp. 211–12; for an overview of contributing authors see Lieselotte Maas, *Handbuch der deutschen Exilpresse 1933–1945* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1976). The one issue of the paper I have seen (September 1936) confirms Schiller's assessment: it is certainly even more obviously political than, say, the *Left Review*.
84. Büttner, 'Alfred Kantorowicz und "Der Tag des Freien Buches"', p. 5.
85. Alfred Kantorowicz, 'The Story of the Library of the Burned Books', *Wiener Library Bulletin* 24 (1971), pp. 36–41, 38–9.
86. Rolland, 'A Lecture by Carl Radek', pp. 87–8.
87. Otto Lehmann-Russbueltdt, *Germany's Air Force* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1935), p. 157.
88. Ernst Toller, *I Was a German* (London: Bodley Head, 1935), pp. 294, v.
89. Koestler, *Invisible Writing*, p. 188.
90. 'They had once been suspected of Nazi sympathies; they had now become a liability because they were anti-Nazis.' Oscar Paul, *Farewell, France!* (London: Gollancz, 1941), pp. 95, 204.
91. Marie Kuhlmann, *Censure et bibliothèques au XXe siècle* (Paris: Editions du Cercle de la librairie, 1989), p. 34.
92. Werner Berthold, 'Zur Anlage der Ausstellung und des Katalogs', in Köster (ed.), *Exil-Literatur 1933–1945*, p. 8.
93. Arthur Koestler, *Scum of the Earth* (London: Gollancz, 1941), p. 206.

4 TO HELL WITH CULTURE

1. William Saroyan, 'A Cold Day', in Downs (ed.), *The First Freedom*, p. 282.
2. Stern, 'The Burning of the Books in Nazi Germany'.
3. Stern, 'The Burning of the Books in Nazi Germany'.
4. Saroyan, 'A Cold Day', p. 284.
5. Elias Canetti, 'The First Book: Auto-da-Fé', *The Conscience of Words* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), pp. 205–6.
6. Quoted in Whitfield, 'Where They Burn Books', 222.
7. Elias Canetti, 'The First Book: Auto-da-Fé', p. 213.
8. Elias Canetti, *Auto-da-fé* (London: Pan, 1978), p. 299.
9. Canetti, *Auto-da-fé*, p. 428.
10. Elias Canetti, *The Play of the Eyes* (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1986), p. 3.
11. The American edition was published under the equally evocative title *The Tower of Babel* (New York: Knopf, 1947).
12. 'Murray Constantine' (Katharine Burdekin, pseud.), *Swastika Night* (London: Gollancz, 1940), p. 80.
13. Burdekin, *Swastika Night*, p. 74.
14. Burdekin, *Swastika Night*, p. 156.
15. To cite just one example, Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* begins with the protagonist intending to write a glittering homage to the 'United State', but from the way his cheeks burn as he writes his first entry, it's clear that the fever has already taken hold, and many subsequent entries comment on his growing delirium. *We* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1952), pp. 3–4.
16. Naomi Mitchison, 'Anger Against Books', in *Contemporary Essays 1933* (London: Elkin Mathews & Marrot, 1933), pp. 79, 87.

17. Ivor Brown, *I Commit to the Flames* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1934). First released in January 1934, it had reached a fifth impression by February of the following year. Its title was a nod to the *Feuersprüche* of the Nazi students.
18. Brown, *I Commit to the Flames*, p. 8.
19. Brown, *I Commit to the Flames*, p. 14.
20. Brown, *I Commit to the Flames*, pp. 32, 40, 85–7, 204.
21. This for instance, after seeing the London show ‘King Congo’: ‘As I watched this performance I began, for the first time in my life, to understand the feelings of an American Southerner, whose racial antipathies had previously seemed so childish and perverse.’ Brown, *I Commit to the Flames*, p. 114.
22. Brown, *I Commit to the Flames*, p. 240.
23. Brown, *I Commit to the Flames*, pp. 231–2.
24. Osbert Sitwell, ‘On the Burning of Books as Private Pastime and National Recreation’, in Downs (ed.), *The First Freedom*, p. 270.
25. C.E.M. Joad, *Manifesto* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1934), p. 41. The FPSI was a think-tank clustered around lofty notions like the Wellsian World Government and the planned economy.
26. C.E.M. Joad, *The Testament of Joad* (London: Faber, 1937), pp. 132–3.
27. Joad, *Testament*, p. 133.
28. Cyril Connolly, ‘Writers and Society, 1940–1943’, *The Condemned Playground* (London: Routledge, 1945), p. 263.
29. Connolly, ‘Writers and Society’, p. 269.
30. Herbert Read, *To Hell with Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963, but 1941), p. 30.
31. Clarence A. Forbes, ‘Books for the Burning’, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 67 (1936), 125. A ‘pony’ is a ‘literal translation of a text used by students, a crib’ (OED).
32. Forbes, ‘Books for the Burning’, p. 125.
33. Haight, *Banned Books*, p. iii.
34. I.L. Kandel, ‘The New German Nationalism and Education’, *School and Society* 39:1010 (5 May 1933), 553.
35. I.L. Kandel, *The Making of Nazis* (New York: Columbia University, 1935), p. 49.
36. E.Y. Hartshorne, *German Universities and National Socialism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1937), p. 173.
37. Hartshorne, *German Universities and National Socialism*, pp. 38–9.
38. Hartshorne, *German Universities and National Socialism*, pp. 167–73.
39. Hartshorne, *German Universities and National Socialism*, p. 56.
40. Quoted in Hartshorne, *German Universities and National Socialism*, p. 57.
41. Hartshorne, *German Universities and National Socialism*, p. 57.
42. Hartshorne, *German Universities and National Socialism*, p. 58. The tone of his study was not universally admired. See the Italian exile Gaetano Salvemini’s *Historian and Scientist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), pp. 154–7. The same year as his study was concluded a less positive account of Nazi education included a quote from the commander of Oranienburg concentration camp: ‘I have seldom seen such admirable educators as my old S.A. men.’ Frieda Wunderlich, ‘Education in Nazi Germany’, *Social Research* 3:3 (September 1937), 349, n.1.
43. *Germany: The Olympic Year 1936* (Berlin: Volk und Reich Verlag, 1936), unpaginated.
44. Cesare Santoro, *Hitler Germany as Seen by a Foreigner* (Berlin: Internationaler Verlag, 1938), p. 36.
45. Santoro, *Hitler Germany as Seen by a Foreigner*, pp. 344, 353–66.
46. Bernard Causton, ‘Nazi Authors: A Letter from Berlin’, *The Bookman*, October 1933, p. 10.

47. Albert Bettex, 'Some Aspects of the Contemporary German Novel', *German Life and Letters* 1:3 (April 1937), 204–18.
48. J.B.C. Grundy, 'Art Tendencies in the Third Reich', *German Life and Letters* 2:3 (April 1938), 213–16.
49. Alexander Henderson, 'What the Nazis have done for Culture', *Left Review* 3:6 (July 1937), 332.
50. Henderson, 'What the Nazis have done for Culture', 325.
51. 'Reich Propaganda's Literary Chamber Recommends Six Books to Loyal Nazis', *New York Times*, 28 October 1934, IV, p. 2.
52. Schiller, 'Die Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek in Paris', p. 214.
53. Kathleen McLaughlin, 'Hecklers Shout Disapproval of Hitler Defender', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 15 November 1933, p. 5.
54. 'New York Burning Spared Libraries', *Washington Post*, 7 October 1933, p. 2.
55. Peggy Sullivan, *Carl H. Milam and the American Library Association* (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1976), pp. 222–4; David A. Lincove, 'Activists for Internationalism: ALA Responds to World War II and British Requests for Aid', *Libraries and Culture* 26:3 (Summer 1991), 487–510.
56. Thorez, *France To-Day and the People's Front*. See also Omer Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 45–55.
57. Alfred Kantorowicz, *In unserer Lager ist Deutschland* (Paris: Editions du Phénix, 1936), pp. 48–9.
58. Herbert Lottman, *The Left Bank; Writers, Artists, and Politics from the Popular Front to the Cold War* (Cardiff: Plantin Publishers, 1995), p. 84.
59. Lottman, *The Left Bank*, pp. 92–3.
60. Kantorowicz, *Politik und Literatur im Exil*, p. 223.
61. Virginia Woolf to Vanessa Bell, in Nigel Nicolson (ed.), *The Letters of Virginia Woolf* (London: Hogarth Press, 1979), vol. 5, no. 3031.
62. E.M. Forster, 'Liberty in England', *Abinger Harvest* (London: Edward Arnold, 1936), pp. 62–8.
63. Aldous Huxley to Julian Huxley, in Grover Smith (ed.), *Letters of Aldous Huxley* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), no. 386; Aldous Huxley to Victoria Ocampo, *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, no. 387.
64. Aldous Huxley, 'Ballyhoo for Nations', in David Bradshaw (ed.), *The Hidden Huxley* (London: Faber, 1994), pp. 176–91.
65. See Raymond Postgate, *How to Make a Revolution* (London: Hogarth, 1934), pp. 157–8, 164–84.
66. Huxley, 'Ballyhoo for Nations', p. 186.
67. Stead, 'The Writers Take Sides', *Left Review* 1:11 (August 1935), 456.
68. 'The International Association', *Left Review* 1:11 (August 1935), 462–3.
69. The best review of their roles is David Bradshaw's 'British Writers and Anti-Fascism in the 1930s', *Woolf Studies Annual* 3 (1997), 3–27, 4 (1998), 41–66.
70. Gaetano Salvemini, *Carlo and Nello Rosselli* (London: For Intellectual Liberty, 1937), p. 42.
71. George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Gollancz, 1937), p. 246.
72. See Peter Davison (ed.), *Orwell in Spain* (London: Penguin, 2001). The Gollancz print run of *The Road to Wigan Pier* was 42,000; of *Homage to Catalonia*, 1,500. Paul Laity (ed.), *Left Book Club Anthology* (London: Victor Gollancz, 2001), p. x.
73. Only the second half of the book, a personal meditation on his time in prison, has survived with any integrity; Koestler himself moved to halt any reprinting of the former section.
74. Laity (ed.), *Left Book Club Anthology*, pp. 65–6. See 'Arthur Koestler's Spanish Tour', *Left News* 20 (December 1937), 607.
75. Joseph Douillet, *Moscow Unmasked* (London: Pilot Press, 1930), p. 143.

76. The *Sydney Daily Telegraph* reported 'seventy people are now reported missing, and the steamer is drifting, a blazing wreck'. 20 May 1932, p. 5.
77. John A. Toomey, *Pointing a Finger at Press Propaganda* (New York: America Press, 1938), p. 3; Joseph F. Thorning, *Why the Press Failed on Spain!* (New York: International Catholic Truth Society, ?1938), p. 18.
78. Arnold Lunn, *Spanish Rehearsal* (London: Hutchinson, ?1937), p. 165.
79. Anna Louise Strong, *Spain in Arms 1937* (New York: Henry Holt, 1937), p. 20.
80. Christopher Caudwell, *Studies in a Dying Culture* (London: Bodley Head, 1957), p. xxi.
81. Caudwell, *Studies in a Dying Culture*, p. 181.
82. Amabel Williams-Ellis, 'Soviet Writers' Conference', *Left Review* 1:2 (November 1934), 28.
83. Williams-Ellis, 'Soviet Writers' Conference', 28.
84. Editorial, *Left Review* 3:16 (May 1938), 957.
85. George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946), pp. 17–18.
86. Virginia Woolf to Lady Ottoline Morrell, 16 March 1935, in Nicolson (ed.), *Letters of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 5, no. 2865.
87. Virginia Woolf to Julian Bell, 1 December 1935, in Nicolson (ed.), *Letters of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 5, no. 3085.
88. Brenda Silver, *Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); Bradshaw, 'British Writers and Anti-Fascism', part 2, 58.
89. Woolf, who had delighted in making notebooks full of news clippings, noted rather ironically: 'It is to be hoped that some methodical person has made a collection of the various manifestoes and questionnaires issued broadcast during the years 1936–7 ... What effect this inquisition has had upon governments it is for the politician to say.' Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1938), p. 304, n.1.
90. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, p. 60.
91. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, p. 61.
92. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, pp. 65–6.
93. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, p. 278.
94. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, p. 151.
95. Bradshaw, 'British Writers and Anti-Fascism', part 2, 42–3, 58.
96. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, p. 176. Her frustration with Leonard's meetings is from a letter to Janet Case, quoted in Bradshaw, 'British Writers and Anti-Fascism', part 2, 57.
97. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, p. 176.
98. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, pp. 186–7.
99. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, p. 208.
100. Stephen Spender, *The Destructive Element* (London: Jonathon Cape, 1935), p. 235.
101. Cecil Day Lewis, *Revolution in Writing* (London: Hogarth Press, 1935), p. 35.
102. Malcolm Muggeridge, *The Thirties* (London: Collins, 1967), p. 272.
103. Vitaly Shentalinsky, *The KGB's Literary Archive* (London: Harvill Press, 1995), p. 80.
104. Shentalinsky, *The KGB's Literary Archive*, p. 81.
105. Lion Feuchtwanger, *Moscow 1937* (London: Gollancz, 1937), pp. 148–9.
106. Victor Serge, *From Lenin to Stalin* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1937), p. 214.
107. This is from an article he wrote for *Die Zukunft* (10 March 1939), quoted in Babette Gross, *Willi Münzenberg* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1974), pp. 307–8.
108. M.Z. Zelenov, 'The Library Purges of 1932–1937 in Soviet Russia', *Solanus* 14 (2000), 42–57. One of the few contemporary references I have been able to locate is in Lunn's *Spanish Rehearsal*, pp. 150–1.
109. On his biography see Eugene Zamiatin (sic), *We* (New York: E.P Dutton & Co., 1952), pp. v–xxv.
110. Yevgeny Zamyatin, 'The Cave', *The Dragon: Fifteen Stories* (London: Gollancz, 1972), p. 138.

111. Zamyatin, 'The Cave', p. 145.
112. '2,000 Books Burned by Nazis – Salzburg Ceremony', *The Times*, 2 May 1938, p. 18.
113. 'Hitler Effigy Saved From William Fire: Then Student Battle Rages Over Burning of Swastika', *New York Times*, 27 April 1938, p. 11.

5 'SWING, THEY'RE BURNING BOOKS'

1. 'These Talented Youngsters Draw the War', *Life*, 15 July 1940, pp. 45–9.
2. This knowledge of how a book burning *should* look is surprisingly common, in large part thanks to the enormous setpiece in Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989). The rally staged for this film also has a certain visual verisimilitude at the same time that it cheerfully takes considerable historical licence, especially by making Hitler the impresario when he wasn't actually present, and by staging the fires in 1938.
3. Stern, 'The Burning of the Books in Nazi Germany'.
4. 'Fighting the Fires of Hate', exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/bookburning/index.php>.
5. Muggerridge, *The Thirties*, p. 258.
6. Orwell, 'Literature and Totalitarianism', p. 505. The original broadcast was made on 21 May 1941.
7. Heywood Broun, 'The Burning of the Books', *Collected Edition of Heywood Broun* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941), p. 288. Originally printed *New York World-Telegram*, 13 May 1933.
8. Heywood Broun, 'The Walls of the Nazi Tyranny', in *Collected Edition*, pp. 441–2. Originally printed *New York World-Telegram*, 27 April 1938.
9. It received especial prominence when it was printed as 'Berlin Bonfire' in the *ALA Bulletin* 36:6 (June 1942), 375–6.
10. Raymond Gram Swing, *Forerunners of American Fascism* (New York: Julian Messner, 1935), pp. 103–4.
11. Sir Norman Angell, 'Refugees – Allies, or Enemies?' *Picture Post* 7:1 (6 April 1940), 25; 'What We Are Fighting For', *Picture Post* 8:2 (13 July 1940), 37; Charles Fenby, 'A Few Facts to Remember in Dealing with Rudolf Hess', *Picture Post* 11:9 (31 May 1941), 26.
12. E.M. Forster, 'Three Anti-Nazi Broadcasts', *Two Cheers for Democracy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1951), pp. 49, 43. The broadcasts were first printed as *Nordic Twilight* (London: Macmillan War Pamphlet No. 3, 1940).
13. Forster, 'Three Anti-Nazi Broadcasts', p. 49.
14. Forster, 'Three Anti-Nazi Broadcasts', p. 54.
15. C.E.M. Joad, *For Civilization* (London: Macmillan, 1940), p. 31.
16. Joad, *For Civilization*, pp. 28–9.
17. Harold Denny, 'British, Fiercely Attacked, Say Line Holds in Belgium', *New York Times*, 16 May 1940, p. 4.
18. 'Louvain Library is Again Destroyed in War', *New York Times*, 21 May 1940, p. 6.
19. Hilda Urén Stubbings, *Blitzkrieg and Books* (Bloomington, IN: Ruben Press, 1983), p. 5.
20. William Shirer, *Berlin Diary* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1941), p. 280.
21. The propaganda of the First World War had been patiently dismantled in the 1920s and 1930s by writers like Arthur Ponsonby, whose *Falsehood in War-Time* (1928) showed that some of the most infamous stories (the Corpse Factory, the execution of Nurse Cavell, the crucified Canadian, the Belgian baby with no hands) had little or no basis in fact.
22. Harold Lavine and James Wechsler, *War Propaganda and the United States* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), p. 166.
23. 'Again Louvain', *New York Times*, 22 May 1940, p. 20.

24. See 'Nazis Charge British Set Fire to Library', *New York Times*, 27 June 1940, p. 12; 'Pictures Showing Damage to the Louvain Library Reach the United States', *New York Times*, 27 February 1941, p. 4.
25. 'Librarian at Louvain Tells of War Losses', *New York Times*, 17 April 1941, p. 1.
26. 'Once More Louvain', *New York Times*, 18 April 1941, p. 20.
27. The so-called Baedeker Blitz began in 1942, after a German general announced that the Luftwaffe would bomb every three-star attraction in the famous Baedeker tourist guides in retaliation for the RAF's bombing of Lübeck in February.
28. Phyllis Bottome, *The Mortal Storm* (Bath: Cedric Chivers, 1975).
29. Arthur Koestler commented on the strangeness of the books confiscated by the French authorities during his internment, including the only typescript of books on his travels in Central Asia and to the Arctic on the *Graf Zeppelin*. Despite this loss, his reaction is one of relief at still being free: 'In ordinary times these losses would have driven me mad – now I hardly cared at all.' Koestler, *Scum of the Earth*, p. 153.
30. 'Movie of the Week – "The Mortal Storm"', *Life*, 17 June 1940, p. 41.
31. 'Of Local Origin', *New York Times*, 6 August 1940, p. 15.
32. Freya's family name is also changed, for no reason I can discern, from 'Toller' to 'Roth'. It is curious that two of the most important German exile writers were the playwright Ernst Toller and the writer and journalist Joseph Roth, both of whom died in 1939.
33. Robert Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994), p. 22.
34. See Paul Fussell's unflattering discussion in *Wartime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 172–5.
35. Archibald MacLeish, *The Irresponsibles* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1940), p. 15.
36. MacLeish, *The Irresponsibles*, pp. 19, 30–3.
37. Scott Donaldson and R.H. Winnick, *Archibald MacLeish: An American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), p. 337. Hemingway contented himself with accusing MacLeish of having 'a very bad conscience'. Quoted in 'War Writers on Democracy', *Life*, 24 June 1940, p. 8.
38. See, for example, *Library Journal* 65 (15 October 1940), 864. Occasionally, as with the 'Defence of Democracy' number (15 May 1941), the quote appears on the front wrapper. The Studebaker quote drops from prominence mid 1942.
39. 'Americanism and Democracy', *Library Journal* 67 (1 February 1942), 124.
40. Verna E. Bayles, 'Books Under Fire', *Princeton University Library* 2:3 (April 1941), 89–90. See 'Tons of Propaganda Seized at San Francisco Are Burned', *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 March 1941, p. 2. The latter article includes a photograph of 175 tons of material not registered with the State Department being burned in furnaces by postal employees. The three greatest sources of the material are listed as Germany, Russia and Japan.
41. 'Boom in Patriotism', *Life*, 2 September 1940, p. 36.
42. Logan Pearsall Smith, 'Saved from the Salvage', *Horizon* 7:39 (March 1943), 149. See John Brophy (ed.), *Britain Needs Books* (London: National Book Council, 1942), pp. 44–6. The photo-journal *Illustrated London News* was full of pulping advice: see, for example, 'Save Your Old Waste Paper for Conversion into Munitions', 8 November 1941, pp. 602–3, or 'Different Kinds of Waste: All Can be Converted into Munitions', 22 November 1941, p. 667.
43. James Ross, 'Book Salvage Drive at Bristol', *Library Association Record* 45 (January 1943), 6–7.
44. 'Books: For the British Army, the Library and Scrap Pile', *New York Times*, 29 October 1943, p. 21.
45. Rosalie Mander, 'Ex-Libris Battles for Liberty', *Library Journal* 68 (1 October 1943), 756–8. At this particular drive approximately 85 per cent of nearly 420,000 books was pulped.

46. 'Waste Paper in Britain', *New York Times*, 21 November 1941, p. 4.
47. *Picture Post*, 28 November 1942, p. 3.
48. 'What to Do if You Don't Like Picture Post', *Picture Post*, 15 November 1941, p. 3.
49. Nelson R. Burr, *Safeguarding our Cultural Heritage* (Washington: Library of Congress General Reference and Bibliography Division, 1952).
50. Archibald MacLeish, 'A Free Man's Books', in Brophy (ed.), *Britain Needs Books*, p. 67.
51. MacLeish, 'A Free Man's Books', pp. 72, 67.
52. MacLeish, 'A Free Man's Books', p. 68.
53. MacLeish, 'A Free Man's Books', p. 72. When it was collected for a Boston edition it was given the more aggressive title 'The Power of the Book', *A Time to Act* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), pp. 146–55. In his commencement address to Union College in 1941 he gave the following rather tortured summary: 'Words as weapons are of two kinds in such a war as this ... The words which the Nazis can use as weapons are not the words we can use, nor are the words which can be weapons for us be weapons for them.' *A Time to Act*, p. 76.
54. See the full page advertisement for A.C. McClurg & Co. who reprint Roosevelt's letter. *Library Journal* 68 (1 June 1942), 493.
55. Paul Tillich, 'Läuterndes Feuer', *Aufbau* 8:22 (29 May 1942), 10. See also Wilhelm and Marion Pauck, *Paul Tillich: His Life & Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 132ff.
56. These were written for a group called the Council for Democracy, formed in August 1940 to promote an understanding of American democracy specifically to the public of the United States. Raymond Gram Swing was one of the Council's members. Cedric Larson, 'The Council for Democracy', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 6:2 (Summer 1942), 284–90. See also Charles A. Fenton, *Stephen Vincent Benét* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), pp. 360–4.
57. I. Rakosky and R. Ballou, *A History of the Council on Books in Wartime* (New York: Country Life Press, 1946), p. 7.
58. Rakosky and Ballou, *A History of the Council on Books in Wartime*, pp. 3–9. They quote a figure of 108,500,000 Armed Services Editions published.
59. Rakosky and Ballou, *A History of the Council on Books in Wartime*, p. 7.
60. Stephen Vincent Benét, *They Burned the Books*, in *We Stand United* (New York and Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, 1945), p. 100.
61. Benét, *They Burned the Books*, pp. 110–12.
62. Benét, *They Burned the Books*, p. 114.
63. Benét, *They Burned the Books*, p. 115.
64. Benét, *They Burned the Books*, p. 116.
65. Benét, *They Burned the Books*, p. 107.
66. Benét, *They Burned the Books*, p. 107. Very few of the exiles were allowed to walk far on the streets.
67. New York Public Library, *Books the Nazis Banned* (New York: New York Public Library, 1942).
68. 'Notes on Books and Authors', *New York Times*, 13 December 1942, p. BR10.
69. "'Burning of Books" Merely Symbolic', *New York Times*, 2 December 1942, p. 22
70. 'Report of the Director', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 47:3 (March 1943), 180.
71. Alfred Kantorowicz, 'The Burning of the Books', *Free World*, May 1943, p. 424.
72. Kantorowicz, 'The Burning of the Books', p. 424.
73. Alfred Kantorowicz, 'Der Tag des 10. Mai', *Aufbau* 9:19 (7 May 1943), 14.
74. See Kantorowicz, *Politik und Literatur im Exil*, pp. 259–60, 293–300.
75. See Rakosky and Ballou, *History of the Council on Books in Wartime*, pp. 16–17. They estimate that in 1943 the Council sent out 1,500 newspaper releases, 100 mats of Jerry Doyle's cartoon and 100 copies of Benét's play, articles for journals, a letter to 350

- clergymen, and a release to Associated Press, as well as encouraging window displays in bookstores 'to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Nazi's literary holocaust'.
76. Alfred Kantorowicz, *Der Tag des freien Buches* (Berlin: Deutschen Verwaltung für Volksbindung, 1947), p. 18.
 77. The full article is in Rochelle Chadakoff (ed.), *Eleanor Roosevelt's My Day: Her Acclaimed Columns 1936–1945* (New York: Pharos Books, 1989), p. 291.
 78. 'Book-Burning Night', *New York Times*, 10 May 1943, p. 21.
 79. Raymond Gram Swing, 'Berlin Bonfire', *ALA Bulletin* 36:6 (June 1942), 376.
 80. The image was much reprinted: see the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 9 May 1943, p. D17.
 81. *New York Times*, 10 May 1943, p. 18.
 82. John Chamberlain, 'Books of the Times', *New York Times*, 9 May 1942, p. 11.
 83. Flora B. Ludington, 'Books and the Sword', *ALA Bulletin* 37:5 (May 1943), 147. A 1941 book drive for the so-called Front Libraries (the German equivalent of the book drives for the Armed Services of the Allies) was promoted under the same slogan. Derrick Sington and Arthur Weidenfeld, *Goebbels Experiment* (London: John Murray, 1942), p. 200.
 84. Ludington, 'Books and the Sword', pp. 148–9.
 85. Gregor Ziemer, *Education for Death* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 191–2.
 86. It's not clear whether the last is meant to refer to Heinrich Mann (whose books were burned in 1933) or Thomas Mann (whose books weren't, although they were later banned). It's tempting to say that it was deliberately vague on the issue given Thomas Mann's much higher profile in the United States.
 87. Undaunted by these changes, *Life* editorialized: 'For a plot the love story of a German-born American girl and a young soldier has been added, but Hollywood has been careful to keep this secondary to the picture's main theme.' 'Hitler's Children: Nazi Education for Death', *Life*, 1 February 1943, pp. 37–40.
 88. Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, p. 89.
 89. Kantorowicz, 'The Burning of the Books', p. 425. It is also worth noting that Kantorowicz's triumphant article for *Aufbau* in 1943 sits uncomfortably at the end of an issue devoted to the six-week period of mourning instituted by the Synagogue Council of America for the persecuted Jews in Europe.
 90. Kantorowicz, 'The Burned Books Still Live', *New York Times Magazine*, 7 May 1944, pp. 17, 43.
 91. Editorial, *New York Times*, 10 May 1944, p. 18.
 92. 'City College Class Alters a Tradition: Instead of Burning Textbooks Seniors Aid Paper Scrap Drive', *New York Times*, 13 June 1944, p. 19.

6 BEAUTY FOR ASHES

1. Lynn H. Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe's Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War* (New York: Knopf, 1995).
2. The great figure here, especially with regard to the fate of libraries in Eastern Europe, is undoubtedly Patricia Kennedy Grimsted: see bibliography.
3. See Sarah Wilson, 'Collaboration in the Fine Arts, 1940–1944', in Gerhard Hirschfeld and Patrick Marsh (eds), *Collaboration in France: Politics and Culture during the Nazi Occupation* (Oxford: Berg, 1989), pp. 103–25.
4. The character is openly modelled on Rose Valland, whose book *Le Front de l'art* (1961) was the catalyst for the film.
5. Grayson N. Kefauver and Carl M. White, 'Library Situation in Europe', *Library Journal* 70 (1 May 1945), 385–9; (15 May 1945), 473–6.
6. Archibald MacLeish, 'The Library and the Nation', in Pierce Butler (ed.) *Books and Libraries in Wartime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), p. 147.

7. Kefauver and White, 'Library Situation in Europe', 386.
8. Janet Flanner, 'Paris, Germany', *Janet Flanner's World* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), p. 53 (originally published in the *New Yorker*, 1940).
9. The blacklist has been published in facsimile, Natalie Zemon Davis (ed.), *Liste Otto: The Official List of French Books Banned Under the German Occupation, 1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard College Library, 1992).
10. The plunder and looting of a defeated enemy by their victors has long-established historical precedents, but its modern antecedent is recognized to be the Napoleonic army, which was given broad powers to remove cultural treasures from their defeated enemies as France had anointed itself the 'natural repository' for the artistic heritage of Europe. The Napoleonic fiat was overturned at the Congress of Vienna, and looting was condemned at the 1815 Convention of Paris (although the French tried to install a clause guaranteeing the 'integrity of museums and libraries' and accused the British of trying to promote their British Museum at the expense of the Louvre). The Hague Convention of 1907 formalized the international condemnation of looting, where Article 56 forbade 'seizure of, destruction or wilful damage' to religious, educational and charitable institutions. The principles – and the implications – of this development had been actively debated in the interwar years because of the destruction of the library at Louvain. Dorothy Mackay Quynn, 'The Art Confiscations of the Napoleonic Wars', *American Historical Review* 50:3 (April 1945), 447–8; Wilfried Fiedler, 'Legal Issues Bearing on the Restitution of German Cultural Property in Russia', in Elizabeth Simpson (ed.), *The Spoils of War* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), pp. 175–8.
11. André Masson, 'Le Martyre des Bibliothèques de France (1940–1945)', *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1 July 1945, p. 154.
12. Masson, 'Le Martyre des Bibliothèques de France', p. 152.
13. Hilary Jenkinson, 'The Protection of Archives in Italy', in British Committee on the Preservation and Restitution of Works of Art, Archives, and Other Material in Enemy Hands, *Works of Art in Italy: Losses and Survivals in the War, Part I* (London: HMSO, 1945), p. 77.
14. Thus, the only systematic looting done in the occupied Channel Islands was of Masonic collections. No less than 3,740 Masonic items were returned to Britain in June 1946. Offenbach Archival Depot, *Monthly Report*, June 1946, p. 9.
15. British Committee on the Preservation and Restitution of Works of Art, Archives, and Other Material in Enemy Hands, *Works of Art in Italy: Losses and Survivals in the War, Part II* (London: HMSO, 1946), pp. 107–8.
16. Kenneth R. Shaffer, 'Conquest of Books', *Library Journal* 71 (15 January 1946), 84.
17. Document in Evidence R-143 (16 December 1939), United States, Office of Chief of Council for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (Washington: USGPO, 1946), vol. 8, pp. 246–8.
18. Janusz Dunin, 'The Tragic Fate of Polish Libraries after 1939', *Solanus* 10 (1996), 5–8.
19. Polish Ministry of Information, *Nazi Kultur in Poland* (London: Polish Ministry of Information, 1945), pp. 87–8.
20. Jacqueline Borin, 'Embers of the Soul', *Journal of Library History* 28:4 (Fall 1993), 446.
21. Jon Evans, *Nazi New Order in Poland* (London: Gollancz, 1941), pp. 116–18.
22. Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa*, p. 277.
23. The collection is formally dated February 1942, and some of the chapters had been prepared earlier again: the chapter on 'Libraries' is dated August 1941; on 'Reading' May 1941. The preface by the London-based editors is signed 11 November 1944.
24. Charles Estreicher, *Cultural Losses of Poland: Index of Polish cultural losses during the German occupation, 1939–1944* (London: n.p., 1944), p. 169.
25. Estreicher, *Cultural Losses of Poland*, p. xiii.
26. Estreicher, *Cultural Losses of Poland*, p. 101.
27. Max Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 95–7.

28. Polish Ministry of Information, *Nazi Kultur in Poland*, pp. 85–6.
29. Marek Sroka, 'The University of Cracow Library Under Nazi Occupation', *Libraries and Culture* 34:1 (Winter 1999), 5–6.
30. Polish Ministry of Information, *Nazi Kultur in Poland*, pp. 84–5.
31. Estreicher, *Cultural Losses of Poland*, pp. 475–7. The order was revoked in November 1941.
32. Estreicher, *Cultural Losses of Poland*, pp. 263–5.
33. Estreicher, *Cultural Losses of Poland*, p. 171.
34. Friedman, 'The Fate of the Jewish Book During the Nazi Era', 3–13.
35. Borin, 'Embers of the Soul', 445–7.
36. Hill, 'The Nazi Attack on "Un-German" Literature', 27. In Sybil Milton, 'Images of the Holocaust', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 1:1/2 (1986), there are several photographs of the public burning of the furnishings and ritual objects from the synagogue in Mosbach on the town square on 10 November 1938. Another series shows the pyre built of the meagre furnishings of the tiny synagogue in the village of Zeven, about to be burned before the assembled school children of the town (figures 30–37).
37. Barbara Bienkowska, *Losses of Polish Libraries During World War II* (Warsaw: Wydawn Reklama, 1994).
38. Ladislav J. Zivny, 'Czechoslovak Libraries During the War and After', *Library Journal* 71 (15 June 1946), 877–8.
39. Hans van der Hoeven and Joan van Albada, *Memory of the World* (Paris: UNESCO, 1996), p. 14.
40. Sem C. Sutter, 'The Lost Libraries of Vilna', in Rose (ed.), *The Holocaust and the Book*, pp. 223–7.
41. Friedman, 'The Fate of the Jewish Book During the Nazi Era', 10.
42. A.M. Mazuritskii, I.G. Matveeva and G.V. Mikheeva, 'Book Losses in Russia during World War II', *Solanus* 16 (2002), 27–38.
43. International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major German War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal* (London: HMSO, 1947), vol. 7, p. 174.
44. International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major German War Criminals*, vol. 7, p. 188 (USSR 51/2). See the line of questioning in document in evidence Rosenberg-41, International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major German War Criminals*, vol. 41, p. 210.
45. For an overview of the ERR see Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, 'Roads to Ratibor: Library and Archival Plunder by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 19:3 (Winter 2005), 390–458.
46. Donald E. Collins and Herbert P. Rathfeder, 'The Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg', *Journal of Library History* 18:1 (Winter 1983), 22–3; they quote Document in Evidence 136-PS. See also Hitler's letter of 1 March 1942 (Document in Evidence 1015(k)-PS), explaining Rosenberg's duties in the East and describing his right to seize any cultural property in the occupied zones which will initially serve the immediate tasks of the Nazi Party and, later, research in the Hohe Schule.
47. Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors*, pp. 97–106.
48. On Rosenberg's address see Dov Schidorsky, 'Confiscation of Libraries and Assignments to Forced Labor', *Libraries and Culture* 33:4 (Fall 1998), 383, n.6.
49. Document in evidence 171-PS, quoted in International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major German War Criminals*, vol. 25. Pohl noted that the books from the East – about 240,000 – were still in Berlin.
50. Joshua Starr, 'Jewish Cultural Property under Nazi Control', *Jewish Social Studies* 12:1 (January 1950), 34.
51. Janet Flanner, *Men and Monuments* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957), p. 254.
52. Sington and Weidenfeld, *Goebbels Experiment*, p. 85.
53. John Fisher, 'Marxist Museum in Berlin', *Left Review* 2:6 (March 1936), 247–9.

54. International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major German War Criminals*, vol. 7, p. 208.
55. International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major German War Criminals*, vol. 12, p. 8.
56. International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major German War Criminals*, vol. 12, p. 7.
57. A full listing of personnel is given in the official report of the Roberts Commission, *Report of the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas* (Washington: USGPO, 1946), pp. 3–10.
58. Lt.-Col. Sir Leonard Woolley, *A Record of the Work Done by the Military Authorities* (London: HMSO, 1947), p. 6.
59. Francis Henry Taylor, 'Beauty for Ashes', *Atlantic*, May 1944, p. 88. Taylor is quoting from the King James version, Isaiah 61:3–4.
60. Taylor, 'Beauty for Ashes', p. 88.
61. This was by no means the only example of this rhetoric of a sort of reverse colonialism, and would bear further study. In 1947 Delbert Clark said that the American occupation officers were slightly envious of their British and French counterparts, who had 'learned, over generations, how to shoulder the "white man's burden"'. *Again the Goose Step* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1949), p. 183.
62. Flanner, *Men and Monuments*, p. 281.
63. Woolley, *A Record of the Work Done by the Military Authorities*, p. 20.
64. Quoted in Francis Henry Taylor, 'The Rape of Europa', *Atlantic*, January 1945, p. 54.
65. Woolley, *A Record of the Work Done by the Military Authorities*, p. 8.
66. Robert K. Posey, 'Protection of Cultural Materials During Combat', *College Art Journal* 5:2 (January 1946), 127.
67. Woolley, *A Record of the Work Done by the Military Authorities*, p. 49; James J. Rorimer, *Survival* (New York: Abelard Press, 1950), pp. 234–48; Roberts Commission, *Report of the American Commission*, p. 108.
68. British Committee on the Preservation and Restitution of Works of Art, Archives, and Other Material in Enemy Hands, *Works of Art in Italy: Losses and Survivals in the War, Part I*, pp. 42–5; Rorimer, *Survival*, p. 104.
69. Leslie I. Poste, 'Archives Under Attack', *Library Journal* 83 (July 1958), 1992.
70. Leslie I. Poste, *The Development of U.S. Protection of Libraries and Archives in Europe during World War II* (Fort Gordon, GA: US Army Civil Affairs School, 1964), p. 161.
71. Rensselaer W. Lee, 'The Effect of the War on Renaissance and Baroque Art', *College Art Journal* 4:2 (January 1945), 81.
72. Frederick Hartt, *Florentine Art Under Fire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 52.
73. Ernest Posner, 'Public Records Under Military Occupation', *American Historical Review* 49:2 (January 1944), 224.
74. Margaret Bourke-White, *Dear Fatherland, Rest Quietly* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), p. 40.
75. Walter Hancock, 'Experiences of a Monuments Officer in Germany', *College Art Journal* 5:4 (May 1946), 311.
76. Taylor, 'The Rape of Europa', pp. 55–6.
77. Thomas Carr Howe, *Salt Mines and Castles* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1946), p. 254; John Walker, 'Europe's Looted Art', *National Geographic* 89:1 (January 1946), 44.
78. Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa*, p. 337.
79. Flanner, *Men and Monuments*, p. 295.
80. Howe, *Salt Mines and Castles*, p. 280. Supporters of Tyrone Slothrop may be able to read something into Howe's suspicious comment that the Farben building survived, 'either by accident or design'.
81. Richard Sasuly, *IG Farben* (New York: 1947), p. 12.
82. Poste, *The Development of U.S. Protection of Libraries and Archives*, p. 259.
83. Poste, *The Development of U.S. Protection of Libraries and Archives*, p. 227.

84. Leslie Poste, 'Books Go Home From the Wars', *Library Journal* 73 (1 December 1948), 1699.
85. H. Chr. Schmolok, 'Kultur und Anstand: Eine Betrachtung zur Widergutmachung des Bibliothekenraubes', *Frankfurter Rundschau* (12 October 1946); quoted in Offenbach Archival Depot, *Monthly Report*, 31 October 1946, pp. 126–7.
86. Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *From that Time and Place* (New York: 1989), p. 316.
87. Poste, 'Books Go Home From the Wars', 1699.
88. Poste, 'Books Go Home From the Wars', 1702.
89. Of this number, 158,000 items went to American libraries including the Library of Congress. Significant material on the JCR now exists because of the recent flurry of claims being made regarding ownership of loot from the Second World War, in particular the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations inquiry of 1999 and the work of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets.
90. See Michael J. Kurtz, *America and the Return of Nazi Contraband* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 151–73.
91. Robert G. Waite, 'Returning Jewish Cultural Property', *Libraries and Culture* 37:3 (2002), 218–19.
92. Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blücher, *Briefe 1936–1968* (München: Piper, 1996), p. 175.
93. Hannah Arendt, 'The Aftermath of Nazi Rule: Report from Germany', *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1994), p. 249
94. Starr, 'Jewish Cultural Property under Nazi Control', 28.
95. Offenbach Archival Depot, *Monthly Report*, 31 July 1946, p. 4; *Monthly Report*, 31 August 1946, p. 3.
96. Gerschom Scholem to Siegmund Hurwitz (1 November 1946), in Anthony David Skinner (ed.), *Gerschom Scholem: A Life in Letters, 1914–1982* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 339.
97. Gerschom Scholem to Hans-Geert Falkenberg (1952), *Gerschom Scholem: A life in Letters*, p. 363
98. Gerschom Scholem to Siegmund Hurwitz (8 June 1946), *Gerschom Scholem: A life in Letters*, pp. 336–7.
99. Dawidowicz, *From that Time and Place*, p. 324.
100. Dawidowicz, *From that Time and Place*, p. 326.
101. Poste, 'Books Go Home From the Wars', 1700.
102. Reuben Peiss, 'Report on Europe', *College and Research Libraries* 8:2 (April 1947), 119.

7 FUNERAL PYRES

1. Hughes Rudd made this advertising tagline the ironic punchline to his experience of being bombed in the Liri Valley, near Monte Cassino. He writes: 'I could see bombs bursting 10 miles behind American lines. They were dropping them all over the fucking landscape. Maybe it was true that they could hit a pickle barrel with that Nordern bombsight, but there were no pickle barrels in the Liri Valley that day.' Quoted in Stephen McFarland, *America's Pursuit of Precision Bombing* (Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1995), p. 5.
2. Percy Knauth, *Germany in Defeat* (New York: Knopf, 1946), p. 156.
3. 'Marcus Aurelius', *Am I My Brother's Keeper?* (London: Gollancz, November 1945), p. 15.
4. See Klaus Goldmann, 'The Trojan Treasures in Berlin' and Werner Schmidt, 'The Loss of German Artistic Property as a Result of World War II', both in Simpson (ed.), *Spoils of War*, pp. 200–3, 95–8.

5. See especially Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, *U.S. Restitution of Nazi-Looted Cultural Treasures to the USSR, 1945–1949* (Washington, DC: National Archives of the United States, 2001).
6. Mason Hammond, 'The War and Art Treasures in Germany', *College Art Journal* 5:3 (January 1946), 213.
7. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1988), p. 106.
8. See Antony Penrose, *The Lives of Lee Miller* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), pp. 143–4.
9. 'In This Trench Hitler May Have Been Cremated', *Life*, 23 July 1945, p. 23.
10. Rebecca West, *A Train of Powder* (London: Macmillan, 1955), p. 42.
11. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 414.
12. Knauth, *Germany in Defeat*, p. 164. Robert Capa detested how after they had surrendered many German soldiers would suddenly remember that they had a cousin in Philadelphia: 'That is what I like about the French,' he commented, 'they do not have cousins in Philadelphia.' Robert Capa, *Robert Capa: Photographs* (New York: Aperture, 1996), p. 117.
13. Sasuly, *IG Farben*, p. 231; Leslie E. Simon, *German Research* (New York and London: John Wiley & Sons, 1947), pp. 61–2.
14. David Scherman (photographer), 'DPs: Millions of "Displaced Persons" Stream Across Europe to their Homes', *Life*, 30 July 1945, p. 13.
15. Robert Birley, 'British Policy in Retrospect', in Arthur Hearnden (ed.), *The British in Germany* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), p. 53.
16. F.S.V. Donnison, *Civil Affairs and Military Government* (London: HMSO, 1961), p. 199.
17. Victor Gollancz, *Germany Revisited* (London: Gollancz, 1947), p. 17.
18. Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 54.
19. Vasily Grossman, 'The Treblinka Hell', *The Years of War* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1946), pp. 405–6.
20. Nadine Fresco, 'Remembering the Unknown', *The International Review of Psychoanalysis* 11:4 (1984), 423; Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 4–5.
21. Jane Kramer, *The Politics of Memory* (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 293.
22. Olga Lengyel, *Five Chimneys* (London: Panther Books, 1967), pp. 202–5.
23. Rorimer, *Survival*, p. 218.
24. British Committee on the Preservation and Restitution of Works of Art, Archives, and Other Material in Enemy Hands, *Works of Art in Germany* (London: HMSO, 1946), pp. iii–iv. A more recent historian noted that despite the efforts of thousands of historians, so many documents were produced during the war that many of them 'have still not been examined'. Martin van Creveld, *Technology and War from 2000 B.C. to the Present* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), p. 236.
25. International Military Tribunal, *Trial of German Major War Criminals*, vol. 12, p. 70.
26. Anna J. Merritt and Richard L. Merritt (eds), *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany: The OMGUS Surveys, 1945–1949* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), pp. 70–1.
27. Sgt. Saul Levit, 'German Bookshelf', *New York Times Book Review*, 1 July 1945, VII, p. 5.
28. Julia Pascal, 'Hitler's Legacy', *Good Weekend Magazine* (*Sydney Morning Herald*), 22 September 2001, pp. 45–6.
29. Christa Wolf, *A Model Childhood* (London: Virago, 1995), p. 26.
30. Wolf, *A Model Childhood*, p. 226.
31. See Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Don Quixote* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983), pp. 117–18.

32. Edward N. Peterson, *The American Occupation of Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, ?1978), *passim*.
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80. Gollancz noted admiringly that the German wits had added a last question to the forms: 'Did you play with toy soldiers as a child? If so, what regiment?' *In Darkest Germany*, p. 102.
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POSTSCRIPT: THE PATH OF CINDERS

1. A good introduction to twentieth-century censorship are two works by Rebecca Knuth, *Libricide* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003) and *Burning Books and Leveling Libraries* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006).
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6. Charles G. Bolte, 'Security Through Book Burning', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 300 (July, 1955), 87.
7. Bolte, 'Security Through Book Burning', 87.
8. Cedric Belfrage, *The American Inquisition* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), p. 188.
9. Guy Stern, 'Investigation and Censorship during the McCarthy Era', interview in the 2003 'Fighting the Fires of Hate' exhibit at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.
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15. Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (London: Pan, 1976), p. 38.
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17. Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, pp. 107–8.
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25. Wal-Mart excused. See 'Wal-Mart Apologizing for Ad Showing Nazi-era Book Fire', *USA Today* (online edition), posted 14 May 2005: Daphne Moore, Director of Community Affairs for Wal-Mart, 'said the ad was prepared by an outside agency but reviewed and approved by Wal-Mart. "Whoever the individual who approved it was, was not aware of the historical context of the picture."'
26. Kantorowicz, 'Rudolf Kantorowicz', in *Deutsche Schicksale: Intellektuelle unter Hitler und Stalin* (Wien: Europa Verlag, 1964), p. 62.
27. Kantorowicz, 'Rudolf Kantorowicz', p. 65.
28. Kantorowicz, 'Rudolf Kantorowicz', p. 66.
29. Alfred Kantorowicz, 'I Have Lost Every Illusion', *Christian Science Monitor*, 1 November 1957, p. 24.

30. Clifton Daniel, 'Students in Egypt Hold Book-Burning', *New York Times*, 1 March 1946, p. 7.
31. 'Barbarianism at Work', *New York Times*, 5 December 1964, p. 30.
32. Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 24. My thanks to Nina Parish for this reference.
33. Young, *Postcolonialism*, p. 23.
34. Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p. 3.
35. Jean Rhys, 'The Day They Burned the Books', *Tigers are Better-Looking* (London: Deutsch, 1968), pp. 40–6.
36. This ignores some obvious candidates such as *The Ninth Gate* (1999), in which a bookseller and antiquarian (Johnny Depp) searches for copies of a satanic-authored work which a mysterious antagonist burns. It is integral to the plot of *The Name of the Rose* (1986), where a medieval monastery is burned to the ground by a Christian fanatic. There are also book burning scenes in F.W. Murnau's *Faust* (1926) and Jean Renoir's *La grande Illusion* (1937).
37. On the night Hitler delivered a lecture to the Congress of the German Work Front on the necessity for German self-reliance. Adolf Hitler, *My New Order* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1942), pp. 129–37.
38. Hermann Broch, *The Death of Virgil* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 174–5.
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44. Peter Conrad, *Modern Times, Modern Places* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), p. 493.
45. 'Lexington: Cut from the Same Cloth', *The Economist*, 29 November–5 December 2003, p. 37.
46. Koestler, *The Invisible Writing*, p. 431.
47. Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction*, p. 211.

Select Bibliography

I have thought it best to have small bibliographical sections devoted to each chapter, which I hope will be helpful for the chapter on the MFAA and looted books (Chapter 6) in particular. It also allows me to single out the works which gave shape to this book, pre-eminent among which I would like to name the collection edited by Jonathan Rose, *The Holocaust and the Book: Destruction and Preservation* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), and a very different work, Jorge Luis Borges, *Other Inquisitions: 1937–1952* (London: Souvenir Press, 1973). No work on book burning could overlook the most famous polemic on the press, John Milton's *Areopagitica* of 1644 (reprinted in *Selected Essays* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911)). Equally important were James Raven (ed.), *Lost Libraries: The Destruction of Great Book Collections since Antiquity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); an essay by Jon Thiem, 'The Great Library of Alexandria Burned: Towards the History of a Symbol', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40:4 (October–December, 1979): 507–26; and Rebecca Knuth, *Libricide: The Regime-Sponsored Destruction of Books and Libraries in the Twentieth Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

Lastly, I would single out four very different works: Jacques Derrida's meditation on the contemporary obsession with memory, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); the UNESCO project on the importance of libraries to heritage, Hans van der Hoeven and Joan van Albada's *Memory of the World: Lost Memory – Libraries and Archives Destroyed in the Twentieth Century* (Paris: UNESCO, 1996); probably the most famous fictional example of the theme of book burning, Ray Bradbury's 1953 novel *Fahrenheit 451* (London: Pan Books, 1976); and Virginia Woolf's amazing polemic on the flammability of culture, *Three Guineas* (London: Hogarth Press, 1938).

INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER 1

This section relies heavily on the extensive history of censorship; notes on the sources could easily have been much longer. Important were Holbrook Jackson's two studies, *The Anatomy of Bibliomania* (London: The Soncino Press, 1931) and *The Fear of Books* (London: The Soncino Press, 1932), as well as Charles Ripley Gillett's great study, *Burned Books: Neglected Chapters in British History and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932). A short list of titles that have informed this chapter includes:

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CHAPTER 2

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Burnings' at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC (see <www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/bookburning/burning.php>).

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CHAPTER 3

The most important figure here is demonstrably Alfred Kantorowicz himself, especially his early *Why A Library of the Burned Books?* (London: Mackays Limited, 1934) and his late 'The Story of the Library of the Burned Books', *Wiener Library Bulletin* 24 (1971), 36–41. Also significant are his *Politik und Literatur im Exil: Deutschsprachige Schriftsteller im Kampf gegen den Nationalsozialismus* (Hamburg: Hans Christian Verlag, 1978); and *Exil in Frankreich Merkwürdigkeit und Denkwürdigkeit* (Bremen: Schünemann Universitätsverlag, 1971). Kantorowicz has been much discussed (and often dismissed). The most open-handed appraisal remains Josie McLellan, 'The Politics of Communist Biography: Alfred Kantorowicz and the Spanish Civil War', *German History* 22:4 (2004), 536–62. One of the more important reassessments of the period – which includes a stinging attack on Kantorowicz as a mediocrity and a liar – is Henry Pachter's essay 'On Being an Exile: An Old Timer's Personal and Political Memoir', in Robert Boyers (ed.), *The Legacy of the German Refugee Intellectuals* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), pp. 12–51.

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CHAPTER 4

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The section on Elias Canetti obviously relies on *Auto-da-fé* (London: Pan Books, 1978), as well as his essay 'The First Book: Auto-da-Fé', *The Conscience of Words* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), pp. 203–13; and his memoirs *The Torch in My Ear* (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1982) and *The Play of the Eyes* (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1986). Otherwise, see:

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CHAPTER 5

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The signature study on Offenbach, which deserves being made more widely available, is still former MFAA officer Leslie I. Poste's *The Development of U.S. Protection of Libraries and Archives in Europe during World War II* (Fort Gordon, GA: US Army Civil Affairs School, 1964). This is based on his 1958 doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago. The United States

Holocaust Memorial Museum has a good overview of Offenbach online, including access to the official Monthly Reports of the Depot, and the 'Personal Reminiscences' of Seymour J. Pomrenze, the first Director of the depot, at <www.ushmm.org/oad>.

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