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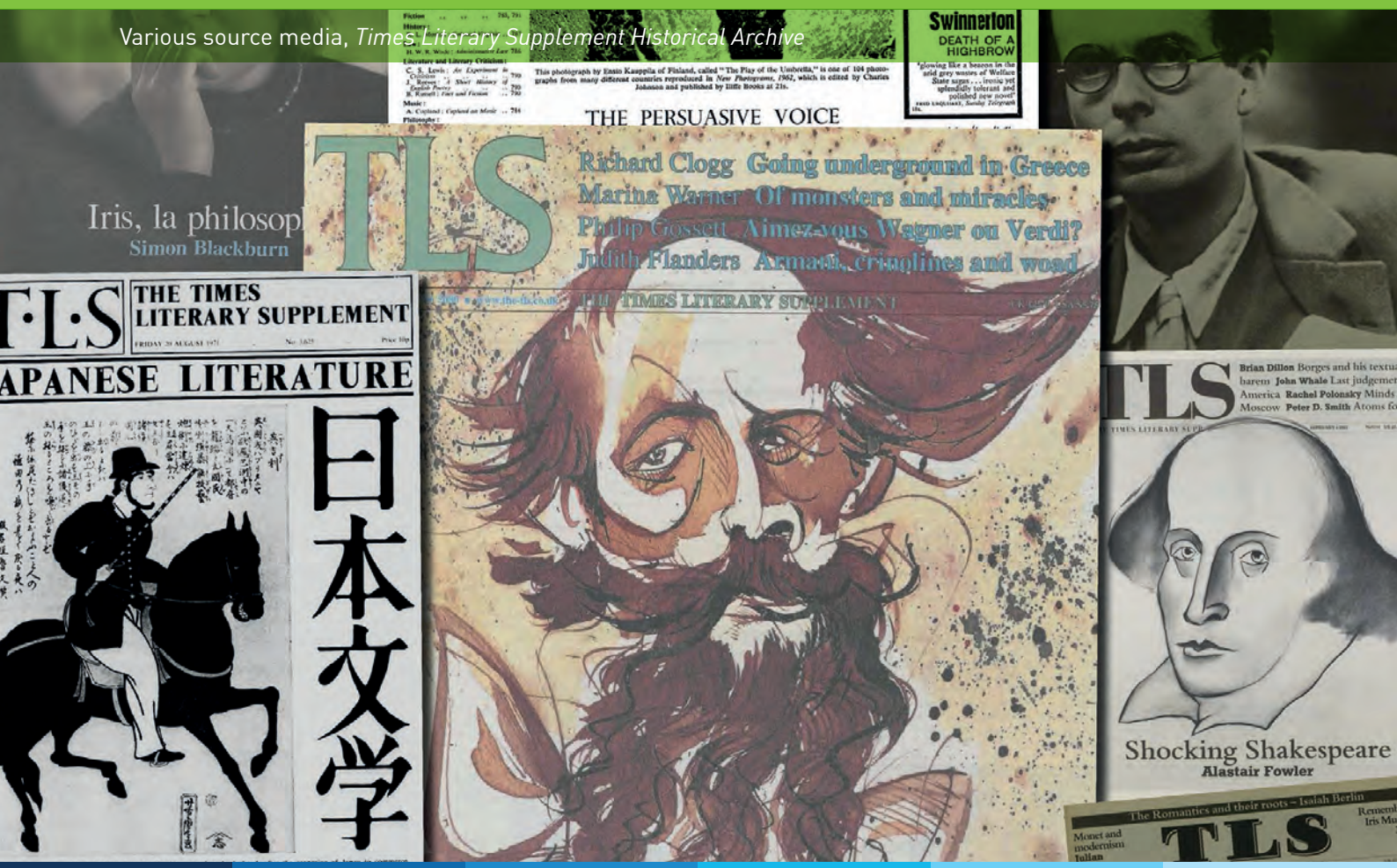
The *Times Literary Supplement* in the Years of Anonymous Reviewing 1902-1974

1939-1945

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Perhaps *The Times Literary Supplement* should have been renamed *Survival*, the title of the fictional wartime literary magazine in Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* trilogy. The outbreak of war helped the previously struggling journal in various ways. Paper shortages necessitated restrictions in the size of daily newspapers, forcing them to reduce space for book reviews and to turn away a proportion of their advertising. Publishers consequently bought more space in the *Supplement*. Meanwhile, literature in general found a growing market among a population forced to sit around in barracks and air-raid shelters, often with little to do but read books and magazines. In these circumstances, D.L. Murray's more populist editorial approach began to pay off, bringing the paper a new audience. Meanwhile, some smaller literary periodicals which had previously represented competition, if only at the margins, closed down under the various pressures of the time: among them the *Bookman*, the *London Mercury*, T.S. Eliot's *Criterion*, and Geoffrey Grigson's *New Verse*.

On 2 September 1939, a *TLS* editorial declared a new agenda: "to man the strongholds of the mind. Against the poisoning of human relationships, we oppose [i.e., we set up as a form of opposition] the spirit of Europe". One form taken by this opposition was increased coverage of such foreign books as could be obtained, especially, until they stopped appearing, books from European countries threatened by Nazism. The reviewers too, were more international: during the war, no less than 12% of new contributors were originally from outside Britain, as compared with 2% in earlier years. Murray also broadened the editorial scope by publishing more poetry and a little fiction. Here, too, he

looked beyond Britain, printing a poem by Antonin Slonimski, for example, and translations by Frances Cornford and John Lehmann of other foreign work.

Among English poets, Vita Sackville-West and Edith Sitwell were frequent contributors. It was the *TLS* that first published work by Dirk Bogarde, then an aspiring poet, as well as H.E. Bates's story *The Bell* (under his pseudonym of "Flying Officer X"), Alun Lewis's poem *Raiders' Dawn* and, posthumously, two poems by Keith Douglas. Another of the *TLS*'s poets was its future editor Alan Pryce-Jones, then serving in the army. The young John Buxton, later an authority on Elizabethan culture and the biographer of Sir Philip Sidney, sent poems from Oflag VII B, where he spent most of the war as a prisoner. Cheques in payment, resonantly, for three guineas, were sent to his wife.

The more traditional articles and reviews showed impressive confidence about the post-war future of Europe, including possibilities for democratic unification. In May 1940, a *Times* leader-writer, Dermot Morrah, wrote a sympathetic piece for the *Supplement* on William Beveridge's pamphlet *Peace by Federation?* and this apparently quixotic optimism was apparent again in a special issue celebrating the paper's 2,000th issue, which appeared on 1 June 1940, within days of the retreat from Dunkirk. Under the sub-heading, "Germany's Place in the New Europe", E.H. Carr reviewed a book on *French War Aims* by Denis Saurat, director of the French Institute in London. "M. Saurat assumes as his starting-point that Western and Central Europe must somehow be welded into a single Europe", Carr wrote. "The Germans are trying to do this

in their way. We must do it in a way which we believe to be better than theirs". In the titles of both books and reviews, a new key word was "planning": "Planning for Freedom", planning the war, planning the second front, planning the victory, the peace, the future, planning for Africa or for Plymouth or for the theatre.

On 6 September 1941, three months before Pearl Harbor finally brought the United States into the war, a special issue appeared, entitled "England Looks to the Future". A strong woodcut on the front page depicts a woman holding the hands of a departing man, against the background of a storm-lashed coast. Inside, Edith Sitwell's poem "Still Falls the Rain" was published for the first time, along with resolute analyses of books on the links between England and Russia and the future of Anglo-American relations, as well as of other more or less undisguisedly propagandist works by established literary figures, *War in the Air*, by David Garnett, for example, and Margery Allingham's *The Oaken Heart*, an account of English village life aimed at stirring nostalgia in American readers. The main piece, though, was by J.B. Priestley, prophesying a post-war future in which "England will be the eastern outpost of a new oceanic English-speaking power. [in] a democratic pioneering kind of world, creative rather than subtly appreciative. It will be rough-and-ready rather than smooth and finished. Its culture will rest on a broader base". Much of what is anticipated here sounds like an idealised extension of Priestley himself but it proved none the less accurate for that. He hastened to reassure *TLS* readers that he was not looking forward to "an orgy of 'proletarian' literature with hymns to concrete mixers". On the contrary, he hoped that "it may well be a far more deeply philosophical culture".

Whatever form this vaguely-imagined philosophicality might have taken, he was confident that it would belong to "a better world than the one that is currently being blown to pieces".

Priestley's piece was signed: an increasingly common occurrence in Murray's *TLS*. 24% of new contributors in this period were credited by name at least once. Another humanising element, albeit one forced by melancholy necessity, was the regular appearance of obituaries. And a "News & Notes" section was compiled by Arthur Crook, a printer's son who had joined *The Times* as a clerk in the 1920s, soon moved to the *Literary Supplement* and was eventually to become editor. From these pieces readers learned, for example, that royalties in the English translation of *Mein Kampf* were being diverted to the Red Cross; that the Germans had destroyed Tolstoy's house but that, alas, the flattening of the house in Lübeck which Thomas Mann used in *Buddenbrooks* was caused by the RAF. The section also carried information about the literary work of exiled Europeans in England: new foreign-language publications such as *Poètes Casques*, an anthology of poems by French soldiers; or a scholarship scheme offered by PEN to potential translators of Polish literary works into English. There were regular reports of the effects of anti-Semitism, not least in literature and scholarship, for example, the fact that the Nazi Party Commission of Examination for the Defence of National-Socialist Writing required authors to separate work by Jewish and Aryan authors in their bibliographies. In May 1942, it was reported that in Croatia, the Czech propaganda board had conferred what the *TLS* wryly called "the honour of the index" on writers including Karel Capek, Sigmund Freud, Maxim

Gorki, Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, André Maurois and Emile Zola.

Censorship wasn't, of course, confined to the Axis powers, and the *TLS* took a stern line with publications thought likely to harm the war effort. John Middleton Murry was eventually dropped as a reviewer because of his pacifism. The paper was quick, too, to put Lord David Cecil in his place when, in its own columns, he criticised the domination of the wartime book trade by political subjects and complained of a decline in what he called "real" literature - a debate which touched many of the arts at the time. Cecil made a claim of art-for-art's-sake, even when:

those who still defend the artist's right to live in his ivory tower.[know] he may at any moment be bombed out of it. A man is admired who escapes from a German prison camp. Why should he be blamed for escaping out of the dingy, bloodstained prison of contemporary events into the fertile garden of his creative fancy?

An editorial in the same issue thundered back that artists must buckle to: "Is not the Nazi threat to men's liberty sufficient to move them? Here are themes enough, full, rich and complex. We can dispense with the perfumery". This was the voice of one of the *TLS*'s assistant editors and most prolific contributors, Philip Tomlinson. A similar line, comical in its effect on readers living in less urgent circumstances, was taken by another very frequent contributor, the elderly E.E. Mavrogordato, in a review of Evelyn Waugh's 1942 satire *Put Out More Flags*:

The period of which he is writing is that of the present war; the people are rogues or inept - people such as in the years after the last war were drawn by authors dubbed young intellectuals, to the weakening, as some think, of the nation's faith in itself and with general disruptive effects from which its enemies are now profiting. In fact, in its rendering of those to whom the nation has to look for orders and guidance this book would be mischievous, but that it is unlikely to impress readers whose value to the community would be reduced by accepting its implications.

Orotundities like these, with their echoes of the First World War, were consistent with a more subtly conformist approach in reviews of political books, especially those on foreign policy. There was a noticeable shift, for example, in the paper's attitude to the Soviet Union after June 1941. Many criticisms of Soviet totalitarianism continued to be voiced in the *TLS* during the time of the Nazi-Soviet Pact (not least in a review of Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*). But after mid-1941, when Germany turned against the Soviet Union, the note became one of respectful enthusiasm for Soviet military strength and the greatness of Russian literature. The novelist William Gerhardt, who had been born and educated in Russia, contributed a signed piece which, though not wholly uncritical of the Soviet system, emphasised its coherence, resilience and admirable rejection of class-distinctions.

While looking to the future, the *TLS* continued to give space to authors who found sources of strength and hope in the past. There's something touching about the blithely unruffled air of business as usual which comes across in the more scholarly literary articles. On 2 September 1939, for example, just after Germany invaded Poland, the journal published a letter from Maynard Mack elucidating a couplet in Pope's *Epistle to*

Dr Arbuthnot. Britain declared war the following day. At the beginning of 1940, Georgina Battiscombe asked for information relevant to her biography of Charlotte M. Yonge. The early years of the war also saw correspondence about a forged letter from Peele to Marlowe, and about "A Line in Baudelaire". On 2 May 1942, immediately after the 'Baedeker' raids on the cathedral cities of Exeter, Bath, Norwich and York in which 1,000 civilians were killed, readers were treated to the text of a lecture given by Dorothy Margaret Stuart on "Minor Verse of the Regency Period". Week by week they learned, too, about new books on Etruscan sculpture, medieval music, ancient Greek drama, ornithology and bibliography. Meanwhile, some of the material culture being discussed was sold off. The *TLS's* literary versions of war-casualty lists reported sales of rare books and manuscripts. January 1942, for example, saw a first edition of *Lamia* inscribed to Hazlitt, offered at auction in London, along with a first edition of *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn, 1855). *Tom Jones*, six volumes in a contemporary calf binding, went for £30; more than 1,300 original woodblocks made by Thomas Bewick, in four wooden chests, for £300. "They have presumably gone to some American museum or library", the paper noted.

Clearly, the value of these and other aspects of the *Supplement's* wartime coverage lay in their stubborn upholding of the national culture, a point spelt out movingly by Philip Tomlinson in the "News and Notes" section in the last issue of 1941:

The Nazis not only have destroyed their native literary output, but already they have deeply affected the significance of the literature of the lands still free. By which is meant not the current of to-day's

writings, which inevitably is directed along the channels of war, but the point of so much that was written in the past.

The work of all the greater writers of the nineteenth century and later expressed protest in varying degrees and for various reasons against conformity to conditions which, in their view, fall short of civilisation. When we turn to them to-day they seem to dwell in some capricious atmosphere, remote from the dread realities of life. They were in revolt against conditions which seem some centuries in advance of our own. Thoreau proves an American case. He was allowed to speculate freely by his pond, and his broodings seemed positively anarchical till yesterday. Now they lead us nowhere, except to some kind of fairyland.

Such were the conditions against which the *TLS* stood, week by week, year by year, in more than 300 war-time issues, containing between them more than 10 million words. Who wrote them?

Wartime Contributors

Since most of the able-bodied young were directly involved in war-work, Murray was to some extent tied to the personnel he and his predecessor had built up earlier. Edmund Blunden, for example, not only wrote for the paper often during the Second World War but was brought on to its staff. Other well-established literary and academic figures who continued to appear included Laurence Binyon, Ifor Evans, Roger Fry, Roger Fulford, Philip Guedalla, John Hayward, Christopher Hollis, Lewis Namier, Mario Praz, Peter Quennell, Herbert Read and Michael Sadleir. The youngest of these had been boys during the First World War and

were now in their mid to late thirties. The others could remember the reign of Queen Victoria.

None the less, there are more than 250 newcomers to the index of contributors in these years: a rate of growth comparable to that earlier in numbers, if not in volume of work. They include the economist Friedrich von Hayek, the political scientist Harold Laski, the physicist Edward Appleton, the Chinese author Hsiao Ch'ien, the art historians Tancred Borenius, Joan Evans and Nikolaus Pevsner, the natural historian H.J. Massingham, the journalist Tom Driberg, a number of novelists, among them Richard Church and Richard Hughes, and other literary people: Geoffrey Faber, M.H. Abrams, Phyllis Hartnoll. George Bernard Shaw, hitherto not a *TLS* reviewer though he had contributed frequent letters, wrote his first review for the paper in 1945, on a book about the Webbs.

The social and professional profile was changing. In general, new contributors were more middle-class (fewer than 1% from the aristocracy and baronetcy, as compared with 5% earlier), less bureaucratic (civil servants, in these administratively hectic times, accounted for 9% of new reviewers rather than the earlier 16%), slightly less academic (23% against 29%), more cosmopolitan, more worldly (there was an increase in reviewers working in business and commerce), more literary - largely as a result of the inclusion of new writing - and more journalistic, with a notable increase in people whose jobs were on papers other than *The Times*. There is also a striking rise in the proportion of specialists commissioned to write just one item.

A small but significant percentage of those enlisted to help "man the strongholds of the mind" were women: 11% of new reviewers during the war, compared with 7% in the paper's first two decades (but 13% in the 1920s and 30s). Some of them, including Naomi Royde-Smith, Elizabeth Sturch, Marjorie Hessel Tiltman and the editor's wife Leonora Murray, wrote pieces almost every week. Of course, as the poet and novelist Gertrude Woodthorpe pointed out in a *TLS* review in 1940, it was not the Second World War but the First which had secured most of the emancipations women then enjoyed. For many, 1939 brought an interruption to established careers which should have earned them a larger and more fully recognised role at the *TLS*, as elsewhere. There was a marked degree of gender-stereotyping in how reviewer was matched to subject: children's books and books about clothes, for example, were invariably reviewed by women. On the other hand, almost every work on the pressing topic of the British colonies and their future was reviewed by Margery Perham, Reader in Colonial Administration at Oxford. Even the *TLS*'s main wartime reviewer of books on the sea and sailing was a woman. A good proportion of the poems were by women, among them "HD", as well as Vita Sackville-West and Edith Sitwell. Other well-known female contributors included Georgina Battiscombe, Clemence Dane, and Elizabeth Middleton Murry. Most tellingly, the paper's first major statement on the role of writers in the Second World War was not only written by a woman but appeared under her name: Storm Jameson.

The piece appeared on 7 October 1939 with the heading "Fighting the Foes of Civilization: The Writer's Place in

the Defence Line". Jameson wrote fervently about how the "forces of regress", anti-Semitism among them, had persisted throughout the supposedly civilised world since the First World War, and warned of how easily a new conflict might produce other regressions, particularly in the form of censorship. For her as for many writers of the time, one prediction about the war was that in combating Fascism, the Allies would find themselves taking on some of its colouring. Authors could be useful, here: "The writer, because he is used to breaking through his own solitude in order to speak, is more able than other men to reach the individual in time to save him from choking in the officially induced fog". It was essential, Jameson insisted, to avoid the crudifications of jingoism, of a sort which she criticised in *The Times* itself. "A correspondent in *The Times* wrote lately, 'We have no other aim than to destroy Hitlerism, and no elaboration of that simple purpose should be permitted.' The writer cannot allow himself to share this comforting simplicity." Literature's task, she continued, was nothing less than that of "imagining for Europe a future from which the poison of nationalism has been drawn....The rest is to experience despair as a stage in courage...the thought of defeat as a reminder that no Dark Age has outlasted, or can outlast, the unquenchable energy of the mind."

Jameson, then in her late 40s, was among the most prominent British novelists and cultural activists of her day. A lifelong socialist, she had begun her career as a writer in 1913 with a piece about Shaw for A.R. Orage's journal *New Age*, where she became a regular contributor. By the 1920s she was in effect the editor of a shorter-lived little magazine, *New Commonwealth*. An early, vocal and consistent opponent of Fascism (she

and her husband, the publisher Guy Chapman, were among those who went to see at first hand what was happening in Germany in the early 1930s), she helped organise practical support for refugees and in 1938 was elected as the first woman president of PEN, a position which she held until the end of the war.

Jameson was a close friend of D.L. Murray, whom she later described as "like a good-humoured priest, large, soft, delicate in mind and manner, with no vanity and not a great deal of male energy". It's not clear what kind of male energy she may have wanted from him but intellectually, at any rate, she seems to have supplied some of what was missing herself. Certainly the ideas expressed in her article at this early stage of the war, though (as she admitted) not entirely original, were to become theme-tunes of the *TLS* in the coming months and years. Arthur Crook recalls that Murray admired Jameson's novels enormously, "and also her general attitude and thoughts about the war. She was quite an important part of the *Supplement*. They dined together frequently and he took a lot of guidance from her". So much so that in 1944, as she later described, Murray "set me down to write his editorial" on the liberation of Paris, which took place while she was staying with him, his wife and his father at their home in Brighton, convalescing from an illness.

According to Jameson, Murray was "deeply proud" of his editorship of the *TLS* and mortified by what she describes as his "abrupt dismissal" in 1945. His successor, Stanley Morison, claimed that Murray, in whose appointment he had been involved, had fatally "lightened" the paper, and Morison liked to boast that

when he took over, he made it "difficult to read again". But Murray was right to feel that he had done a good job: one which he carried out in exceptionally difficult circumstances, and with little recognition. Most historians of modern British literature still write as if the only wartime British literary journals were Cyril Connolly's *Horizon* and John Lehmann's *New Writing*. D.L. Murray's *TLS* deserves a place in the story.

Murray had spent a quarter of a century on the staff. Another epochal event for the paper at this time was the death of Harold Child in November 1945, at the age of 76. Child had reviewed 3,062 books over 2,268 issues, the first of them in May 1902. But great institutions are more than the sum of their members and in the post-war years the *TLS* was to enter another ambitious new phase.

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